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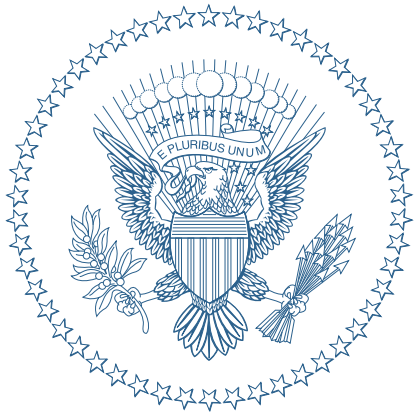
OF THE
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2013

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK I—JANUARY 1 TO JUNE 30, 2013

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Foreword

In January, I pledged a solemn oath to serve a second term as President of the United States. During a moment of hope and resolve, I addressed the American people about what binds our Nation together—not the color of our skin, the tenets of our faith, or the origins of our names, but our allegiance to a set of ideals declared by our forebears more than two centuries ago. And I called on all Americans to join in bridging the meaning of those ideals with the realities of our time.

In the first half of the year, we recommitted to reigniting the true engine of America's economic growth—a rising, thriving middle class. Where I was able to work with the Congress, I did—signing a bipartisan tax agreement that prevented a tax hike for 98 percent of Americans and reduced the deficit. When the Congress failed to avoid a series of severe, arbitrary spending cuts that hit workers, business owners, and families across our country, my Administration took action—proposing a budget that made targeted investments to create jobs right away and prime our economy to keep generating good jobs down the road.

We worked to secure the American promise of equal opportunity for all by protecting the rights and safety of everyone who calls America home. I urged the Congress to fix our broken immigration system, so that we might welcome the best and the brightest from around the world and hopeful, striving, young people who are Americans in every way but on paper can reach their full potential. I applauded the Supreme Court for striking down the Defense of Marriage Act, and I signed the bipartisan reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. And in the wake of the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, I introduced 23 Executive actions to reduce gun violence and keep our kids safe—from helping schools hire more resource officers to directing the Centers for Disease Control to study the best ways to reduce gun violence.

At the same time that we made progress at home, we worked to strengthen our relationships abroad. During the first international trip of my second term, I met with leaders in Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan to discuss security, peace, and prosperity in the Middle East. In Northern Ireland, I advanced a broad range of issues with key allies—from development and counterterrorism to global trade and transparency. I traveled to Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania to reaffirm America's commitment to bolstering democratic institutions throughout Africa, expanding economic growth, and investing in African innovation. As we marked the 50th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's stirring defense of freedom, I stood at the Brandenburg Gate and challenged the global community to continue the vital work of pursuing peace and justice for all mankind.

Nothing could prepare Americans for the tragedy these 6 months would bring. Unspeakable terrorist attacks at the Boston Marathon, an explosion at a fertilizer plant in West, Texas, and devastating tornadoes in Oklahoma shook us all. While our hearts still ache for those we lost and our prayers remain with their families, these communities proved once more that the grit and resilience of the American people are stronger than any challenge. Their strength and compassion in the face of adversity inspire us to continue our efforts, as citizens, to deliver on our founding values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all our people. In the years to come, it remains for all of us to meet that task together and write the next great chapter of the American story.

Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period January 1–June 30, 2013. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless otherwise indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the printed Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the online Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compilation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary. In 2012, the Government Printing Office and the Office of the Federal Register released a mobile web application (http://m.gpo.gov/dcpd) that catalogues the daily public activities of the President of the United States and enhances features of the online Daily Compilation with user-friendly search capability, allowing users to access Presidential content by date, category, subject, or location.

Also included in the printed edition are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford,

Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of John Hyrum Martinez, Director of the Publications and Services Division, Office of the Federal Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit, Laurice A. Clark, Supervisor. The Chief Editor of this book was Joseph K. Vetter; the Managing Editor was Joshua H. Liberatore, assisted by Amelia E. Otovo.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Publishing Office under the direction of Andrew M. Sherman, Acting Deputy Director.

Oliver A. Potts
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

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Cabinet

Vice President	Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Secretary of State	Hillary Rodham Clinton (resigned February 1) John F. Kerry (confirmed January 29)
Secretary of the Treasury	Timothy F. Geithner (resigned January 25) Jacob J. Lew (confirmed February 27)
Secretary of Defense	Leon E. Panetta (resigned February 8) Charles T. Hagel (confirmed February 26)
Attorney General	Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Secretary of the Interior	Kenneth L. Salazar (resigned April 12) Sarah M.R. "Sally" Jewell (confirmed April 10)
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Rebecca M. Blank, Acting (resigned May 31) Penny S. Pritzker (confirmed June 25)
Secretary of Labor	Hilda L. Solis (resigned January 22) Seth D. Harris, Acting (appointed January 24)
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Shaun L.S. Donovan

Secretary of Transportation	Raymond H. LaHood (resigned June 27) Anthony R. Foxx (confirmed June 27)
Secretary of Energy	Steven Chu (resigned April 23) Ernest J. Moniz (confirmed May 16)
Secretary of Education	Arne Duncan
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Homeland Security	Janet A. Napolitano
Chief of Staff	Jacob J. Lew (nominated as Treasury Secretary January 10) Denis R. McDonough (appointed January 25)
Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency	Lisa P. Jackson (resigned February 14) Robert Perciasepe, Acting (appointed February 15)
United States Trade Representative	Ronald Kirk (resigned March 15) Michael B. Froman (confirmed June 19)
Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Jeffrey D. Zients, Acting Sylvia Mathews Burwell (confirmed April 24)
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Alan B. Krueger
United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations	Susan E. Rice
Administrator of the Small Business Administration	Karen G. Mills

Administration of Barack Obama

2013

Statement on Senate Passage of Tax Reform Legislation
January 1, 2013

Leaders from both parties in the Senate came together to reach an agreement that passed with overwhelming bipartisan support today that protects 98 percent of Americans and 97 percent of small-business owners from a middle class tax hike. While neither Democrats nor Republicans got everything they wanted, this agreement is the right thing to do for our country, and the House should pass it without delay.

This agreement will also grow the economy and shrink our deficits in a balanced way: by investing in our middle class and by asking the wealthy to pay a little more.

What's more, today's agreement builds on previous efforts to reduce our deficits. Last year, I worked with Democrats and Republicans to cut spending by more than $1 trillion. Tonight's agreement does even more by asking millionaires and billionaires to begin to pay their fair share for the first time in 20 years. As promised, that increase will be immediate, and it will be permanent.

There's more work to do to reduce our deficits, and I'm willing to do it. But tonight's agreement ensures that, going forward, we will continue to reduce the deficit through a combination of new spending cuts and new revenues from the wealthiest Americans. And as we address our ongoing fiscal challenges, I will continue to fight every day on behalf of the middle class and all those fighting to get into the middle class to forge an economy that grows from the middle out, not from the top down.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 8.

Remarks on Congressional Passage of Tax Reform Legislation
January 1, 2013

The President. Happy New Year, everybody.

Audience members. Happy New Year, Mr. President.

The President. A central promise of my campaign for President was to change the Tax Code that was too skewed towards the wealthy at the expense of working middle class Americans. Tonight we've done that. Thanks to the votes of Democrats and Republicans in Congress, I will sign a law that raises taxes on the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans while preventing a middle class tax hike that could have sent the economy back into recession and obviously had a severe impact on families all across America.

I want to thank all the leaders of the House and Senate. In particular, I want to thank the work that was done by my extraordinary Vice President, Joe Biden, as well as Leader Harry Reid, Speaker Boehner, Nancy Pelosi, and Mitch McConnell. Everybody worked very hard on this, and I appreciate it. And, Joe, once again, I want to thank you for your great work.

Under this law, more than 98 percent of Americans and 97 percent of small businesses will not see their income taxes go up. Millions of families will continue to receive tax credits to help raise their kids and send them to college. Companies will continue to receive tax credits for the research that they do, the investments they make, and the clean energy jobs that they create. And 2 million Americans who are out of work, but out there looking, pounding the pavement every day, are going to continue to receive unemployment benefits as long as they're actively looking for a job.

But I think we all recognize, this law is just one step in the broader effort to strengthen our economy and broaden opportunity for everybody. The fact is, the deficit is still too high, and we're still investing too little in the things

that we need for the economy to grow as fast as it should.

And that's why Speaker Boehner and I originally tried to negotiate a larger agreement that would put this country on a path to paying down its debt while also putting Americans back to work rebuilding our roads and bridges and providing investments in areas like education and job training. Unfortunately, there just wasn't enough support or time for that kind of large agreement in a lame duck session of Congress. And that failure comes with a cost, as the messy nature of the process over the past several weeks has made business more uncertain and consumers less confident.

But we are continuing to chip away at this problem, step by step. Last year, I signed into law $1.7 trillion in deficit reduction. Tonight's agreement further reduces the deficit by raising $620 billion in revenue from the wealthiest households in America. And there will be more deficit reduction as Congress decides what to do about the automatic spending cuts that we have now delayed for 2 months.

I want to make this point: As I've demonstrated throughout the past several weeks, I am very open to compromise. I agree with Democrats and Republicans that the aging population and the rising cost of health care makes Medicare the biggest contributor to our deficit. I believe we've got to find ways to reform that program without hurting seniors who count on it to survive. And I believe that there's further unnecessary spending in Government that we can eliminate.

But we can't simply cut our way to prosperity. Cutting spending has to go hand in hand with further reforms to our Tax Code so that the wealthiest corporations and individuals can't take advantage of loopholes and deductions that aren't available to most Americans. And we can't keep cutting things like basic research and new technology and still expect to succeed in a 21st-century economy. So we're going to have to continue to move forward in deficit reduction, but we have to do it in a balanced way, making sure that we are growing even as we get a handle on our spending.

Now, one last point I want to make: While I will negotiate over many things, I will not have another debate with this Congress over whether or not they should pay the bills that they've already racked up through the laws that they passed. Let me repeat: We can't not pay bills that we've already incurred. If Congress refuses to give the United States Government the ability to pay these bills on time, the consequences for the entire global economy would be catastrophic, far worse than the impact of a fiscal cliff.

People will remember, back in 2011, the last time this course of action was threatened, our entire recovery was put at risk. Consumer confidence plunged. Business investment plunged. Growth dropped. We can't go down that path again.

Now, today's agreement enshrines, I think, a principle into law that will remain in place as long as I am President: The deficit needs to be reduced in a way that's balanced. Everyone pays their fair share. Everyone does their part. That's how our economy works best. That's how we grow.

The sum total of all the budget agreements we've reached so far proves that there is a path forward, that it is possible if we focus not on our politics, but what's—but on what's right for the country. And the one thing that, I think, hopefully, in the new year we'll focus on is seeing if we can put a package like this together with a little bit less drama, a little less brinksmanship, not scare the heck out of folks quite as much.

We can come together as Democrats and Republicans to cut spending and raise revenue in a way that reduces our deficit, protects our middle class, provides ladders into the middle class for everybody who's willing to work hard. We can find a way to afford the investments that we need to grow and compete. We can settle this debate, or at the very least, not allow it to be so all-consuming all the time that it stops us from meeting a host of other challenges that we face: creating jobs, boosting incomes, fixing our infrastructure, fixing our immigration system, protecting our planet from the harmful effects of climate change, boosting

domestic energy production, protecting our kids from the horrors of gun violence.

It's not just possible to do these things, it's an obligation to ourselves and to future generations. And I look forward to working with every single Member of Congress to meet this obligation in the new year.

And I hope that everybody now gets at least a day off, I guess, or a few days off, so that people can refresh themselves, because we're going to have a lot of work to do in 2013.

Thanks, everybody. Happy New Year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 8.

Statement on Funding for Hurricane Sandy Recovery Efforts
January 2, 2013

It has only been 2 months since Hurricane Sandy devastated communities across New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, as well as other eastern States. Our citizens are still trying to put their lives back together. Our States are still trying to rebuild vital infrastructure. And so last month, working closely with the Governors of the affected States, I sent Congress an urgent request to support their efforts to rebuild and recover. The Senate passed this request with bipartisan support. But the House of Representatives has refused to act, even as there are families and communities who still need our help to rebuild in the months and years ahead and who also still need immediate support with the bulk of winter still in front of us.

When tragedy strikes, Americans come together to support those in need. I urge Republicans in the House of Representatives to do the same, bring this important request to a vote today, and pass it without delay for our fellow Americans.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1.

Statement on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013
January 2, 2013

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4310, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013." I have approved this annual defense authorization legislation, as I have in previous years, because it authorizes essential support for service members and their families, renews vital national security programs, and helps ensure that the United States will continue to have the strongest military in the world.

Even though I support the vast majority of the provisions contained in this Act, which is comprised of hundreds of sections spanning more than 680 pages of text, I do not agree with them all. Our Constitution does not afford the President the opportunity to approve or reject statutory sections one by one. I am empowered either to sign the bill, or reject it, as a whole. In this case, though I continue to oppose certain sections of the Act, the need to renew critical defense authorities and funding was too great to ignore.

In a time when all public servants recognize the need to eliminate wasteful or duplicative spending, various sections in the Act limit the Defense Department's ability to direct scarce resources towards the highest priorities for our national security. For example, restrictions on the Defense Department's ability to retire unneeded ships and aircraft will divert scarce resources needed for readiness and result in future unfunded liabilities. Additionally, the Department has endeavored to constrain manpower costs by recommending prudent cost sharing reforms in its health care programs. By

failing to allow some of these cost savings measures, the Congress may force reductions in the overall size of our military forces.

Section 533 is an unnecessary and ill-advised provision, as the military already appropriately protects the freedom of conscience of chaplains and service members. The Secretary of Defense will ensure that the implementing regulations do not permit or condone discriminatory actions that compromise good order and discipline or otherwise violate military codes of conduct. My Administration remains fully committed to continuing the successful implementation of the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, and to protecting the rights of gay and lesbian service members; Section 533 will not alter that.

Several provisions in the bill also raise constitutional concerns. Section 1025 places limits on the military's authority to transfer third country nationals currently held at the detention facility in Parwan, Afghanistan. That facility is located within the territory of a foreign sovereign in the midst of an armed conflict. Decisions regarding the disposition of detainees captured on foreign battlefields have traditionally been based upon the judgment of experienced military commanders and national security professionals without unwarranted interference by Members of Congress. Section 1025 threatens to upend that tradition, and could interfere with my ability as Commander in Chief to make time-sensitive determinations about the appropriate disposition of detainees in an active area of hostilities. Under certain circumstances, the section could violate constitutional separation of powers principles. If section 1025 operates in a manner that violates constitutional separation of powers principles, my Administration will implement it to avoid the constitutional conflict.

Sections 1022, 1027 and 1028 continue unwise funding restrictions that curtail options available to the executive branch. Section 1027 renews the bar against using appropriated funds for fiscal year 2012 to transfer Guantanamo detainees into the United States for any purpose. I continue to oppose this provision, which substitutes the Congress's blanket political determination for careful and fact-based determinations, made by counterterrorism and law enforcement professionals, of when and where to prosecute Guantanamo detainees. For decades, Republican and Democratic administrations have successfully prosecuted hundreds of terrorists in Federal court. Those prosecutions are a legitimate, effective, and powerful tool in our efforts to protect the Nation, and in certain cases may be the only legally available process for trying detainees. Removing that tool from the executive branch undermines our national security. Moreover, this provision would, under certain circumstances, violate constitutional separation of powers principles.

Section 1028 fundamentally maintains the unwarranted restrictions on the executive branch's authority to transfer detainees to a foreign country. This provision hinders the Executive's ability to carry out its military, national security, and foreign relations activities and would, under certain circumstances, violate constitutional separation of powers principles. The executive branch must have the flexibility to act swiftly in conducting negotiations with foreign countries regarding the circumstances of detainee transfers. The Congress designed these sections, and has here renewed them once more, in order to foreclose my ability to shut down the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. I continue to believe that operating the facility weakens our national security by wasting resources, damaging our relationships with key allies, and strengthening our enemies. My Administration will interpret these provisions as consistent with existing and future determinations by the agencies of the Executive responsible for detainee transfers. And, in the event that these statutory restrictions operate in a manner that violates constitutional separation of powers principles, my Administration will implement them in a manner that avoids the constitutional conflict.

As my Administration previously informed the Congress, certain provisions in this bill, including sections 1225, 913, 1531, and 3122, could interfere with my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the Unit-

ed States. In these instances, my Administration will interpret and implement these provisions in a manner that does not interfere with my constitutional authority to conduct diplomacy. Section 1035, which adds a new section 495(c) to title 10, is deeply problematic, as it would impede the fulfillment of future U.S. obligations agreed to in the New START Treaty, which the Senate provided its advice and consent to in 2010, and hinder the Executive's ability to determine an appropriate nuclear force structure. I am therefore pleased that the Congress has included a provision to adequately amend this provision in H.R. 8, the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, which I will be signing into law today.

Certain provisions in the Act threaten to interfere with my constitutional duty to supervise the executive branch. Specifically, sections 827, 828, and 3164 could be interpreted in a manner that would interfere with my authority to manage and direct executive branch officials. As my Administration previously informed the Congress, I will interpret those sections consistent with my authority to direct the heads of executive departments to supervise, control, and correct employees' communications with the Congress in cases where such communications would be unlawful or would reveal information that is properly privileged or otherwise confidential. Additionally, section 1034 would require a subordinate to submit materials directly to the Congress without change, and thereby obstructs the traditional chain of command. I will implement this provision in a manner consistent with my authority as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and the head of the executive branch.

A number of provisions in the bill—including sections 534(b)(6), 674, 675, 735, 737, 1033(b), 1068, and 1803—could intrude upon my constitutional authority to recommend such measures to the Congress as I "judge necessary and expedient." My Administration will interpret and implement these provisions in a manner that does not interfere with my constitutional authority.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
January 2, 2013.

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

The President's Weekly Address
January 5, 2013

Hi, everybody. Over the past year, as I traveled across the country campaigning for this office, I told you that if I was fortunate enough to be reelected, I'd work to change a Tax Code that too often benefited the wealthy at the expense of the middle class.

This week, we did that. For the first time in two decades, we raised taxes on the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans in a bipartisan way, while preventing a middle class tax hike that could have thrown our economy back into recession.

Under this law, more than 98 percent of Americans and 97 percent of small businesses will not see their income taxes go up one dime. We also made sure that millions of families will continue to receive tax credits to help raise their children and send them to college. Companies will continue to receive tax credits for the research they do, the investments that they make, and the clean energy jobs that they create. And 2 million Americans who are out of work will continue to receive unemployment benefits so long as they are actively looking for a job.

But all this was just one step in the broader effort to grow our economy and shrink our deficits. We still need to do more to put Americans back to work while also putting this country on a path to pay down its debt. And our economy can't afford more protracted showdowns or manufactured crises along the way. Because even as our businesses created 2 million new jobs last year—including 168,000 new

jobs last month—the messy brinksmanship in Congress made business owners more uncertain and consumers less confident.

We know there's a path forward. Last year, I signed into law $1.7 trillion in deficit reduction. This week's action further reduces the deficit by $737 billion, making it one of the largest deficit reduction bills passed by Congress in over a decade. And I'm willing to do more.

I believe we can find more places to cut spending without shortchanging things like education, job training, research, and technology, all of which are critical to our prosperity in a 21st-century economy. But spending cuts must be balanced with more reforms to our Tax Code. The wealthiest individuals and the biggest corporations shouldn't be able to take advantage of loopholes and deductions that aren't available to most Americans.

And as I said earlier this week, one thing I will not compromise over is whether or not Congress should pay the tab for a bill they've already racked up. If Congress refuses to give the United States the ability to pay its bills on time, the consequences for the entire global economy could be catastrophic. The last time Congress threatened this course of action, our entire economy suffered for it. Our families and our businesses cannot afford that dangerous game again.

I congratulate the newly sworn-in Members of Congress, and I look forward to working with the new Congress in a bipartisan way. If we focus on the interests of our country above the interests of party, I'm convinced we can cut spending and raise revenue in a manner that reduces our deficit and protects the middle class. And we can step up to meet the important business that awaits us this year: creating jobs, boosting incomes, fixing our infrastructure and our immigration system, promoting our energy independence while protecting our planet from the harmful effects of climate change, educating our children, and shielding them from the horrors of gun violence.

These aren't just things we should do, they're things we must do. And in this new year, I'll fight as hard as I know how to get them done. Happy New Year, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 9:30 a.m. on January 4 in Kailua, HI, for broadcast on January 5. In the address, the President referred to the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, which was approved on January 2 and assigned Public Law No. 112–240. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 5.

Remarks on the Nominations of Charles T. Hagel To Be Secretary of Defense and John O. Brennan To Be Director of Central Intelligence
January 7, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. As President and Commander in Chief, my most solemn obligation is the security of the American people. Over the past 4 years, we've met that responsibility: by ending the war in Iraq and beginning a transition in Afghanistan, by decimating the Al Qaida core and taking out Usama bin Laden, by disrupting terrorist plots and saving countless American lives.

Among an outstanding national security team, I am especially grateful to Leon Panetta, who has led the CIA and our military with incredible skill. Leon, after nearly five decades of service, you have more than earned the right to return to civilian life. I'll have much more to say about Leon's distinguished service in the days ahead. Today I simply want to convey both to you and to Sylvia the eternal gratitude of the entire Nation. Thank you so much, Leon.

I also want to thank Michael Morell, who has earned the admiration of all of us who've worked with him across Government and here

in the White House. In moments of transition, he's guided the CIA with a steady hand as Acting Director, not once, but twice. And he is a consummate professional. As I said, everybody in the White House who works with him, everybody across agencies who works with him, considers him truly to be one of our most outstanding national security team members. And so, Michael, on behalf of all of us, thank you and Mary Beth for your continued service.

As these leaders know, the work of protecting our Nation is never done, and we've still got much to do: ending the war in Afghanistan and caring for those who have borne the battle; preparing for the full range of threats, from the unconventional to the conventional, including things like cybersecurity; and within our military, continuing to ensure that our men and women in uniform can serve the country they love, no matter who they love.

To help meet the challenges of our time, I'm proud to announce my choice for two key members of my national security team: Chuck Hagel for Secretary of Defense and John Brennan for Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Now, Chuck Hagel is the leader that our troops deserve. He is an American patriot. He enlisted in the Army and volunteered for Vietnam. As a young private and then a sergeant, he served with honor, alongside his own brother. When Chuck was hit by shrapnel, his brother saved him. When his brother was injured by a mine, Chuck risked his life to pull him to safety. To this day, Chuck bears the scars—and the shrapnel—from the battles he fought in our name.

Chuck Hagel's leadership of our military would be historic. He'd be the first person of enlisted rank to serve as Secretary of Defense, one of the few Secretaries who have been wounded in war, and the first Vietnam veteran to lead the Department. As I saw during our visits together to Afghanistan and Iraq, in Chuck Hagel our troops see a decorated combat veteran of character and strength. They see one of their own.

Chuck is a champion of our troops and our veterans and our military families. As a leader at the VA, he fought to give our veterans the benefits they deserved. As head of the USO, he devoted himself to caring for our troops. Having studied under the GI bill himself, he helped lead the fight for the post-9/11 GI bill so today's returning heroes can get their education too. Having cochaired my Intelligence Advisory Board, he knows that our Armed Forces collect, analyze, and depend on good intelligence.

And Chuck recognizes that American leadership is indispensable in a dangerous world. I saw this in our travels together across the Middle East. He understands that America stands strongest when we stand with allies and with friends. As a successful businessman, he also knows that even as we make tough fiscal choices, we have to do so wisely, guided by our strategy, and keep our military the strongest fighting force the world has ever known.

Maybe more—most importantly, Chuck knows that war is not an abstraction. He understands that sending young Americans to fight and bleed in the dirt and mud, that's something we only do when it's absolutely necessary. My frame of reference, he has said, is geared towards the guy at the bottom who's doing the fighting and the dying. With Chuck, our troops will always know, just like Sergeant Hagel was there for his own brother, Secretary Hagel will be there for you.

And finally, Chuck represents the bipartisan tradition that we need more of in Washington. For his independence and commitment to consensus, he's earned the respect of national security and military leaders, Republicans and Democrats, including me. In the Senate, I came to admire his courage and his judgment, his willingness to speak his mind, even if it wasn't popular, even if it defied the conventional wisdom.

And that's exactly the spirit I want on my national security team: a recognition that when it comes to the defense of our country, we are not Democrats or Republicans, we are Americans. Each of us has a responsibility, Chuck has said, to be guided not by the interest of our party or our President even, but by the interests of our country.

So, Chuck, I thank you and Lilibet for agreeing to serve once more in the interests of our country.

Now, when I'm on the subject of patriots, let me say a few words about John Brennan. In John Brennan the men and women of the CIA will have the leadership of one of our Nation's most skilled and respected intelligence professionals, not to mention that unique combination of smarts and strength that he claims comes from growing up in New Jersey. [*Laughter*]

A 25-year veteran of the CIA, John knows what our national security demands: intelligence that provides policymakers with the facts, strong analytic insights, and a keen understanding of a dynamic world. Given his extensive experience and travels, which include, by the way, traveling through the Arabian Peninsula, where he camped with tribesmen in the desert, John has an invaluable perspective on the forces—the history, the culture, the politics, economics, the desire for human dignity—driving so much of the changes in today's world.

Having held senior management, analytic, and operational positions at the Agency, John's committed to investing in the range of intelligence capabilities we need, technical and human. He literally built and then led the National Counterterrorism Center. And he knows the risks that our intelligence professionals face every day. John has lost colleagues and friends, heroes whose stars now grace that memorial wall at Langley.

For the last 4 years, as my adviser for Counterterrorism and Homeland Security, John developed and has overseen our comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, a collaborative effort across the Government, including intelligence and defense and homeland security and law enforcement agencies.

And so think about the results. More Al Qaida leaders and commanders have been removed from the battlefield than at any time since 9/11. Their communications, recruiting, training, finances are all under enormous strain, all of which makes it harder to plan and carry out large-scale attacks against our homeland. And our entire team, including our exceptional Director of National Intelligence, Jim Clapper, will remain relentless against Al Qaida and its affiliates.

In all this work, John has been tireless. People here in the White House work hard. But John is legendary, even in the White House, for working hard. [*Laughter*] He is one of the hardest working public servants I've ever seen. I'm not sure he's slept in 4 years. [*Laughter*] We—when I was on Martha's Vineyard, John came and did the press briefing; this is in summer, it's August, he's in full suit and tie. And one of the reporters asked him, don't you ever get any down time? And John said, I don't do down time. [*Laughter*] He's not even smiling now. [*Laughter*]

There's another reason I value John so much, and that is his integrity and his commitment to the values that define us as Americans. He has worked to embed our efforts in a strong legal framework. He understands we are a nation of laws. In moments of debate and decision, he asks the tough question, and he insists on high and rigorous standards. Time and again, he's spoken to the American people about our counterterrorism policies because he recognizes we have a responsibility to be [as]* open and transparent as possible.

And so, John, you've been one of my closest advisers. You've been a great friend. I am deeply grateful for your extraordinary service. I'm even more grateful for Kathy's willingness to put up with you. And I'm grateful to both of you for your willingness to take this assignment.

Today I can say to the men and women of the CIA: In Director John Brennan you will have one of your own, a leader who knows you, who cares for you deeply, and who will fight for you every single day. And you'll have a leader who has my complete confidence and my complete trust.

As I said, the work of defending our Nation is never done. My number-one criteria in mak-

* White House correction.

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 successful 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.

Statement on the Resignation of Hilda L. Solis as Secretary of Labor
January 9, 2013

Over her long career in public service—as an advocate for environmental justice in California, State legislator, Member of Congress, and Secretary of Labor—Hilda Solis has been a tireless champion for working families. Over the last 4 years, Secretary Solis has been a critical member of my economic team as we have worked to recover from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression and strengthen the economy for the middle class. Her efforts have helped train workers for the jobs of the future, protect workers' health and safety, and put millions of Americans back to work. I am grateful to Secretary Solis for her steadfast commitment and service not only to the administration, but on behalf of the American people. I wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Remarks on the Nomination of White House Chief of Staff Jacob J. Lew To Be Secretary of the Treasury
January 10, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat.

A little more than 4 years ago, I stood with Mr. Tim Geithner and announced him as my first nominee to my Cabinet. We were barely 2 months into the financial crisis. The stock market had cratered. The housing market had cratered as well. Bank after bank was on the verge of collapse. And worst of all, more than 800,000 Americans would lose their jobs in just that month. And the bottom was not yet in sight.

So I couldn't blame Tim when he tried to tell me he wasn't the right guy for the job. [*Laughter*] But I knew that Tim's extensive experience with economic policy made him eminently qualified, and I also knew that he could hit the ground running. As Chairman of the New York Federal Reserve, he had just spent several sleepless and chaotic weeks immersed in the complexities of the crisis and had been working closely with his Republican predecessor at Treasury to save the financial system.

Then, with the wreckage of our economy still smoldering and unstable, I asked Tim to help put it back together. And thanks in large part to his steady hand, our economy has been growing again for the past 3 years, our businesses have created nearly 6 million new jobs. The money that we spent to save the financial system has largely been paid back. We've put in place rules to prevent that kind of financial meltdown from ever happening again. An auto industry was saved. We made sure taxpayers are not on the hook if the biggest firms fail again. We've taken steps to help underwater homeowners come up for air and open new markets to sell American goods overseas. And we've begun to reduce our deficit through a balanced mix of spending cuts and reforms to a Tax Code that, at the time that we both came in, was too skewed in favor of the wealthy at the expense of middle class Americans. So when the history books are written, Tim Geithner is going to go down as one of our finest Secretaries of the Treasury. [*Applause*] All right, don't embarrass him. [*Laughter*]

On a personal note, Tim has been a wonderful friend and a dependable adviser throughout these last 4 years. There's an unofficial saying over at Treasury: "No peacocks, no jerks, no whiners." That would be a good saying for all of Washington—[*laughter*]—"no peacocks, no jerks, no whiners." Few embody that ideal better than Tim Geithner. That's why, when Tim was thinking about leaving a couple of years ago, I had to personally get on my knees with Carole to help convince him to stay on a little bit longer. [*Laughter*] And I could not be more grateful to Carole and the entire Geithner family for allowing him to make the sacrifices that

so many of our Cabinet members ask of their families in serving the country.

The fact is, while a lot of work remains, especially to rebuild a strong middle class and offer working folks new pathways to rise into the middle class, our economy is better positioned for tomorrow than most of those other countries hit by the financial crisis. The tough decisions Tim made and carried out deserve a lot of credit for that. So I understand that Tim is ready for a break. Obviously, we're sad to see him go. But I cannot think of a better person to continue Tim's work at Treasury than Jack Lew.

Now, this is bittersweet not only because Tim is leaving, but also because Jack has been my Chief of Staff for the last year. He was my Budget Director before that. I trust his judgment; I value his friendship. I know very few people with greater integrity than the man to my left. And so I don't want to see him go because it's working out really well for me to have him here in the White House. But my loss will be the Nation's gain.

Jack has the distinction of having worked and succeeded in some of the toughest jobs in Washington and the private sector. As a congressional staffer in the 1980s, he helped negotiate the deal between President Reagan and Tip O'Neill to save Social Security. Under President Clinton, he presided over three budget surpluses in a row. So for all the talk out there about deficit reduction, making sure our books are balanced, this is the guy who did it—three times. He helped oversee one of our Nation's finest universities and one of our largest investment banks. In my administration, he has managed operations for the State Department and the budget for the entire executive branch. And over the past year, I've sought Jack's advice on virtually every decision that I've made, from economic policy to foreign policy.

Now, one reason Jack has been so effective in this town is because he is a low-key guy who prefers to surround himself with policy experts rather than television cameras. And over the years, he's built a reputation as a master of policy who can work with members of both parties and forge principled compromises. And maybe most importantly, as the son of a Polish immigrant, a man of deep and devout faith, Jack knows that every number on a page, every dollar we budget, every decision we make, has to be an expression of who we wish to be as a nation, our values. The values that say everybody gets a fair shot at opportunity—and says that we expect all of us to fulfill our individual obligations as citizens in return.

So Jack has my complete trust. I know I'm not alone in that. In the words of one former Senator, "Having Lew on your team is the equivalent, as a coach, of having the luxury of putting somebody at almost any position and knowing he will do well." And I could not agree more. So I hope the Senate will confirm him as quickly as possible.

I want to personally thank both of these men and their families, especially Carole and Ruth, for their extraordinary service to our country. And with that, I'd like to invite them to say a few words, starting with Tim.

[*At this point, Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner and Secretary-designate Lew made brief remarks. The President then continued his remarks as follows.*]

Well, these are two outstanding public servants. I think the only point that I want to make—leave you with is the fact that I had never noticed Jack's signature. [*Laughter*] And when this was highlighted yesterday in the press, I considered rescinding—[*laughter*]—my offer to appoint him. Jack assures me that he is going to work to make at least one letter legible in order not to debase our currency—[*laughter*]—should he be confirmed as Secretary of the Treasury.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr.; Carole Sonnenfeld Geithner, wife of Secretary Geithner; former Sen. Thomas A. Daschle; and Ruth Schwartz Lew, wife of Secretary-designate Lew. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Geithner and Secretary-designate Lew.

The President's News Conference With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan
January 11, 2013

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat.

It is my pleasure to welcome President Karzai back to the White House, as well as his delegation. We last saw each other during the NATO summit in my hometown of Chicago, a city that reflects the friendship between our peoples, including many Afghan Americans, as well as the Karzai family.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Obama. So, Mr. President, welcome.

We meet at a critical moment. The 33,000 additional forces that I ordered to Afghanistan have served with honor. They've completed their mission and, as promised, returned home this past fall. The transition is well underway, and soon, nearly 90 percent of Afghans will live in areas where Afghan forces are in the lead for their own security.

This year, we'll mark another milestone: Afghan forces will take the lead for security across the entire country. And by the end of next year, 2014, the transition will be complete: Afghans will have full responsibility for their security, and this war will come to a responsible end.

This progress is only possible because of the incredible sacrifices of our troops and our diplomats, the forces of our many coalition partners, and the Afghan people, who have endured extraordinary hardship. In this war, more than 2,000 of America's sons and daughters have given their lives. These are patriots that we honor today, tomorrow, and forever. And as we announced today, the next month, I will present our Nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, to Staff Sergeant Clinton Romesha for his heroic service in Afghanistan.

Today, because of the courage of our citizens, President Karzai and I have been able to review our shared strategy. With the devastating blows we've struck against Al Qaida, our core objective—the reason we went to war in the first place—is now within reach: ensuring that Al Qaida can never again use Afghanistan to launch attacks against our country. At the same time, we pushed the Taliban out of their strongholds. Today, most major cities—and most Afghans—are more secure, and insurgents have continued to lose territory.

Meanwhile, Afghan forces continue to grow stronger. As planned, some 352,000 Afghan soldiers and police are now in training or on duty. Most missions are already being led by Afghan forces. And of all the men and women in uniform in Afghanistan, the vast majority are Afghans who are fighting and dying for their country every day.

We still face significant challenges. But because of this progress, our transition is on track. At the NATO summit last year, we agreed with our coalition partners that Afghan forces will take the lead for security in mid-2013.

President Karzai and his team have been here for several days. We've shared a vision for how we're going to move ahead. We've consulted with our coalition partners, and we will continue to do so. And today we agreed that as Afghan forces take the lead and as President Karzai announces the final phase of the transition, coalition forces will move to a support role this spring. Our troops will continue to fight alongside Afghans, when needed. But let me say it as plainly as I can. Starting this spring, our troops will have a different mission: training, advising, assisting Afghan forces. It will be a historic moment and another step toward full Afghan sovereignty, something I know that President Karzai cares deeply about, as do the Afghan people.

This sets the stage for the further reduction of coalition forces. We've already reduced our presence in Afghanistan to roughly 66,000 U.S. troops. I've pledged we'll continue to bring our forces home at a steady pace, and in the coming months, I'll announce the next phase of our

drawdown, a responsible drawdown that protects the gains our troops have made.

President Karzai and I also discussed the nature of our security cooperation after 2014. Our teams continue to work toward a security agreement. And as they do, they will be guided by our respect for Afghan sovereignty and by our two long-term tasks, which will be very specific and very narrow: first, training and assisting Afghan forces; and second, targeting counterterrorism missions—targeted counterterrorism missions against Al Qaida and its affiliates. Our discussions will focus on how best to achieve these two tasks after 2014, and it's our hope that we can reach an agreement this year.

Ultimately, security gains must be matched by political progress. So we recommitted our nations to a reconciliation process between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. President Karzai updated me on the Afghan Government's road map to peace. And today we agreed that this process should be advanced by the opening of a Taliban office to facilitate talks.

Reconciliation also requires constructive support from across the region, including Pakistan. We welcome recent steps that have been taken in that regard, and we'll look for more tangible steps, because a stable and secure Afghanistan is in the interest not only of the Afghan people and the United States, but of the entire region.

And finally, we reaffirmed the strategic partnership that we signed last year in Kabul, an enduring partnership between two sovereign nations. This includes deepening ties of trade, commerce, strengthening institutions, development, education, and opportunities for all Afghans: men and women, boys and girls. And this sends a clear message to Afghans and to the region: As Afghans stand up, they will not stand alone; the United States, and the world, stands with them.

Now, let me close by saying that this continues to be a very difficult mission. Our forces continue to serve and make tremendous sacrifices every day. The Afghan people make significant sacrifices every day. Afghan forces still need to grow stronger. We remain vigilant against insider attacks. Lasting peace and security will require governance and development that delivers for the Afghan people and an end to safe havens for Al Qaida and its ilk. All this will continue to be our work.

But make no mistake: Our path is clear, and we are moving forward. Every day, more Afghans are stepping up and taking responsibility for their own security. And as they do, our troops will come home. And next year, this long war will come to a responsible end.

President Karzai, I thank you and your delegation for the progress we've made together and for your commitment to the goals that we share: a strong and sovereign Afghanistan where Afghans find security, peace, prosperity, and dignity. And in pursuit of that future, Afghanistan will have a long-term partner in the United States of America.

Mr. President.

President Karzai. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the very gracious and warm welcome to me and the Afghan delegation on this visit to Washington and for bearing with us, as I mentioned during our talks, in the Blair House, with all the crowds that we have there.

The President and I discussed today in great detail all the relevant issues between the two countries. I was happy to see that we have made progress on some of the important issues for Afghanistan. Concerning Afghan sovereignty, we agreed on the complete return of detention centers and detainees to Afghan sovereignty and that this will be implemented soon after my return to Afghanistan. We also discussed all aspects of transition to Afghan governance and security.

I'm very happy to hear from the President, as we also discussed it earlier, that in spring this year, the Afghan forces will be fully responsible for providing security and protection to the Afghan people and that the international forces, the American forces, will be no longer present in Afghan villages, that the task will be that of the Afghan forces to provide for the Afghan people in security and protection.

That we also agreed on the steps that we should be taking to—in the peace process, which is of highest priority to Afghanistan. We agreed on allowing a Taliban office in Qatar, in Doha, where the Taliban will engage in direct talks with the representatives of the Afghan High Council for Peace, where we will be seeking the help of relevant regional countries, including Pakistan, where we'll be trying our best, together with the United States and our other allies, to return peace and stability to Afghanistan as soon as possible and employing all the means that we have within our power to do that so the Afghan people can live in security and peace and work for their prosperity and educate their children.

The President and I also discussed the economic transition in Afghanistan and all that entails for Afghanistan. Once the transition to Afghan forces is completed, once the bulk of these international forces have withdrawn from Afghanistan, we hope that the dividends of that transition economically to Afghanistan will be beneficial to the Afghan people and will not have adverse effects on Afghan economy and the prosperity that we have gained in the past many years.

We also discussed the issue of election in Afghanistan and the importance of election for the Afghan people, with the hope that we'll be conducting a free and fair election in Afghanistan, where our friends in the international community—in particular, the United States—will be assisting in conducting those elections; of course, where Afghanistan will have the right environment for conducting elections without interference and without undue concern in that regard for the Afghan people.

We also discussed in a bit of detail and in the environment that we have, all aspects of the bilateral security agreement between Afghanistan and the United States, and I informed the President that the Afghan people—already in the *loya jirga* that we called for—the strategic partnership agreement between us and the United States, have given their approval to this relationship, and they value it as one that's good for Afghanistan. So, in that context, the bilateral security agreement is one that the Afghan people approve. And I'm sure we will conduct it in detail, where both the interests of the United States and the interests of Afghanistan will be kept in mind.

We had a number of other issues also to talk about. During our conversations, and perhaps many times in that conversation, beginning with the conversation, of course, I thanked the President for the help that the United States has given to the Afghan people, for all that we have gained in the past 10 years, and that those gains will be kept by any standard while we are working for peace and stability in Afghanistan, including the respect for Afghan Constitution.

I also thanked the President and endorsed with him the sacrifices of American men and women in uniform and those of other countries. Accordingly, I also informed President Obama of the sacrifices of the Afghan people—of the immense sacrifices of the Afghan people in the past 10 years—both of the servicemen and of the Afghan people.

I'll be going back to Afghanistan this evening to bring to the Afghan people the news of Afghanistan standing shoulder to shoulder with America as a sovereign, independent country, but in cooperation and in partnership.

Thank you, Mr. President, for the hospitality.

President Obama. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Okay, we've got two questions each, I think, from U.S. and Afghan press. I will start with Scott Wilson of the Washington Post.

U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan/U.S. Troop Levels in Afghanistan/Bilateral Security Agreement Negotiations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President and President Karzai.

Mr. President, does moving up the deadline for the transition to an Afghan security role lead in the spring mean you'll be winding down U.S. troops faster than you expected this year? And as specifically as possible, how many troops do you expect to leave in Afghanistan beyond 2014 for the two missions you outlined? And would you consider leaving any

troops in Afghanistan beyond that date without an immunity agreement for their actions?

And, President Karzai, you've spoken often about the threat the American presence in Afghanistan poses to the—your nation's sovereignty. But I'm wondering if you will be considering and working on behalf of an immunity agreement to preserve some U.S. forces in Afghanistan after the 2014 date and how many U.S. troops you would accept after that time.

Thank you.

President Obama. Scott, our first task has been to meet the transition plan that we set first in Lisbon, then in Chicago. And because of the progress that's been made by our troops, because of the progress that's been made in terms of Afghan security forces, their capacity to take the lead, we are able to meet those goals and accelerate them somewhat.

So let me repeat: What's going to happen this spring is that Afghans will be in the lead throughout the country. That doesn't mean that coalition forces, including U.S. forces, are no longer fighting. They will still be fighting alongside Afghan troops. It does mean, though, that Afghans will have taken the lead and our presence, the nature of our work will be different. We will be in a training, assisting, advising role.

Obviously, we will still have troops there, and that means that our men and women will still be in harm's way, that there will still be the need for force protection. The environment is going to still be very dangerous. But what we've seen is, is that Afghan soldiers are stepping up, at great risk to themselves, and that allows us then to make this transition during the spring.

What that translates into precisely in terms of how this drawdown of U.S. troop proceeds is something that isn't yet fully determined. I'm going to be, over the coming weeks, getting recommendations from General Allen and other commanders on the ground. They will be designing and shaping a responsible plan to make sure that we're not losing the gains that have already been made, to make sure that we're in a position to support Afghan units when they're in theater, and to make sure that our folks are also protected even as we're drawing down.

So I can't give you a precise number at this point. I'll probably make a separate announcement once I've gotten recommendations from troops—from the generals and our commanders in terms of what that drawdown might look like.

With respect to post-2014, we've got two goals, and the—our main conversation today was establishing a meeting of the minds in terms of what those goals would be with a follow-on presence of U.S. troops: number one, to train, assist, and advise Afghan forces so that they can maintain their own security; and number two, making sure that we can continue to go after remnants of Al Qaida or other affiliates that might threaten our homeland.

That is a very limited mission, and it is not one that would require the same kind of footprint, obviously, that we've had over the last 10 years in Afghanistan.

Similar to the issue of drawdown, I'm still getting recommendations from the Pentagon and our commanders on the ground in terms of what that would look like. And when we have more information about that, I will be describing that to the American people.

I think President Karzai's primary concern—and obviously, you'll hear directly from him—is making sure that Afghan sovereignty is respected. And if we have a follow-on force of any sort past 2014, it's got to be at the invitation of the Afghan Government, and they have to feel comfortable with it.

I will say—and I've said to President Karzai—that we have arrangements like this with countries all around the world, and nowhere do we have any kind of security agreement with a country without immunity for our troops. That's how I, as Commander in Chief, can make sure that our folks are protected in carrying out very difficult missions.

And so I think President Karzai understands that. I don't want to get ahead of ourselves in terms of the negotiations that are still remaining on the bilateral security agreement, but I think it's fair to say that, from my perspective at least, it will not be possible for us to have any

kind of U.S. troop presence post-2014 without assurances that our men and women who are operating there are in some way subject to the jurisdiction of another country. Okay?

President Karzai. Well, sir, the bilateral security agreement is in mind for the interests of both countries. We understand that the issue of immunity is of very specific importance for the United States, as was, for us, the issue of sovereignty and detentions and the continued presence of international forces in Afghan villages and the very conduct of the war itself.

With those issues resolved, as we did today, part of it—the rest was done earlier—I can go to the Afghan people and argue for immunity for U.S. troops in Afghanistan in a way that Afghan sovereignty will not be compromised, in a way that Afghan law will not be compromised, in a way that the provisions that we arrive at through our talks will give the United States the satisfaction of what it seeks and will also provide the Afghan people the benefits that they are seeking through this partnership and the subsequent agreement.

Q. Do you have any sense of how many troops you would be willing to accept?

President Karzai. That's not for us to decide. It's an issue for the United States. Numbers are not going to make a difference to the situation in Afghanistan. It's the broader relationship that will make a difference to Afghanistan and beyond in the region. The specifics of numbers are issues that the military will decide, and Afghanistan will have no particular concern when we are talking of numbers and how they are deployed.

An Afghan press? English-speaking press?

[*At this point, President Karzai addressed reporters briefly in Dari, and no transcript was provided.*]

U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan/Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations

Q. I am Abdul Qadeer Merzai, correspondent for Ariana Television, Kabul, Afghanistan. I prefer to ask my question to my own language.

[*The reporter asked a question in Dari, and it was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Mr. President, the missions of—combat missions of United States after 2014—how this mission will be? How will it be resembling the same mission as it was during 11 years? Or is there a difference, different kind of missions? Those who are in Pakistan, particularly the safe havens that are in Pakistan, what kind of policy will you have? Thank you.

President Obama. Just to repeat, our main reason, should we have troops in Afghanistan post-2014 at the invitation of the Afghan Government, will be to make sure that we are training, assisting, and advising Afghan security forces who have now taken the lead for and are responsible for security throughout Afghanistan, and an interest that the United States has—the very reason that we went to Afghanistan in the first place—and that is to make sure that Al Qaida and its affiliates cannot launch an attack against the United States or other countries from Afghan soil.

We believe that we can achieve that mission in a way that's very different from the very active presence that we've had in Afghanistan over the last 11 years. President Karzai has emphasized the strains that U.S. troop presences in Afghan villages, for example, have created. Well, that's not going to be a strain that exists if there is a follow-up operation because that will not be our responsibility, that will be the responsibility of the Afghan National Security Forces, to maintain peace and order and stability in Afghan villages, in Afghan territory.

So I think, although, obviously, we're still 2 years away, I can say with assurance that this is a very different mission and a very different task and a very different footprint for the U.S. if we are able to come to an appropriate agreement.

And with respect to Pakistan's—and safe havens there, Afghanistan and the United States and Pakistan all have an interest in reducing the threat of extremism in some of these border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And that's going to require more than simply military actions. That's really going to require

political and diplomatic work between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And the United States obviously will have an interest in facilitating and participating in cooperation between the two sovereign countries.

But as President Karzai, I think, has indicated, it's very hard to imagine a stability and peace in the region if Pakistan and Afghanistan don't come to some basic agreement and understanding about the threat of extremism to both countries and both Governments and both capitals. And I think you're starting to see a greater awareness of that on the part of the Pakistani Government.

[*President Karzai spoke in Dari, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Karzai. The question that you have made about—we talked about this issue in details today about the prisoners, about the detention centers. All of these will transfer to the Afghan sovereignty, where—and the U.S. forces will pull out from villages, will go to their bases, where—and Afghan sovereignty will be restored.

And after 2014, we are working on it, on this relations. This relation will have a different nature and will have—will base on different principles. It will resemble probably to Turkey-United States—to Turkey or Germany. We are studying these relationships, and we will do that.

U.S. Military Objectives in Afghanistan/Afghanistan-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As you contemplate the end of this war, can you say as Commander in Chief that the huge human and financial costs that this has entailed can be justified, given the fact that the Afghanistan that the world will leave behind is somewhat diminished from the visions of reconstruction and democracy that were kind of prevalent at the beginning of the war?

And, President Karzai, many independent studies have criticized Afghanistan for corruption and poor governance. Do you stand by your assertion last month that much of this is due to the influence of foreigners? And are you completely committed to stepping down as President after the elections next year?

President Obama. I want us to remember why we went to Afghanistan. We went into Afghanistan because 3,000 Americans were viciously murdered by a terrorist organization that was operating openly and at the invitation of those who were then ruling Afghanistan.

It was absolutely the right thing to do for us to go after that organization, to go after the host Government that had aided and abetted—or at least allowed for these attacks to take place. And because of the heroic work of our men and women in uniform, and because of the cooperation and sacrifices of Afghans who had also been brutalized by that then-host Government, we achieved our central goal, which is—or have come very close to achieving our central goal, which is to decapacitate Al Qaida, to dismantle them, to make sure that they can't attack us again.

And everything that we've done over the last 10 years, from the perspective of the U.S. national security interest, have been focused on that aim. And I have—at the end of this conflict, we are going to be able to say that the sacrifices that were made by those men and women in uniform has brought about the goal that we sought.

Now, what we also recognized very early on was that it was in our national security interest to have a stable, sovereign Afghanistan that was a responsible international actor, that was in partnership with us, and that that required Afghanistan to have its own security capacity and to be on a path that was more likely to achieve prosperity and peace for its own people. And I think President Karzai would be the first to acknowledge that Afghanistan still has work to do to accomplish those goals, but there's no doubt that the possibility of peace and prosperity in Afghanistan today is higher than before we went in. And that is also in part because of the sacrifices that the American people have made during this long conflict.

So I think that—have we achieved everything that some might have imagined us

achieving in the best of scenarios? Probably not. This is a human enterprise, and you fall short of the ideal. Did we achieve our central goal? And have we been able, I think, to shape a strong relationship with a responsible Afghan Government that is willing to cooperate with us to make sure that it is not a launching pad for future attacks against the United States? We have achieved that goal. We are in the process of achieving that goal. And for that, I think we have to thank our extraordinary military, intelligence, and diplomatic teams, as well as the cooperation of the Afghan Government and the Afghan people.

President Karzai. Sir, on the question of corruption, whether it has a foreign element to it, if I have correctly understood your question, there is corruption in Afghanistan. There is corruption in the Afghan Government that we are fighting against, employing various means and methods. We have succeeded in certain ways. But if your question is whether we are satisfied, of course not.

And on the corruption that is foreign in origin, but occurring in Afghanistan, I have been very clear and explicit, and I don't think that Afghanistan can see less corruption unless there is cooperation between us and our international partners on correcting some of the methods or applications of delivery of assistance to Afghanistan, without cooperation and without recognition of the problems.

On elections, for me, the greatest of my achievements, eventually, seen by the Afghan people, will be a proper, well-organized, interference-free election in which the Afghan people can elect their next President. And certainly, I would be a retired President and very happily a retired President.

President Obama. Last question from one of yours.

Status of Women in Afghanistan

Q. My name is Mujahid Kakar from Tolo TV, Afghanistan. My question is to you, Mr. President. Afghan women fears that they will be the real victim of reconciliation process in Afghanistan. What assurances you can give them that they will not suffer because of that process?

Thank you.

President Obama. Well, the United States has been very clear that any peace process, any reconciliation process must be Afghan led. It is not for the United States to determine what the terms of this peace will be. But what we have also been very clear about is that, from our perspective, it is not possible to reconcile without the Taliban renouncing terrorism, without them recognizing the Afghan Constitution and recognizing that if there are changes that they want to make to how the Afghan Government operates, then there is a orderly constitutional process to do that, and that you can't resort to violence.

The Afghan Constitution protects the rights of Afghan women. And the United States strongly believes that Afghanistan cannot succeed unless it gives opportunity to its women. We believe that about every country in the world.

And so we will continue to voice very strongly support for the Afghan Constitution, its protection of minorities, its protection of women. And we think that a failure to provide that protection not only will make reconciliation impossible to achieve, but also would make Afghanistan's long-term development impossible to achieve.

The single best indicator, or one of the single best indicators, of a country's prosperity around the world is how does it treat its women. Does it educate that half of the population? Does it give them opportunity? When it does, you unleash the power of everyone, not just some. And I think there was great wisdom in Afghanistan ratifying a constitution that recognized that. That should be part of the legacy of these last 10 years.

President Karzai. Indeed. Indeed.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to S. Sgt. Clinton Romesha, USA; and Gen. John R. Allen, USMC, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan

January 11, 2013

At the invitation of President Obama, President Karzai and his delegation visited Washington January 8–11, 2013. President Karzai's visit comes at an important juncture for both our nations, as we take steps to further strengthen an enduring partnership as sovereign nations, and based upon recognition of our shared interests and shared security.

In their meetings today, President Obama and President Karzai discussed a strategic vision for a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan and reaffirmed the U.S.-Afghanistan Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in May 2012. Further, the Leaders' discussion emphasized a convergence of interests and vision. The two Presidents reviewed the security and economic transitions underway in Afghanistan, election preparations, evolving threats and opportunities in the region, and reaffirmed shared commitments to U.S. and Afghan strategic objectives: advancing peace, security, reconciliation, and regional cooperation; strengthening Afghanistan's democratic institutions; and supporting Afghanistan's long-term economic and social development.

Security Transition

During their meetings, the Presidents welcomed recent improvements in Afghanistan's security environment. The Leaders welcomed Afghan security forces' increasing assumption of lead responsibility, noting the marked progress made in the growth and capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Exceeding initial expectations, Afghan forces began leading the majority of operations in July 2012 and now lead approximately 80% of operations. In February, in conjunction with the fourth tranche of transition, the ANSF is expected to have the lead in securing nearly 90% of the Afghan population.

Consistent with Afghan priorities, Leaders at the Chicago Summit committed to mark a milestone in mid-2013 when the ISAF mission would shift from combat to support. President Obama welcomed President Karzai's desire to mark this milestone this spring, when the ANSF are expected to assume the operational lead across Afghanistan, and ISAF will move into an advisor-support role. This milestone would coincide with announcing the fifth and final tranche of transition, which would commence implementation in the summer, subject to final NATO and Afghan approval.

At the time of the milestone, most unilateral U.S. combat operations should end, with U.S. forces pulling back their patrols from Afghan villages. Both Leaders recognized that, as the Afghan security forces take greater responsibility for security, improving the quality of the ANSF, including the accelerated provision of appropriate equipment and enablers, remains a key priority.

Building upon significant progress in 2012 to transfer responsibility for detentions to the Afghan Government, the Presidents committed to placing Afghan detainees under the sovereignty and control of Afghanistan, while also ensuring that dangerous fighters remain off the battlefield. President Obama reaffirmed that the United States continues to provide assistance to the Afghan detention system. The two Presidents also reaffirmed their mutual commitment to the lawful and humane treatment of detainees, and their intention to ensure proper security arrangements for the protection of Afghan, U.S., and coalition forces.

Economic Transition

The Leaders discussed the significant development gains in Afghanistan over the past decade and the need for continued progress on a foundation of sustainable economic growth and fiscal self-reliance from Transition in 2014 and through the Transformation Decade that follows. Afghanistan's economic strategy is focused on investing in its human capital to lead the country's institutions and to create an

enabling environment for inclusive economic growth and investment, to harness the private sector, entrepreneurs, and natural wealth for the creation of a prosperous country. To this end, the Presidents reaffirmed the commitments made in Bonn, Chicago, and Tokyo, including long-term economic and security assistance in the context of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

President Karzai affirmed his view that the international community's assistance must be effective, efficient, and sustainable, and he stressed the critical importance of Afghan commitments to build a stable, democratic society, based on the rule of law, respect for the rights of all Afghan citizens, including women, an effective and independent judiciary and good governance, including progress in social development and the shared fight against corruption.

President Obama reiterated the U.S. commitment to support Afghan stability by strengthening Afghanistan's economic foundations and supporting Afghan reforms to achieve sustainable development and self-sufficiency. He reaffirmed the conclusions of the Tokyo Conference, including that the U.S. align 80 percent of aid with Afghan priorities and channel at least 50 percent of development assistance through the national budget of the Afghan Government.

Elections 2014

During the Leaders' meetings, President Karzai outlined the Government of Afghanistan's plans to hold free, fair, inclusive, and democratic elections in 2014. The Leaders reviewed preparations for the 2014 elections and agreed that independent Afghan institutions are to lead election preparations and implementation, in close consultation with legitimate stakeholders in the democratic process. President Obama welcomed the Afghan Independent Election Commission's establishment of April 5, 2014 as the date for presidential and provincial council elections, and he reiterated that the United States' role is not to support any particular candidate but to support a fair and inclusive electoral process.

Peace and Reconciliation

The Presidents reaffirmed that Afghan-led peace and reconciliation is the surest way to end violence and ensure lasting stability of Afghanistan and the region. Noting progress in the process of peace and reconciliation, they stressed the importance of accelerating efforts, including by countries in the region that have a role to play in support of the Afghan peace process. Through the High Peace Council, the Afghan Government will intensify its efforts to promote the peace process. The Leaders said that they would support an office in Doha for the purpose of negotiations between the High Peace Council and the authorized representatives of the Taliban. In this context, the Leaders called on the armed opposition to join a political process, including by taking those steps necessary to open a Taliban office. They urged the Government of Qatar to facilitate this effort. The two Presidents reiterated that the outcomes of peace and reconciliation must respect the historic achievements that Afghanistan has made over the past decade, including protecting the rights that all citizens of Afghanistan, both men and women, guaranteed under the constitution. As a part of the outcome of any process, the Taliban and other armed opposition groups must end violence, break ties with Al Qaeda, and accept Afghanistan's constitution.

Regional Environment

President Obama and President Karzai recognized the important role of the region in supporting Afghanistan's progress towards stability and prosperity. In this context, President Obama expressed support for Afghanistan's efforts to promote regional cooperation to foster a region that is secure, free from extremism and radicalization and that enjoys greater economic integration. The Leaders expressed support for Afghanistan's emerging role as a focal point for trade and economic activity at the Heart of Asia. The Leaders also reiterated that the goals of the U.S.-Afghanistan partnership are fully consistent with Afghanistan's vision

for building strong and cooperative ties with its neighbors and regional partners.

Bilateral Security Agreement

As we further develop the U.S.-Afghanistan partnership, the United States and Afghanistan look forward to expanded cooperation under the auspices of the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Commission, through 2014 and beyond. President Obama and President Karzai committed to conclude the Bilateral Security Agreement as soon as possible, reaffirming that such an agreement is in both countries' interest. They discussed the possibility of a post-2014 U.S. presence that is sustainable, that supports a capable and effective Afghan National Security Force, and that continues to pressure the remnants of al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. The scope and nature of any possible post-2014 U.S. presence, legal protections for U.S. forces, and security cooperation between the two countries is to be specified in the Bilateral Security Agreement. The U.S. reaffirmed that it does not seek permanent bases in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

President Obama reaffirmed the United States' respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty and reiterated that as Afghanistan takes full responsibility for its security and development, the United States continues to be committed to supporting the Afghan people. Both Presidents paid tribute to the sacrifices made by Afghanistan, the United States, and our international partners in efforts to achieve a stable, prosperous, peaceful, sovereign and democratic future for Afghanistan, as well as security for the international community. The United States and Afghanistan intend to continue working together to achieve the full promise of our enduring partnership.

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

Statement on Senator John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
January 11, 2013

Jay Rockefeller first arrived in West Virginia as a young volunteer, eager to improve the lives of working families. And for more than four decades, he has continued to fight tirelessly on their behalf. From his time in the State legislature to the Governor's office, to the Senate floor, Jay has built an impressive legacy, one that can be found in the children who have better schools, the miners who have safer working conditions, the seniors who have retired with greater dignity, and the new industries that he helped bring to West Virginia. A long-time champion of health care reform, Jay was also instrumental in the fight to make sure that nobody in America has to go broke because they get sick. Michelle and I join the people of West Virginia in thanking Senator Rockefeller for a lifetime of service, and I look forward to continuing to work with him over the next 2 years.

The President's Weekly Address
January 12, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, I welcomed President Hamid Karzai to the White House to discuss the way ahead in Afghanistan. And today I want to update you on how we will end this war, bring our troops home, and continue the work of rebuilding America.

Over the past 4 years, thanks to our brave men and women in uniform, we've dealt devastating blows to Al Qaida. We've pushed the Taliban out of their strongholds. And our core objective—the reason we went to war in the first place—is now within reach: ensuring that

Al Qaida can never again use Afghanistan to launch attacks against America.

The 33,000 additional forces that I ordered to Afghanistan served with honor. They completed their mission and, as promised, returned home last fall. This week, we agreed that this spring, Afghan forces will take the lead for security across the entire country and our troops will shift to a support role. In the coming months, I'll announce the next phase of our drawdown. And by the end of next year, America's war in Afghanistan will be over.

This progress has only been possible because of the heroic sacrifices of our troops and diplomats, alongside forces from many other nations. More than a half million Americans—military and civilian—have served in Afghanistan. Thousands have been wounded. More than 2,000 have given their lives.

This remains a very difficult mission. The work ahead will not be easy. Our forces are still in harm's way. But make no mistake: Our path is clear, and we are moving forward. Because after more than a decade of war, the nation we need to rebuild is our own.

As we do, we have to care of our troops and veterans who fought in our name. We have to grow our economy and shrink our deficits, create new jobs and boost family incomes. We have to fix our infrastructure and our immigration system. We have to protect our planet from the destructive effects of climate change and protect our children from the horrors of gun violence.

These, too, will be difficult missions for America, but they must be met. And if we can just summon a fraction of the determination of our men and women in uniform, I know we can meet them. And I intend to work as hard as I know how to make sure we do.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:05 p.m. on January 11 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on January 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 11, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 12.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on U.S. Military Support for a French Rescue Operation in Somalia
January 13, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On January 11, 2013, French forces conducted an operation in Somalia in which they attempted to rescue a French citizen being held hostage by al-Shabaab. United States forces provided limited technical support to the French forces in that operation, but took no direct part in the assault on the compound where it was believed the French citizen was being held hostage. United States combat aircraft briefly entered Somali airspace to support the rescue operation, if needed. These aircraft did not employ weapons during the operation. The U.S. forces that supported this operation left Somalia by approximately 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on January 11, 2013.

I directed U.S. forces to support this rescue operation in furtherance of U.S. national security interests, and pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148). I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tem-

pore of the Senate. The letter referred to Denis Allex, a French intelligence operative who was kidnapped in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 2009.

The President's News Conference
January 14, 2013

The President. Please have a seat, everybody. Good morning. I thought it might make sense to take some questions this week, as my first term comes to an end.

It's been a busy and productive 4 years. And I expect the same for the next 4 years. I intend to carry out the agenda that I campaigned on: an agenda for new jobs, new opportunity, and new security for the middle class.

Now, right now our economy is growing, and our businesses are creating new jobs, so we are poised for a good year if we make smart decisions and sound investments and as long as Washington politics don't get in the way of America's progress.

As I said on the campaign, one component to growing our economy and broadening opportunity for the middle class is shrinking our deficits in a balanced and responsible way. And for nearly 2 years now, I've been fighting for such a plan, one that would reduce our deficits by $4 trillion over the next decade, which would stabilize our debt and our deficit in a sustainable way for the next decade. That would be enough not only to stop the growth of our debt relative to the size of our economy, but it would make it manageable so it doesn't crowd out the investments we need to make in people and education and job training and science and medical research—all the things that help us grow.

Now, step by step, we've made progress towards that goal. Over the past 2 years, I've signed into law about $1.4 trillion in spending cuts. Two weeks ago, I signed into law more than $600 billion in new revenue by making sure the wealthiest Americans begin to pay their fair share. When you add the money that we'll save in interest payments on the debt, all together that adds up to a total of about $2.5 trillion in deficit reduction over the past 2 years, not counting the $400 billion already saved from winding down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So we've made progress. We are moving towards our ultimate goal of getting to a $4 trillion reduction. And there will be more deficit reduction when Congress decides what to do about the $1.2 trillion in automatic spending cuts that have been pushed off until next month.

The fact is, though, we can't finish the job of deficit reduction through spending cuts alone. The cuts we've already made to priorities other than Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and defense mean that we spend on everything from education to public safety less as a share of our economy than it has—than has been true for a generation. And that's not a recipe for growth.

So we've got to do more both to stabilize our finances over the medium and long term, but also spur more growth in the short term. Now, I've said I've—I'm open to making modest adjustments to programs like Medicare to protect them for future generations. I've also said that we need more revenue through tax reform by closing loopholes in our Tax Code for the wealthiest Americans. If we combine a balanced package of savings from spending on health care and revenues from closing loopholes, we can solve the deficit issue without sacrificing our investments in things like education that are going to help us grow.

It turns out, the American people agree with me. They listened to an entire year's debate over this issue, and they made a clear decision about the approach they prefer. They don't think it's fair, for example, to ask a senior to pay more for his or her health care or a scientist to shut down lifesaving research so that a multimillionaire investor can pay less in tax rates than a secretary. They don't think it's smart to protect endless corporate loopholes and tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans

rather than rebuild our roads and our schools, invest in our workers' skills, or help manufacturers bring jobs back to America. So they want us to get our books in order in a balanced way, where everybody pulls their weight, everyone does their part.

That's what I want as well. That's what I've proposed. And we can get it done, but we're going to have to make sure that people are looking at this in a responsible way rather than just through the lens of politics.

Now, the other congressionally imposed deadline coming up is the so-called debt ceiling, something most Americans hadn't even heard of before 2 years ago. So I want to be clear about this. The debt ceiling is not a question of authorizing more spending. Raising the debt ceiling does not authorize more spending. It simply allows the country to pay for spending that Congress has already committed to. These are bills that have already been racked up, and we need to pay them.

So while I'm willing to compromise and find common ground over how to reduce our deficits, America cannot afford another debate with this Congress about whether or not they should pay the bills they've already racked up.

If congressional Republicans refuse to pay America's bills on time, Social Security checks and veterans' benefits will be delayed. We might not be able to pay our troops or honor our contracts with small-business owners. Food inspectors, air traffic controllers, specialists who track down loose nuclear materials wouldn't get their paychecks. Investors around the world will ask if the United States of America is, in fact, a safe bet. Markets could go haywire. Interest rates would spike for anybody who borrows money: every homeowner with a mortgage, every student with a college loan, every small-business owner who wants to grow and hire. It would be a self-inflicted wound on the economy. It would slow down our growth, might tip us into recession, and ironically, would probably increase our deficit.

So to even entertain the idea of this happening—of the United States of America not paying its bills—is irresponsible. It's absurd. As the Speaker said 2 years ago, it would be—and I'm quoting Speaker Boehner now—"a financial disaster, not only for us, but for the worldwide economy."

So we've got to pay our bills. And Republicans in Congress have two choices here: They can act responsibly and pay America's bills, or they can act irresponsibly, and put America through another economic crisis. But they will not collect a ransom in exchange for not crashing the American economy. The financial well-being of the American people is not leverage to be used. The full faith and credit of the United States of America is not a bargaining chip.

And they'd better choose quickly, because time is running short. The last time Republicans in Congress even flirted with this idea, our AAA credit rating was downgraded for the first time in our history, our businesses created the fewest jobs of any month in nearly the past 3 years, and ironically, the whole fiasco actually added to the deficit.

So it shouldn't be surprising, given all this talk, that the American people think Washington is hurting, rather than helping, the country at the moment. They see their representatives consumed with partisan brinksmanship over paying our bills, while they overwhelmingly want us to focus on growing the economy and creating more jobs.

So let's finish this debate. Let's give our businesses and the world the certainty that our economy and our reputation are still second to none. We pay our bills. We handle our business. And then we can move on, because America has a lot to do. We've got to create more jobs. We've got to boost the wages of those who have work. And we've got to reach for energy independence. We've got to reform our immigration system. We've got to give our children the best education possible, and we've got to do everything we can to protect them from the horrors of gun violence.

And let me say I'm grateful to Vice President Biden for his work on this issue of gun violence and for his proposals, which I'm going to be reviewing today and I will address in the next few days and I intend to vigorously pursue.

So with that, I'm going to take some questions. And I'm going to start with Julie Pace of AP. And I want to congratulate Julie for this new, important job.

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Yes.

Gun Control/School Shootings in Newtown, CT

Q. I wanted to ask about gun violence. Today marks the 1-year—or 1-month anniversary of the shooting in Newtown, which seemed to generate some momentum for reinstating the assault weapons ban. But there's been fresh opposition to that ban from the NRA. And even Harry Reid has said that he questions whether it could pass Congress. Given that, how hard will you push for an assault weapons ban? And if one cannot pass Congress, what other measures would need to be included in a broad package in order to curb gun violence successfully?

The President. All right. Well, as I said, the Vice President and a number of members of my Cabinet went through a very thorough process over the last month, meeting with a lot of stakeholders in this, including the NRA, listened to proposals from all quarters, and they've presented me now with a list of sensible, commonsense steps that can be taken to make sure that the kinds of violence we saw at Newtown doesn't happen again.

I'm going to be meeting with the Vice President today. I expect to have a fuller presentation later in the week to give people some specifics about what I think we need to do.

My starting point is not to worry about the politics, my starting point is to focus on what makes sense, what works: What should we be doing to make sure that our children are safe and that we're reducing the incidents of gun violence? And I think we can do that in a sensible way that comports with the Second Amendment.

And then, Members of Congress, I think, are going to have to have a debate and examine their own conscience, because if, in fact—and I believe this is true—everybody across party lines was as deeply moved and saddened as I was by what happened in Newtown, then we're going to have to vote based on what we think is best. We're going to have to come up with answers that set politics aside. And that's what I expect Congress to do.

But what you can count on is, is that the things that I've said in the past—the belief that we have to have stronger background checks, that we can do a much better job in terms of keeping these magazine clips with high capacity out of the hands of folks who shouldn't have them, an assault weapons ban that is meaningful—that those are things I continue to believe make sense.

Okay. Will all of them get through this Congress? I don't know. But what's uppermost in my mind is making sure that I'm honest with the American people and with Members of Congress about what I think will work, what I think is something that will make a difference. And to repeat what I've said earlier: If there is a step we can take that will save even one child from what happened in Newtown, we should take that step.

Q. Can a package be discussed to allow an assault weapons ban?

The President. I'll present the details later in the week.

Chuck Todd, NBC.

Debt Ceiling/National Economy

Q. Thank you, sir. As you know, Senate Democrats, Harry Reid, sent you a letter begging you, essentially, to take—consider some sort of executive action on this debt ceiling issue. I know you've said you're not negotiating on it. Your administration has ruled out the various ideas that have been out there, the 14th Amendment. But just this morning, House—one of the House Democratic leaders, Jim Clyburn, asked you to use the 14th Amendment and even said, sometimes that's what it takes. He brought up the Emancipation Proclamation as saying it took executive action when Congress wouldn't act, and he compared the debt ceiling to that. So are you considering a plan B, and if not, why not?

The President. Well, Chuck, the issue here is whether or not America pays its bills. We are not a deadbeat nation. And so there's a very

simple solution to this: Congress authorizes us to pay our bills.

Now, if the House and the Senate want to give me the authority so that they don't have to take these tough votes, if they want to put the responsibility on me to raise the debt ceiling, I'm happily to take it. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate, had a proposal like that last year, and I'm happy to accept it. But if they want to keep this responsibility, then they need to go ahead and get it done.

And there are no magic tricks here. There are no loopholes. There are no easy outs. This is a matter of Congress authorizes spending. They order me to spend. They tell me, you need to fund our Defense Department at such and such a level; you need to send out Social Security checks; you need to make sure that you are paying to care for our veterans. They lay all this out for me, and—because they have the spending power. And so I am required by law to go ahead and pay these bills.

Separately, they also have to authorize the raising of the debt ceiling in order to make sure that those bills are paid. And so what Congress can't do is tell me to spend X, and then say, but we're not going to give you the authority to go ahead and pay the bills.

And I just want to repeat, because I think sometimes the American people, understandably, aren't following all the debates here in Washington: Raising the debt ceiling does not authorize us to spend more. All it does is say that America will pay its bills. And we are not a deadbeat nation. And the consequences of us not paying our bills, as I outlined in my opening statement, would be disastrous.

So I understand the impulse to try to get around this in a simple way. But there's one way to get around this. There's one way to deal with it. And that is for Congress to authorize me to pay for those items of spending that they have already authorized.

And the notion that Republicans in the House, or maybe some Republicans in the Senate, would suggest that in order for us to get our way on our spending priorities, that we would risk the full faith and credit of the United States, that, I think, is not what the Founders intended. That's not how I think most Americans think our democracy should work. They've got a point of view; Democrats in Congress have a point of view. They need to sit down and work out a compromise.

Q. You just outlined an entire rationale for why this can't happen.

The President. Yes.

Q. And if—then if—and you're not negotiating on the debt ceiling.

The President. Yes.

Debt Ceiling/Deficit and National Debt/Federal Budget Negotiations

Q. So you're not negotiating and they say you have to negotiate, and you're not considering another plan B, then do you just wait it out, and we do go—we do see all these things happen?

The President. Well look, Chuck, there are—there's a pretty straightforward way of doing this, and that is to set the debt ceiling aside, we pay our bills, and then we have a vigorous debate about how we're going to do further deficit reduction in a balanced way.

Now, keep in mind that what we've heard from some Republicans in both the House and the Senate is that they will only increase the debt ceiling by the amount of spending cuts that they're able to push through and—in order to replace the automatic spending cuts of the sequester—that's $1.2 trillion. Say it takes another trillion or trillion-two to get us through one more year, they'd have to identify $2.5 trillion in cuts just to get the debt ceiling extended to next year—2.5 trillion.

They can't even—Congress has not been able to identify $1.2 trillion in cuts that they're happy with. Because these same Republicans say they don't want to cut defense; they've claimed that they don't want to gut Medicare or harm the vulnerable. But the truth of the matter is, is that you can't meet their own criteria without drastically cutting Medicare or having an impact on Medicaid or affecting our defense spending. So the math just doesn't add up.

Now, what—here's what would work. What would work would be for us to say we've al-

ready done close to $2 trillion in deficit reduction, and if you add the interest that we won't be paying because of less spending and increased revenue, it adds up to about $2.5 trillion. The consensus is we need about $4 trillion to stabilize our debt and our deficit, which means we need about $1.5 trillion more. The package that I offered to Speaker Boehner before we—before the new year would achieve that. We were actually fairly close in terms of arriving at that number.

So if the goal is to make sure that we are being responsible about our debt and our deficit, if that's the conversation we're having, I'm happy to have that conversation. And by closing some additional loopholes through tax reform—which, Speaker Boehner has acknowledged, can raise money in a sensible way—and by doing some additional cuts, including making sure that we are reducing our health care spending, which is the main driver of our deficits, we can arrive at a package that gets this thing done.

I'm happy to have that conversation. What I will not do is to have that negotiation with a gun at the head of the American people: the threat that unless we get our way, unless you gut Medicare or Medicaid or otherwise slash things that the American people don't believe should be slashed, that we're going to threaten to wreck the entire economy. That is not how, historically, this has been done. That's not how we're going to do it this time.

Q. No plan B? No, you're not searching for any other ideas or—[*inaudible*]—the 14th Amendment is completely off the table?

The President. Chuck, what I'm saying to you is that there is no simpler solution, no ready, credible solution, other than Congress either give me the authority to raise the debt ceiling, or exercise the responsibility that they have kept for themselves and raise the debt ceiling. Because this is about paying your bills.

Everybody here understands this. I mean, this is not a complicated concept. You don't go out to dinner and then eat all you want and then leave without paying the check. And if you do, you're breaking the law. And Congress should think about it the same way that the American people do. You don't—now, if Congress wants to have a debate about maybe we shouldn't go out to dinner next time, maybe we should go to a more modest restaurant, that's fine. That's a debate that we should have. But you don't say, in order for me to control my appetites, I'm going to not pay the people who already provided me services, people who already lent me the money. That's not showing any discipline. All that's doing is not meeting your obligations. You can't do that.

And that's not a credible way to run this Government. We've got to stop lurching from crisis to crisis to crisis, when there's this clear path ahead of us that simply requires some discipline, some responsibility, and some compromise. That's where we need to go. That's how this needs to work.

Major Garrett [CBS News].

Debt Ceiling/Deficit and National Debt/Federal Budget Negotiations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As you well know, sir, finding votes for the debt ceiling can sometimes be complicated. You, yourself, as a Member of the Senate, voted against a debt ceiling increase. And in previous aspects of American history—President Reagan in 1985, President George Herbert Walker Bush in 1990, President Clinton in 1997—all signed deficit reduction deals that were contingent upon or in the context of raising the debt ceiling. You, yourself, four times have done that. Three times, those were related to deficit reduction or budget maneuvers.

What Chuck and I and, I think, many people are curious about is this new, adamant desire on your part not to negotiate, when that seems to conflict with the entire history in the modern era of American Presidents and the debt ceiling and your own history on the debt ceiling. And doesn't that suggest that we are going to go into a default situation, because no one is talking to each other about how to resolve this?

The President. Well, no, Major, I think if you look at the history, getting votes for the debt ceiling is always difficult, and budgets in this town are always difficult. I went through this just last year. But what's different is we

never saw a situation as we saw last year in which certain groups in Congress took such an absolutist position that we came within a few days of defaulting. And the fact of the matter is, is that we have never seen the debt ceiling used in this fashion, where the notion was, you know what, we might default unless we get a hundred percent of what we want. That hasn't happened.

Now, as I indicated before, I'm happy to have a conversation about how we reduce our deficits further in a sensible way. Although, one thing I want to point out is that the American people are also concerned about how we grow our economy, how we put people back to work, how we make sure that we finance our workers getting properly trained and our schools are giving our kids the education we deserve. There's a whole growth agenda which will reduce our deficits that's important as well.

But what you've never seen is the notion that has been presented, so far at least, by the Republicans that deficit reduction—we'll only count spending cuts; that we will raise the deficit—or the debt ceiling dollar for dollar on spending cuts. There are a whole set of rules that have been established that are impossible to meet without doing severe damage to the economy.

And so what we're not going to do is put ourselves in a position where in order to pay for spending that we've already incurred, that our two options are we're either going to profoundly hurt the economy and hurt middle class families and hurt seniors and hurt kids who are trying to go to college, or alternatively, we're going to blow up the economy. We're not going to do that.

Q. Therefore, you're open to a 1- to 3-month extension to the debt ceiling; whatever Congress sends you, you're okay with it?

The President. No, not whatever Congress sends me. They're going to have to send me something that's sensible. And we shouldn't be doing this——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. ——and we shouldn't be doing this on a 1- to 3-month timeframe. Why would we do that? This is the United States of America, Major. What, we can't manage our affairs in such a way that we pay our bills and we provide some certainty in terms of how we pay our bills?

Look, I don't think anybody would consider my position unreasonable here. The—I have——

Q. But why does it presuppose the need to negotiate and talk about this on a daily basis? Because if default is the biggest threat to the economy, why not talk about it——

The President. Major, the—I am happy to have a conversation about how we reduce our deficits. I'm not going to have a monthly or every-3-months conversation about whether or not we pay our bills. Because that in and of itself does severe damage. Even the threat of default hurts our economy. It's hurting our economy as we speak. We shouldn't be having that debate.

If we want to have a conversation about how to reduce our deficit, let's have that. We've been having that for the last 2 years. We just had an entire campaign about it. And by the way, the American people agreed with me that we should reduce our deficits in a balanced way that also takes into account the need for us to grow this economy and put people back to work.

And despite that conversation, and despite the election results, the position that's been taken on the part of some House Republicans is that, no, we've got to do it our way, and if we don't, we simply won't pay America's bills. Well, that can't be a position that is sustainable over time. It's not one that's good for the economy now. It's certainly not going to be the kind of precedent that I want to establish, not just for my Presidency, but for future Presidents, even if it was on the other side.

Democrats don't like voting for the debt ceiling when a Republican is President, and yet you—but you never saw a situation in which Democrats suggested somehow that we would go ahead and default if we didn't get a hundred percent of our way. That's just not how it's supposed to work.

Jon Karl [ABC News].

Gun Control/School Shootings in Newtown, Connecticut

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On the issue of guns, given how difficult it will be—some would say impossible—to get any gun control measure passed through this Congress, what are you willing or able to do, using the powers of your Presidency, to act without Congress? And I'd also like to know, what do you make of these long lines we're seeing at gun shows and gun stores all around the country? I mean, even in Connecticut, applications for guns are up since the shooting in Newtown.

The President. Well, my understanding is the Vice President is going to provide a range of steps that we can take to reduce gun violence. Some of them will require legislation. Some of them I can accomplish through executive action. And so I'll be reviewing those today. And as I said, I'll speak in more detail to what we're going to go ahead and propose later in the week.

But I'm confident that there are some steps that we can take that don't require legislation and that are within my authority as President. And where you get a step that has the opportunity to reduce the possibility of gun violence, then I want to go ahead and take it.

Q. Can you give an idea of what kind of steps?

The President. Well, I think, for example, how we are gathering data, for example, on guns that fall into the hands of criminals and how we track that more effectively, there may be some steps that we can take administratively, as opposed through legislation.

As far as people lining up and purchasing more guns, I think that we've seen for some time now that those who oppose any commonsense gun control or gun safety measures have a pretty effective way of ginning up fear, on the part of gun owners, that somehow the Federal Government's about to take all your guns away. And there's probably an economic element to that. It obviously is good for business.

But I think that those of us who look at this problem have repeatedly said that responsible gun owners, people who have a gun for protection, for hunting, for sportsmanship, they don't have anything to worry about. The issue here is not whether or not we believe in the Second Amendment. The issue is, are there some sensible steps that we can take to make sure that somebody like the individual in Newtown can't walk into a school and gun down a bunch of children in a shockingly rapid fashion. And surely we can do something about that.

But part of the challenge that we confront is, is that even the slightest hint of some sensible, responsible legislation in this area fans this notion that somehow, here it comes and that everybody's guns are going to be taken away. It's unfortunate, but that's the case. And if you look at over the first 4 years of my administration, we've tried to tighten up and enforce some of the laws that were already on the books. But it would be pretty hard to argue that somehow gun owners have had their rights infringed.

Q. So you think this is an irrational fear that's driving all these people to go and stock up——

The President. Excuse me?

Q. Do you think this is an irrational fear causing——

The President. Well, as I said, I think it's a fear that's fanned by those who are worried about the possibility of any legislation getting out there.

Julianna Goldman [Bloomberg News].

Tax Reform/Federal Budget Negotiations/Debt Ceiling

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to come back to the debt ceiling, because in the summer of 2011, you said that you wouldn't negotiate on the debt ceiling, and you did. Last year, you said that you wouldn't extend any of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, and you did. So as you say now that you're not going to negotiate on the debt ceiling this year, why should House Republicans take that seriously and think that if we get to the 1-minute-to-midnight scenario, that you're not going to back down?

The President. Well, first of all, Julianna, let's take the example of this year and the fiscal

cliff. I didn't say that I would not have any conversations at all about extending the Bush tax cuts. What I said was, we weren't going to extend Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, and we didn't. Now, you can argue that during the campaign, I said—I set the criteria for wealthy at 250, and we ended up being at 400. But the fact of the matter is millionaires, billionaires, are paying significantly more in taxes, just as I said. So, from the start, my concern was making sure that we had a Tax Code that was fair and that protected the middle class, and my biggest priority was making sure that middle class taxes did not go up.

The difference between this year and 2011 is the fact that we've already made $1.2 trillion in cuts. And at the time, I indicated that there were cuts that we could sensibly make that would not damage our economy, would not impede growth. I said at the time I think we should pair it up with revenue in order to have an overall balanced package. But my own budget reflected cuts in discretionary spending. My own budget reflected the cuts that needed to be made, and we've made those cuts.

Now, the challenge going forward is that we've now made some big cuts, and if we're going to do further deficit reduction, the only way to do it is in a balanced and responsible way.

The alternative is for us to go ahead and cut commitments that we've made on things like Medicare or Social Security or Medicaid and for us to fundamentally change commitments that we've made to make sure that seniors don't go into poverty or that children who are disabled are properly cared for. For us to change that contract we've made with the American people rather than look at options like closing loopholes for corporations that they don't need, that points to a long-term trend in which we have fundamentally, I think, undermined what people expect out of this Government, which is, is that parties sit down, they negotiate, they compromise, but they also reflect the will of the American people; that you don't have one narrow faction that is able to simply dictate a hundred percent of what they want all the time or otherwise threaten that we destroy the American economy.

Another way of putting it is, we've got to break the habit of negotiating through crisis over and over again. And now we—now is as good of a time as any, at the start of my second term, because if we continue down this path, then there's really no stopping the principle. I mean, literally—even in divided government, even where we've got a Democratic President and a Democratic Senate—that a small group in the House of Representatives could simply say every 2 months, every 3 months, every 6 months, every year, we are going to more and more change the economy in ways that we prefer, despite strong objections of Americans all across the country, or otherwise, we're going to have America not pay its bills. And that is no way for us to do business.

And by the way, I would make the same argument if it was a Republican President and a Republican Senate, and you had a handful of Democrats who were suggesting that we are going to hijack the process and make sure that either we get our way a hundred percent of the time, or otherwise, we are going to default on America's obligations.

Q. Drawing the line in the sand as you are negotiating, how is that not playing chicken with the economy?

The President. No, no, look, what I've said is that I'm happy to have a conversation about deficit reduction——

Q. So you technically are willing to negotiate?

The President. No, Julianna, look, this is pretty straightforward. Either Congress pays its bills, or it doesn't. Now, if—and they want to keep this responsibility; if John Boehner and Mitch McConnell think that they can come up with a plan that somehow meets their criteria that they've set for why they will—when they will raise the debt ceiling, they're free to go ahead and try. But the proposals that they've put forward in order to accomplish that—only by cutting spending—means cuts to things like Medicare and education that the American people profoundly reject.

Now, if they think that they can get that through Congress, then they're free to try. But I think that a better way of doing this is to go ahead and say, we're going to pay our bills. The question now is, how do we actually get our deficit in a manageable, sustainable way? And that's a conversation I'm happy to have.

All right. Matt Spetalnick [Reuters].

Federal Government Shutdown/Deficit and National Debt

Q. Thank you, sir. You've spoken extensively about the debt ceiling debate, but some Republicans have further said that they're willing to allow a Government shutdown to take place rather than put off deep spending cuts. Are you prepared to allow the Government to grind to a halt if you disagree with the spending cut proposals they put forth? And who do you think the American people would blame if that came to pass?

The President. Well, ultimately, Congress makes the decisions about whether or not we spend money and whether or not we keep this Government open. And if the Republicans in Congress have made a decision that they want to shut down the Government in order to get their way, then they have the votes at least in the House of Representatives, probably, to do that.

I think that would be a mistake. I think it would be profoundly damaging to our economy. I think it would actually add to our deficit because it will impede growth. I think it's shortsighted. But they're elected representatives, and folks put them into those positions, and they're going to have to make a decision about that. And I don't—I suspect that the American people would blame all of Washington for not being able to get its act together.

But the larger issue here has to do with, well, what is it that we're trying to accomplish. Are we trying to reduce the deficit? Because if we're trying to reduce the deficit, then we can shape a bipartisan plan to reduce the deficit. I mean, is that really our objective? Our concern is that we're spending more than we take in, and if that's the case, then there's a way of balancing that out so that we take in more money, increasing revenue, and we reduce spending. And there's a recipe for getting that done.

And in the conversations that I had with Speaker Boehner before the end of the year, we came pretty close; I mean, a few hundred billion dollars separating us when stretched out over a 10-year period, that's not a lot.

But it seems as if what's motivating and propelling at this point some of the House Republicans is more than simply deficit reduction. They have a particular vision about what Government should and should not do. So they are suspicious about Government's commitments, for example, to make sure that seniors have decent health care as they get older. They have suspicions about Social Security. They have suspicions about whether Government should make sure that kids in poverty are getting enough to eat or whether we should be spending money on medical research. So they've got a particular view of what Government should do and should be.

And that view was rejected by the American people when it was debated during the Presidential campaign. I think every poll that's out there indicates that the American people actually think our commitment to Medicare or to education is really important, and that's something that we should look at as a last resort in terms of reducing the deficit, and it makes a lot more sense for us to close, for example, corporate loopholes before we go to putting a bigger burden on students or seniors.

But if the House Republicans disagree with that and they want to shut down the Government to see if they can get their way on it, that's their prerogative. That's how the system is set up. It will damage our economy.

The Government is a big part of this economy, and it's interesting that a lot of times, you have people who recognize that when it comes to defense spending; some of the same folks who say we've got to cut spending or complain that Government jobs don't do anything, when it comes to that defense contractor in their district, they think, wow, this is a pretty important part of the economy in my district, and we shouldn't stop spending on that. Let's just

make sure we're not spending on those other folks.

Q. So if you fail to come to an agreement with Republicans on this and—could you come to—[*inaudible*]—shut down——

The President. Look, my hope is, is that common sense prevails. That's always my preference. And I think that would the preference of the American people, and that's what would be good for the economy.

So let me just repeat: If the issue is deficit reduction, getting our deficits sustainable over time, getting our debt in a sustainable place, then Democrats and Republicans in Congress will have a partner with me.

We can achieve that, and we can achieve it fairly quickly. I mean, we know what the numbers are. We know what needs to be done. We know what a balanced approach would take. And we've already done probably more than half of the deficit reduction we need to stabilize the debt and the deficit. There's probably been more pain and drama in getting there than we needed. And so finishing the job shouldn't be that difficult, if everybody comes to the conversation with an open mind, and if we recognize that there are some things, like not paying our bills, that should be out of bounds.

All right. I'm going to take one last question. Jackie Calmes [New York Times].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Diversity in the President's Cabinet/President's Relations With Congress

Q. I'd like to ask you, now that you've reached the end of your first term, starting your second, about a couple of criticisms—one that's longstanding, another more recent. The longstanding one seems to have become a truism of sorts that you're—you and your staff are too insular, that you don't socialize enough. And the second, the more recent criticism is that your team taking shape isn't diverse—isn't as diverse as it could be or even was, in terms of getting additional voices: gender, race, ethnic diversity. So I'd like you to address both of those.

The President. Sure. Let me take the second one first. I'm very proud that in the first 4 years, we had as diverse, if not more diverse, a White House and a Cabinet than any in history. And I intend to continue that, because it turns out that when you look for the very best people, given the incredible diversity of this country, you're going to end up with a diverse staff and a diverse team. And that very diversity helps to create more effective policymaking and better decisionmaking for me, because it brings different perspectives to the table.

So if you think about my first 4 years, the person who probably had the most influence on my foreign policy was a woman. The people who were in charge of moving forward my most important domestic initiative, health care, were women. The person in charge of our homeland security was a woman. My two appointments to the Supreme Court were women, and 50 percent of my White House staff were women. So I think people should expect that that record will be built upon during the next 4 years.

Now, what, I've made four appointments so far? And one women—admittedly, a high-profile one—is leaving the—has already left the administration, and I have made a replacement. But I would just suggest that everybody kind of wait until they've seen all my appointments, who's in the White House staff and who's in my Cabinet, before they rush to judgment.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—the big three.

The President. Yes, but I guess what I'm saying, Jackie, is that I think until you've seen what my overall team looks like, it's premature to assume that somehow we're going backwards. We're not going backwards, we're going forward.

With respect to this "truism" about me not socializing enough and patting folks on the back and all that stuff, most people who know me know I'm a pretty friendly guy. [*Laughter*] And I like a good party. [*Laughter*] And the truth is that when I was in the Senate, I had great relationships over there, and up until the point that I became President, this was not an accusation that you heard very frequently.

I think that really what's gone on in terms of some of the paralysis here in Washington or difficulties in negotiations just have to do with some very stark differences in terms of policy, some very sharp differences in terms of where we stand on issues. And if you think about, let's say, myself and Speaker Boehner, I like Speaker Boehner personally, and when we went out and played golf, we had a great time. But that didn't get a deal done in 2011. When I'm over here at the congressional picnic, and folks are coming up and taking pictures with their family, I promise you, Michelle and I are very nice to them, and we have a wonderful time. [*Laughter*] But it doesn't prevent them from going onto the floor of the House and blasting me for being a big-spending Socialist. [*Laughter*]

And the reason that, in many cases, Congress votes the way they do or talks the way they talk or takes positions in negotiations that they take doesn't have to do with me. It has to do with the imperatives that they feel in terms of their own politics, right? They're worried about their district. They're worried about what's going on back home.

I think there are a lot of Republicans at this point that feel that given how much energy has been devoted in some of the media that's preferred by Republican constituencies to demonize me, that it doesn't look real good socializing with me. Charlie Crist down in Florida, I think, testifies to that. And I think a lot of folks say, well, if we look like we're being too cooperative or too chummy with the President, that might cause us problems. That might be an excuse for us to get a challenge from somebody in a primary.

So that tends to be the challenge. I promise you, we invite folks from Congress over here all the time. And I—when they choose to come, I enjoy their company. Sometimes, they don't choose to come, and that has to do with the fact that, I think, they don't consider the optics useful for them politically. And ultimately, the way we're going to get stuff done—personal relationships are important, and obviously, I can always do a better job, and the nice thing is, is that now that my girls are getting older, they don't want to spend that much time with me anyway, so I'll be probably calling around, looking for somebody to play cards with me or something, because I'm getting kind of lonely in this big house. [*Laughter*] So maybe a whole bunch of members of the House Republican Caucus want to come over and socialize more.

But my suspicion is getting the issues resolved that we just talked about, the big stuff—whether or not we get sensible laws passed to prevent gun violence, whether or not America is paying its bills, whether or not we get immigration reform done—all that's going to be determined largely by where the respective parties stand on policy and, maybe most importantly, the attitude of the American people.

If the American people feel strongly about these issues and they push hard and they reward or don't reward Members of Congress with their votes, if they reject, sort of, uncompromising positions or sharp partisanship or always looking out for the next election and they reward folks who are trying to find common ground, then I think you'll see behavior in Congress change. And that will be true whether I'm the life of the party or a stick in the mud.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:39 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida.

Statement on Signing the Department of State Rewards Program Update and Technical Corrections Act of 2012
January 15, 2013

Today I signed into law S. 2318, the Department of State Rewards Program Update and Technical Corrections Act of 2012. This legislation will enhance the ability of the U.S. Government to offer monetary rewards for information that leads to the arrest or conviction of foreign nationals accused by international criminal tribunals of atrocity-related crimes and of individuals involved in transnational organized crime.

This powerful new tool can be used to help bring to justice perpetrators of the worst crimes known to humankind. This includes individuals such as Joseph Kony and other leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), as well as certain commanders of M23 and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). All of these individuals face charges before international criminal tribunals for horrific acts, including attacks on civilians, murder, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and rape. We have made unmistakably clear that the United States is committed to seeing war criminals and other perpetrators of atrocities held accountable for their crimes, and today's legislation can help us achieve that goal.

The legislation also authorizes the U.S. Government to offer rewards for information leading to the arrest or conviction of individuals involved in transnational organized crime, such as money laundering and trafficking in persons, arms, and illicit goods. This important new tool will support my administration's strategy to combat transnational organized crime, bolster our fight against the scourge of modern slavery, and protect our national security.

NOTE: S. 2318, approved January 15, was assigned Public Law No. 112–283.

Remarks on Gun Violence
January 16, 2013

Vice President Joe Biden. Before I begin today, let me say to the families of the innocents who were murdered 33 days ago, our heart goes out to you. And you show incredible courage—incredible courage—being here. And the President and I are going to do everything in our power to honor the memory of your children and your wives with the work we take up here today.

It's been 33 days since the Nation's heart was broken by the horrific, senseless violence that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School: twenty—twenty—beautiful first-graders gunned down in a place that's supposed to be their second sanctuary; six—six—members of the staff killed trying to save those children. It's literally been hard for the Nation to comprehend, hard for the Nation to fathom.

And I know for the families who are here that time is not measured in days, but it's measured in minutes, in seconds, since you received that news. Another minute without your daughter. Another minute without your son. Another minute without your wife. Another minute without your mom.

I want to personally thank Chris and Lynn McDonnell, who lost their beautiful daughter Grace, and the other parents who I had a chance to speak to, for their suggestions and for—again, just for the courage of all of you to be here today. I admire the grace and the resolve that you all are showing. And I must say I've been deeply affected by your faith as well. And the President and I are going to do everything to try to match the resolve you've demonstrated.

No one can know for certain if this senseless act could have been prevented, but we all know we have a moral obligation—a moral obligation—to do everything in our power to di-

minish the prospect that something like this could happen again.

As the President knows, I've worked in this field a long time, in the United States Senate, having chaired a Committee that had jurisdiction over these issues of guns and crime and having drafted the first gun violence legislation—the last gun violence legislation, I should say. And I have no illusions about what we're up against or how hard the task is in front of us. But I also have never seen the Nation's conscience so shaken by what happened at Sandy Hook. The world has changed, and it's demanding action.

It's in this context that the President asked me to put together, along with Cabinet members, a set of recommendations about how we should proceed to meet that moral obligation we have. And toward that end, the Cabinet members and I sat down with 229 groups—not just individuals, representing groups—229 groups, from law enforcement agencies to public health officials, to gun officials, to gun advocacy groups, to sportsmen and hunters and religious leaders. And I've spoken with Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, had extensive conversation with mayors and Governors and county officials.

And the recommendations we provided to the President on Monday call for executive actions he could sign, legislation he could call for, and long-term research that should be undertaken. They're based on the emerging consensus we heard from all the groups with whom we spoke, including some of you who are victims of this god-awful occurrence, ways to keep guns out of the wrong hands, as well as ways to take comprehensive action to prevent violence in the first place.

We should do as much as we can, as quickly as we can. And we cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. So some of what you will hear from the President will happen immediately; some will take some time. But we have begun. And we are starting here today, and we're resolved to continue this fight.

During the meetings that we held, we met with a young man who's here today; I think Colin Goddard is here. Where are you, Colin? Colin was one of the survivors of the Virginia Tech massacre. He was in the classroom. He calls himself one of the lucky seven. And he'll tell you he was shot four times on that day, and he has three bullets that are still inside him.

And when I asked Colin about what he thought we should be doing, he said that, he said: "I'm not here because of what happened to me. I'm here because of what happened to me keeps happening to other people and we have to do something about it."

Colin, we will. Colin, I promise you, we will. This is our intention. We must do what we can now. And there's no person who is more committed to acting on this moral obligation we have than the President of the United States of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, President Barack Obama.

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Good afternoon, everybody.

Let me begin by thanking our Vice President, Joe Biden, for your dedication, Joe, to this issue, for bringing so many different voices to the table. Because while reducing gun violence is a complicated challenge, protecting our children from harm shouldn't be a divisive one.

Over the month since the tragedy in Newtown, we've heard from so many, and obviously, none have affected us more than the families of those gorgeous children and their teachers and guardians who were lost. And so we're grateful to all of you for taking the time to be here and recognizing that we honor their memories in part by doing everything we can to prevent this from happening again.

But we also heard from some unexpected people. In particular, I started getting a lot of letters from kids. Four of them are here today: Grant Fritz, Julia Stokes, Hinna Zeejah, and Taejah Goode. They're pretty representative of some of the messages that I got. These are some pretty smart letters from some pretty smart young people.

Hinna, a third-grader—you can go ahead and wave, Hinna. Yes, you. [*Laughter*] Hinna wrote: "I feel terrible for the parents who lost

their children. . . . I love my country, and I want everybody to be happy and safe."

And then, Grant—go ahead and wave, Grant. [*Laughter*] Grant said: "I think there should be some changes. We should learn from what happened at Sandy Hook. I feel really bad."

And then, Julia said—Julia, where are you? There you go. "I'm not scared for my safety, I'm scared for others. I have four brothers and sisters, and I know I would not be able to bear the thought of losing any of them."

These are our kids. This is what they're thinking about. And so what we should be thinking about is our responsibility to care for them and shield them from harm and give them the tools they need to grow up and do everything that they're capable of doing, not just to pursue their own dreams, but to help build this country. This is our first task as a society: keeping our children safe. This is how we will be judged. And their voices should compel us to change.

And that's why, last month, I asked Joe to lead an effort, along with members of my Cabinet, to come up with some concrete steps we can take right now to keep our children safe, to help prevent mass shootings, to reduce the broader epidemic of gun violence in this country.

And we can't put this off any longer. Just last Thursday, as TV networks were covering one of Joe's meetings on this topic, news broke of another school shooting, this one in California. In the month since 20 precious children and 6 brave adults were violently taken from us at Sandy Hook Elementary, more than 900 of our fellow Americans have reportedly died at the end of a gun—900 in the past month. And every day we wait, that number will keep growing.

So I'm putting forward a specific set of proposals based on the work of Joe's Task Force. And in the days ahead, I intend to use whatever weight this office holds to make them a reality. Because while there is no law or set of laws that can prevent every senseless act of violence completely, no piece of legislation that will prevent every tragedy, every act of evil, if there is even one thing we can do to reduce this violence, if there is even one life that can be saved, then we've got an obligation to try.

And I'm going to do my part. As soon as I'm finished speaking here, I will sit at that desk, and I will sign a directive giving law enforcement, schools, mental health professionals, and the public health community some of the tools they need to help reduce gun violence.

We will make it easier to keep guns out of the hands of criminals by strengthening the background check system. We will help schools hire more resource officers, if they want them, and develop emergency preparedness plans. We will make sure mental health professionals know their options for reporting threats of violence, even as we acknowledge that someone with a mental illness is far more likely to be a victim of violent crime than the perpetrator.

And while year after year, those who oppose even modest gun safety measures have threatened to defund scientific or medical research into the causes of gun violence, I will direct the Centers for Disease Control to go ahead and study the best ways to reduce it. And Congress should fund research into the effects that violent video games have on young minds. We don't benefit from ignorance. We don't benefit from not knowing the science of this epidemic of violence.

Now, these are a few of the 23 executive actions that I'm announcing today. But as important as these steps are, they are in no way a substitute for action from Members of Congress. To make a real and lasting difference, Congress, too, must act, and Congress must act soon. And I'm calling on Congress to pass some very specific proposals right away.

First, it's time for Congress to require a universal background check for anyone trying to buy a gun. The law already requires licensed gun dealers to run background checks, and over the last 14 years, that's kept 1.5 million of the wrong people from getting their hands on a gun. But it's hard to enforce that law when as many as 40 percent of all gun purchases are conducted without a background check. That's

not safe. That's not smart. It's not fair to responsible gun buyers or sellers.

If you want to buy a gun—whether it's from a licensed dealer or a private seller—you should at least have to show you are not a felon or somebody legally prohibited from buying one. This is common sense. And an overwhelming majority of Americans agree with us on the need for universal background checks, including more than 70 percent of the National Rifle Association's members, according to one survey. So there's no reason we can't do this.

Second, Congress should restore a ban on military-style assault weapons and a 10-round limit for magazines. The type of assault rifle used in Aurora, for example, when paired with high-capacity magazines, has one purpose: to pump out as many bullets as possible, as quickly as possible; to do as much damage, using bullets often designed to inflict maximum damage.

And that's what allowed the gunman in Aurora to shoot 70 people—70 people—killing 12 in a matter of minutes. Weapons designed for the theater of war have no place in a movie theater. A majority of Americans agree with us on this.

And by the way, so did Ronald Reagan, one of the staunchest defenders of the Second Amendment, who wrote to Congress in 1994, urging them—this is Ronald Reagan speaking—urging them to listen to the American public and to the law enforcement community and support a ban on the further manufacture of military-style assault weapons.

And finally, Congress needs to help, rather than hinder, law enforcement as it does its job. We should get tougher on people who buy guns with the express purpose of turning around and selling them to criminals. And we should severely punish anybody who helps them do this. Since Congress hasn't confirmed a Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in 6 years, they should confirm Todd Jones, who will be—who has been Acting, and I will be nominating for the post.

And at a time when budget cuts are forcing many communities to reduce their police force, we should put more cops back on the job and back on our streets.

Now, let me be absolutely clear. Like most Americans, I believe the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms. I respect our strong tradition of gun ownership and the rights of hunters and sportsmen. There are millions of responsible, law-abiding gun owners in America who cherish their right to bear arms for hunting or sport or protection or collection.

I also believe most gun owners agree that we can respect the Second Amendment while keeping an irresponsible, law-breaking few from inflicting harm on a massive scale. I believe most of them agree that if America worked harder to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, there would be fewer atrocities like the one that occurred in Newtown. That's what these reforms are designed to do. They're commonsense measures. They have the support of the majority of the American people.

And yet that doesn't mean any of this is going to be easy to enact or implement. If it were, we'd already have universal background checks. The ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines never would have been allowed to expire. More of our fellow Americans might still be alive, celebrating birthdays and anniversaries and graduations.

This will be difficult. There will be pundits and politicians and special interest lobbyists publicly warning of a tyrannical, all-out assault on liberty, not because that's true, but because they want to gin up fear or higher ratings or revenue for themselves. And behind the scenes, they'll do everything they can to block any commonsense reform and make sure nothing changes whatsoever.

The only way we will be able to change is if their audience, their constituents, their membership says this time must be different, that this time, we must do something to protect our communities and our kids.

I will put everything I've got into this, and so will Joe. But I tell you, the only way we can change is if the American people demand it. And by the way, that doesn't just mean from

certain parts of the country. We're going to need voices in those areas, in those congressional districts, where the tradition of gun ownership is strong to speak up and to say this is important. It can't just be the usual suspects. We have to examine ourselves and our hearts and ask ourselves what is important.

This will not happen unless the American people demand it. If parents and teachers, police officers and pastors, if hunters and sportsmen, if responsible gun owners, if Americans of every background stand up and say: "Enough. We've suffered too much pain and care too much about our children to allow this to continue." Then change will come. That's what it's going to take.

In the letter that Julia wrote me, she said, "I know that laws have to be passed by Congress, but I beg you to try very hard." [*Laughter*] Julia, I will try very hard. But she's right: The most important changes we can make depend on congressional action. They need to bring these proposals up for a vote, and the American people need to make sure that they do.

Get them on record. Ask your Member of Congress if they support universal background checks to keep guns out of the wrong hands. Ask them if they support renewing a ban on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. And if they say no, ask them why not. Ask them what's more important: doing whatever it takes to get a A grade from the gun lobby that funds their campaigns or giving parents some peace of mind when they drop their child off for first grade?

This is the land of the free, and it always will be. As Americans, we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights that no man or government can take away from us. But we've also long recognized, as our Founders recognized, that with rights come responsibilities. Along with our freedom to live our lives as we will comes an obligation to allow others to do the same. We don't live in isolation. We live in a society, a government of and by and for the people. We are responsible for each other.

The right to worship freely and safely, that right was denied to Sikhs in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. The right to assemble peacefully, that right was denied shoppers in Clackamas, Oregon, and moviegoers in Aurora, Colorado. That most fundamental set of rights to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, fundamental rights that were denied to college students at Virginia Tech and high school students at Columbine and elementary school students in Newtown and kids on street corners in Chicago on too frequent a basis to tolerate and all the families who've never imagined that they'd lose a loved one to a bullet, those rights are at stake. We're responsible.

When I visited Newtown last month, I spent some private time with many of the families who lost their children that day. And one was the family of Grace McDonnell. Grace's parents are here. Grace was 7 years old when she was struck down, just a gorgeous, caring, joyful little girl. I'm told she loved pink. She loved the beach. She dreamed of becoming a painter.

And so, just before I left, Chris, her father, gave me one of her paintings, and I hung it in my private study just off the Oval Office. And every time I look at that painting, I think about Grace. And I think about the life that she lived and the life that lay ahead of her, and most of all, I think about how, when it comes to protecting the most vulnerable among us, we must act now. For Grace. For the 25 other innocent children and devoted educators who had so much left to give. For the men and women in big cities and small towns who fall victim to senseless violence each and every day. For all the Americans who are counting on us to keep them safe from harm. Let's do the right thing. Let's do the right thing for them and for this country that we love so much.

Thank you. Let's sign these orders.

[*At this point, the President signed memorandums to increase research by Federal agencies into the causes and prevention of gun violence, improve the availability of records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, and strengthen firearms tracing efforts by Federal law enforcement agencies.*]

All right, there we go.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:52 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; and James E. Holmes, accused gunman in the July 20, 2012, shootings at the Century 16 multiplex in Aurora, CO. Vice President Biden referred to Colin Goddard, assistant director for legislative affairs, Brady Campaign To Prevent Gun Violence. He also referred to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The memorandums are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Resignation of Kenneth L. Salazar as Secretary of the Interior
January 16, 2013

I want to thank Ken for his hard work and leadership on behalf of the American people. As the Secretary of the Interior, Ken has helped usher in a new era of conservation for our Nation's land, water, and wildlife.

Ken has played an integral role in my administration's successful efforts to expand responsible development of our Nation's domestic energy resources. In his work to promote renewable energy projects on our public lands and increase the development of oil and gas production, Ken has ensured that the Department's decisions are driven by the best science and promote the highest safety standards. Ken has also made historic strides in strengthening our nation-to-nation relationship with Indian Country, helping to resolve longstanding disputes and make tribal communities safer and stronger.

I have valued Ken's friendship since we both entered the Senate in 2005, and I look forward to receiving his counsel even after he returns to his home State of Colorado.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996
January 16, 2013

Dear _____:

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114) (the "Act"), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension, for 6 months beyond February 1, 2013, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Barbara A. Mikulski, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, vice chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Robert P. Corker, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Harold D. Rogers, chairman, and Nita M. Lowey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; and Edward R. Royce, chairman, and Eliot L. Engel, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process
January 17, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process is to continue in effect beyond January 23, 2013.

The crisis with respect to grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process that led to the declaration of a national emergency on January 23, 1995, has not been resolved. Terrorist groups continue to engage in activities that have the purpose or effect of threatening the Middle East peace process and that are hostile to United States interests in the region. Such actions constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process and to maintain in force the economic sanctions against them to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
January 19, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, I announced a series of concrete steps we should take to protect our children and our communities from gun violence.

These proposals grew out of meetings Vice President Biden and his Task Force held over the last month with more than 200 different groups, from parents and teachers to law enforcement and sportsmen, to religious leaders and mental health professionals. And in the weeks ahead, I'll do everything in my power to make them a reality. Because while we may not be able to prevent every senseless act of violence in this country, if there is even one thing that we can do to reduce it, if even one life can be saved, we've got an obligation to try.

My administration is taking a series of actions right away, from strengthening our background check system to helping schools hire more resource officers if they want them, to directing the Centers for Disease Control to study the best ways to reduce gun violence. But the truth is, making a real and lasting difference also requires Congress to act and act soon.

First, it's time for Congress to require a universal background check for anyone trying to buy a gun. The law already requires licensed gun dealers to perform these checks, but as many as 40 percent of all gun purchases are conducted without one. That's not safe, it's not smart, and it's not fair to responsible gun buyers or sellers. An overwhelming majority of

Americans agree that anyone trying to buy a gun should at least have to prove that they're not a felon or somebody legally prohibited from owning one. That's just common sense.

Second, Congress should restore a ban on military-style assault weapons and a 10-round limit for magazines. Many assault rifles, when combined with high-capacity magazines, have one purpose and one purpose only: to fire as many bullets as possible as quickly as possible. These weapons have no place in our communities, and a majority of the American people agree with me.

Finally, Congress needs to make it easier, rather than harder, for law enforcement to do its job. We should get tougher on people who buy guns only to turn around and sell them to criminals. And at a time when many communities have been forced to make cuts to their police force, we should put more cops back on the job and back on the street.

Like most Americans, I believe the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms. We have a strong tradition of gun ownership in this country, and the vast majority of gun owners act responsibly. But I also believe most gun owners agree that we can respect the Second Amendment while keeping an irresponsible, law-breaking few from causing harm on a massive scale. That's what these reforms are designed to do.

None of this will be easy. Already, we're seeing pundits and politicians and special interest lobbyists calling any attempt at commonsense reform an all-out assault on liberty, not because that's true, but because that's how they get higher ratings or make more money. And behind the scenes, they're doing everything they can to protect the status quo.

But this time, it can't be up to them. It's got to be up to you. If, like me, you want this time to be different, then I need your help to make it different. Ask your Member of Congress if they support universal background checks and renewing a ban on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. And if the answer is no, ask them why not. Ask them why an A grade from the gun lobby is more important than keeping kids safe in a first grade classroom.

Since the tragedy in Newtown, I've gotten letters from all over the country, including many from our young people. One of them was from 8-year-old Rachel, who lives in Brooklyn, New York. She wrote: "Please do something so that bad people cannot get guns to kill other people. Children should be safe, especially in school."

Rachel is counting on us. Let's get this done for her and all the other children in this country, and let's make sure this country is a safer place for all children to learn and to grow.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:25 p.m. on January 18 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on January 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 19.

Remarks at a Service Event at Burrville Elementary School
January 19, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, this is a good-looking crew here. First of all, we just want to acknowledge Burrville Elementary School and the principal here, Tui Roper, who is doing outstanding work. If you see Tui, you may think she's a student, but no, she's the principal.

As I look around the room, I see friends from all across the country, people who have been such great supporters of ours, but more importantly, everybody here—adults to children—understand the importance of giving back. And as we think about not so much Inauguration, but we think about the fact that this is Dr. King's birthday that we're going to be celebrating this weekend, I'm always reminded that he said, everybody wants to be first, everybody wants to be a drum major; but if you're

going to be a drum major, be a drum major for service, be a drum major for justice, be a drum major for looking out for other people.

And organizations like City Year, the Corporation for National Service, all these—all the great work that's being done day in, day out shows that there's a huge hunger on the part of young people to get involved and to get engaged. And it was interesting—we were talking to one of the young people, I was staining a shelf——

The First Lady. He did a fine job.

The President. And Michelle says I did a fine job. [*Laughter*] And one of the City Year folks, I was talking to them, I said, how'd you get involved? They said, our parents, every holiday, we'd always do service, and so I was taught at a very young age. So the fact that we've got some outstanding young people here today, I want to say thank you to the parents for showing early on to all our young people how gratifying and how fulfilling this is.

This is really what America is about. This is what we celebrate. This Inauguration we're going to be—it's a symbol of how our democracy works and how we peacefully transfer power, but it should also be an affirmation that we're all in this together and that we've got to look out for each other and work hard on behalf of each other.

So we're thrilled that all of you are here. We hope you guys are having a great time. I hear reports that the very young people did some really good work and some of the older folks like me, who it hurt getting our knees, kind of bending down a little bit, we were able to manage also, and somehow, Michelle looked stylish the whole time she was doing it.

So, Miche, you want to say a few words?

The First Lady. You all, thank you so much. It's wonderful to have such great turnout for this Day of Service. And I know that we have a lot of family members in the audience—and we always force our family, when they come up and do something really cool, they have to serve, and they do it happily. So I'm proud of our families for always being there for us. We love you guys.

So, as Barack said, this is a weekend of celebration, but through it all, we have to remember that the reason why we're here, why we're standing here, why we're able to celebrate this weekend is because a lot of people worked hard and supported us. And we've got a job to do. And this is a symbol of the kind of work that we need to be doing for the next 4 years and beyond.

[*At this point, there was a loud crash.*]

The President. That was a cameraman.

The First Lady. That was the press. This is press. [*Laughter*] It's okay, though, it's okay. Hope you didn't break it. [*Laughter*]

So, for all the young people, and we've got a lot of young people—City Year members, the students here at this school—you know, as Barack says, we're passing the baton onto you all. So the goal is, is that as you make your way through life, who are you pulling up behind you? And as long as you're pulling somebody up behind you, you're doing the right thing.

So thank you all. We're very proud of you and we're going to come down and shake some hands.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:46 p.m.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack in Algeria
January 19, 2013

Today the thoughts and prayers of the American people are with the families of all those who were killed and injured in the terrorist attack in Algeria. The blame for this tragedy rests with the terrorists who carried it out, and the United States condemns their actions in the strongest possible terms. We have been in constant contact with Algerian officials and stand ready to provide whatever assistance they need in the aftermath of this attack.

We also will continue to work closely with all of our partners to combat the scourge of ter-

rorism in the region, which has claimed too many innocent lives. This attack is another reminder of the threat posed by Al Qaida and other violent extremist groups in North Africa. In the coming days, we will remain in close touch with the Government of Algeria to gain a fuller understanding of what took place so that we can work together to prevent tragedies like this in the future.

Remarks at an Inaugural Reception
January 20, 2013

[*Vice President Joe Biden was introduced by his wife, Jill T. Biden. He then made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Vice President Biden. Ladies and gentlemen, it's my great honor to introduce you to a magnificent, a truly magnificent First Lady, Michelle Obama, and the guy she hangs out with, my friend, President Barack Obama.

Hey, hey. [*Laughter*] I thought you weren't coming out. [*Laughter*] I thought you weren't coming. I thought you'd changed your mind. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. Hi, everybody. Excuse our tardiness. But you know what, when Stevie Wonder has a few words to say to you—[*laughter*]—you don't rush Stevie Wonder. [*Laughter*] So pardon our delay, but thank you. Thanks so much, Jill. Thank you for that kind introduction. But more importantly, thank you for your leadership and service.

I love Joe Biden. I love Jill a little bit more. [*Laughter*] But I want to thank you both for making this journey so much more fun. Our families have bonded, and this has just been a phenomenal 4 years. And I'm ready to do 4 more with both of you.

The President. Four more.

The First Lady. Four more.

And—but most of all, I want to thank all of you here tonight for everything—everything—that you've done to bring this Inauguration to life. This weekend has been such a wonderful celebration for our people and for the future. And we know that none of it could have happened without all of you. And that's why it was so important for all of us to be here and to spend some time with you.

So this weekend, as we look ahead to the next 4 years, we should absolutely take some time to truly enjoy this next few days. Right? I mean, the last one was kind of fast. [*Laughter*] So we've all agreed that we're going to take some time to just breathe in and enjoy it.

But let's also remember that this Inauguration is about more than all of the events that we will all enjoy this weekend. It's about more than swearing in a President. It's about more than what we accomplish together over the next 4 years. It's also about the opportunities we have to make a real difference in people's lives. I mean, the truth is it's about our opportunity to continue to lift up our families, to help more of our children achieve their dreams, and to put our country on a solid foundation not just for these next few years, but for generations to come.

So tonight let us rededicate ourselves to that work. Let us keep building on the progress that we've made. And let's keep working and fighting and pushing forward——

The President. Forward.

The First Lady. Forward.

The President. Forward.

The First Lady. ——forward to make the real changes that's happened.

And that's what this man, my husband, has been doing for these last 4 years. And let me tell you, it has just been a true thrill to watch this handsome, charming—[*laughter*]—individual grow into the man and the President that he is. We have seen him every single day: his integrity, his character, his sense of humor—[*laughter*]—his compassion, his courage. And no matter what the obstacles, we have seen him be so steady facing the challenges that lie ahead and, as always, held true to one unwavering belief, and that is that we love this country and we can all work together to change it.

So, ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinct honor and pleasure to welcome the love of my life and our President for the next 4 years, Barack Obama.

The President. Hello, everybody. Good evening. Now, first of all, I love Michelle Obama. And to address the most significant event of this weekend, I love her bangs. [*Laughter*] She looks good. She always looks good.

You know, as President, you make a lot of important decisions. Probably the most important decision is who is going to be your partner during the course of your Presidency. And there have been some decisions I got right, some maybe folks might question. But one decision I know was absolutely correct, absolutely spot on, was my choice of Vice President. I could not have a better partner than Joe Biden. And Joe Biden couldn't have a better partner than Dr. Jill Biden. We love these folks. Give them a round of applause.

Now, some of you may have heard the story of Andrew Jackson's Inaugural reception. Party-goers got so rowdy, they broke several thousands of dollars' worth of White House china. [*Laughter*] So my first big thank you tonight is to the National Building Museum for hosting us here. [*Laughter*]

I also want to thank the Source for their outstanding entertainment, the U.S. Navy Sea Chanters, and a guy who has been known to make pretty good music, Mr. Stevie Wonder.

I'm delivering another speech tomorrow, so tonight I'm going to be pretty brief, because there are a limited amount of good lines and you don't want to use them all up tonight. [*Laughter*] My main purpose tonight is just to say thank you.

And as I look out on the room, we've got people from every walk of life, every corner and nook and cranny of this country—every State, every city, every suburb—people who have invested so much heart, soul, time, money, energy. One of the things that made this campaign unique was the degree of investment and ownership people had in this common project of ours, because you understood this was not just about a candidate, it was not just about Joe Biden or Barack Obama. This was about us, who we are as a nation, what values we cherish, how hard we're willing to fight to make sure that those values live not just for today, but for future generations.

All of you here understood and were committed to the basic notion that when we put our shoulders to the wheel of history, it moves. [*Applause*] It moves. It moves forward. And that's part of what we celebrate when we come together for Inauguration.

Yesterday Americans in all 50 States took part in a National Day of Service. Tomorrow hundreds of thousands will join us in the National Mall. And what the Inauguration reminds us of is the role we have as fellow citizens in promoting a common good even as we carry out our individual responsibilities: the sense that there's something larger than ourselves that gives shape and meaning to our lives.

The theme of this year's Inauguration is "Our People and Our Future." And throughout my career, what's always given me energy and inspiration and hope, what's allowed me to stand up when I've been knocked down, are folks like you: the decency, the goodness, the resilience, the neighborliness, the patriotism, the sense of duty, the sense of responsibility of the American people. You have inspired me throughout.

And so whenever I think about the challenges that Joe and I and Jill and Michelle face, we know that we stand amongst friends and colleagues and fellow citizens and that the work is not just ours, that we are working together.

So I just want to say thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. And I want all of you to know that even as we celebrate over the next couple of days—and feel free to stay up as late as you want. Tomorrow is not a school night. Make sure to bundle up, although it won't be as cold as it was 4 years ago. [*Laughter*] Make sure you know that what we're celebrating is not the election of or swearing-in of a President; what we're doing is celebrating each other and celebrating this incredible Nation that we call home.

And after we celebrate, let's make sure to work as hard as we can to pass on an America that is worthy not only of our past, but also of our future.

God bless you, guys. I love you. We'll see you tomorrow.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:55 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to musician Stevie Wonder. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the full remarks of Vice President Biden and Mrs. Biden.

Inaugural Address
January 21, 2013

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Vice President Biden, Mr. Chief Justice, Members of the United States Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens:

Each time we gather to inaugurate a President, we bear witness to the enduring strength of our Constitution. We affirm the promise of our democracy. We recall that what binds this Nation together is not the colors of our skin or the tenets of our faith or the origins of our names. What makes us exceptional—what makes us American—is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Today we continue a never-ending journey to bridge the meaning of those words with the realities of our time. For history tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they've never been self-executing; that while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by His people here on Earth. The patriots of 1776 did not fight to replace the tyranny of a king with the privileges of a few or the rule of a mob. They gave to us a republic, a government of and by and for the people, entrusting each generation to keep safe our founding creed.

And for more than 200 years, we have.

Through blood drawn by lash and blood drawn by sword, we learned that no union founded on the principles of liberty and equality could survive half slave and half free. We made ourselves anew, and vowed to move forward together.

Together, we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce, schools and colleges to train our workers.

Together, we discovered that a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure competition and fair play.

Together, we resolved that a great nation must care for the vulnerable and protect its people from life's worst hazards and misfortune.

Through it all, we have never relinquished our skepticism of central authority, nor have we succumbed to the fiction that all society's ills can be cured through government alone. Our celebration of initiative and enterprise, our insistence on hard work and personal responsibility, these are constants in our character.

But we have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action. For the American people can no more meet the demands of today's world by acting alone than American soldiers could have met the forces of fascism or communism with muskets and militias. No single person can train all the math and science teachers we'll need to equip our children for the future, or build the roads and networks and research labs that will bring new jobs and businesses to our shores. Now more than ever, we must do these things together, as one Nation and one people.

This generation of Americans has been tested by crises that steeled our resolve and

proved our resilience. A decade of war is now ending. An economic recovery has begun. America's possibilities are limitless, for we possess all the qualities that this world without boundaries demands: youth and drive, diversity and openness, an endless capacity for risk and a gift for reinvention. My fellow Americans, we are made for this moment and we will seize it—so long as we seize it together.

For we, the people, understand that our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do very well and a growing many barely make it. We believe that America's prosperity must rest upon the broad shoulders of a rising middle class. We know that America thrives when every person can find independence and pride in their work; when the wages of honest labor liberate families from the brink of hardship. We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else, because she is an American; she is free and she is equal, not just in the eyes of God, but also in our own.

We understand that outworn programs are inadequate to the needs of our time. So we must harness new ideas and technology to remake our Government, revamp our Tax Code, reform our schools, and empower our citizens with the skills they need to work harder, learn more, reach higher. But while the means will change, our purpose endures: a nation that rewards the effort and determination of every single American. That is what this moment requires. That is what will give real meaning to our creed.

We, the people, still believe that every citizen deserves a basic measure of security and dignity. We must make the hard choices to reduce the cost of health care and the size of our deficit. But we reject the belief that America must choose between caring for the generation that built this country and investing in the generation that will build its future. For we remember the lessons of our past, when twilight years were spent in poverty and parents of a child with a disability had nowhere to turn.

We do not believe that in this country freedom is reserved for the lucky, or happiness for the few. We recognize that no matter how responsibly we live our lives, any one of us at any time may face a job loss or a sudden illness or a home swept away in a terrible storm. The commitments we make to each other through Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security, these things do not sap our initiative, they strengthen us. They do not make us a nation of takers, they free us to take the risks that make this country great.

We, the people, still believe that our obligations as Americans are not just to ourselves, but to all posterity. We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations. Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science, but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires and crippling drought and more powerful storms.

The path towards sustainable energy sources will be long and sometimes difficult. But America cannot resist this transition, we must lead it. We cannot cede to other nations the technology that will power new jobs and new industries, we must claim its promise. That's how we will maintain our economic vitality and our national treasure—our forests and waterways, our crop lands and snow-capped peaks. That is how we will preserve our planet, commanded to our care by God. That's what will lend meaning to the creed our fathers once declared.

We, the people, still believe that enduring security and lasting peace do not require perpetual war. Our brave men and women in uniform, tempered by the flames of battle, are unmatched in skill and courage. Our citizens, seared by the memory of those we have lost, know too well the price that is paid for liberty. The knowledge of their sacrifice will keep us forever vigilant against those who would do us harm. But we are also heirs to those who won the peace and not just the war, who turned sworn enemies into the surest of friends. And we must carry those lessons into this time as well.

We will defend our people and uphold our values through strength of arms and rule of law. We will show the courage to try and re-

solve our differences with other nations peacefully, not because we are naive about the dangers we face, but because engagement can more durably lift suspicion and fear.

America will remain the anchor of strong alliances in every corner of the globe. And we will renew those institutions that extend our capacity to manage crisis abroad, for no one has a greater stake in a peaceful world than its most powerful nation. We will support democracy from Asia to Africa, from the Americas to the Middle East, because our interests and our conscience compel us to act on behalf of those who long for freedom. And we must be a source of hope to the poor, the sick, the marginalized, the victims of prejudice, not out of mere charity, but because peace in our time requires the constant advance of those principles that our common creed describes: tolerance and opportunity, human dignity and justice.

We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths—that all of us are created equal—is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls and Selma and Stonewall; just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth.

It is now our generation's task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts. Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law, for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. Our journey is not complete until no citizen is forced to wait for hours to exercise the right to vote. Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as a land of opportunity, until bright young students and engineers are enlisted in our workforce rather than expelled from our country. Our journey is not complete until all our children, from the streets of Detroit to the hills of Appalachia, to the quiet lanes of Newtown, know that they are cared for and cherished and always safe from harm.

That is our generation's task: to make these words, these rights, these values of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness real for every American. Being true to our founding documents does not require us to agree on every contour of life. It does not mean we all define liberty in exactly the same way or follow the same precise path to happiness. Progress does not compel us to settle centuries-long debates about the role of government for all time, but it does require us to act in our time.

For now decisions are upon us, and we cannot afford delay. We cannot mistake absolutism for principle or substitute spectacle for politics or treat name-calling as reasoned debate. We must act. We must act, knowing that our work will be imperfect. We must act, knowing that today's victories will be only partial and that it will be up to those who stand here in 4 years and 40 years and 400 years hence to advance the timeless spirit once conferred to us in a spare Philadelphia hall.

My fellow Americans, the oath I have sworn before you today, like the one recited by others who serve in this Capitol, was an oath to God and country, not party or faction. And we must faithfully execute that pledge during the duration of our service. But the words I spoke today are not so different from the oath that is taken each time a soldier signs up for duty or an immigrant realizes her dream. My oath is not so different from the pledge we all make to the flag that waves above and that fills our hearts with pride.

They are the words of citizens, and they represent our greatest hope. You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country's course. You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time, not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals.

Let us, each of us, now embrace with solemn duty and awesome joy what is our lasting birthright. With common effort and common

purpose, with passion and dedication, let us answer the call of history and carry into an uncertain future that precious light of freedom.

Thank you. God bless you, and may He forever bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. Prior to the address, Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts, Jr., administered the oath of office.

Remarks at an Inaugural Luncheon
January 21, 2013

Senator Charles E. Schumer. Mr. President, Dr. Biden, and your whole wonderful family, I now rise to toast the Vice President of the United States and my former colleague and my friend, Joe Biden.

Mr. Vice President, you've been an extraordinary leader of this Nation and a true partner to our President these past 4 years. You play many roles: adviser, advocate, implementer, persuader, strategist, and most important of all, friend. We're confident this unique partnership between you and our great President will only grow stronger and more productive over the next 4 years.

Mr. Vice President, on the surface, we don't share a common ancestry, but on a deeper level, we do share a common story, an American story, of achieving our dreams thanks to the sacrifice of our immigrant forebears.

As you embark on your well-deserved second term, in the spirit of those who came before us, and on behalf of all Americans, we offer you all our support and warmest wishes, and we say to you, *Slainte*, *l'chaim*, *salud*, *cent'anni,* and cheers. To our great Vice President.

[*At this point, Sen. Schumer offered a toast*.]

Vice President Joe Biden. Mr. President, and to all the Presidents assembled: I always enjoyed this lunch more than anything we did in the Capitol. For the 36 years I served in the Senate, I had the great honor of being included in this lunch of former Presidents and Vice Presidents and—because it really is the place where we get together in a way unlike any other time when we gather. It's always a new beginning every time we're in this room. And there's a sense of possibilities and a sense of opportunity and a sense—sometimes it's fleeting—but a sense that maybe we can really, really begin to work together.

And, Chuck, we may come from different ancestries, but as all our colleagues know over the years, we're cut from the same cloth: that we share that same common, absolute conviction that was expressed by Harry Truman when he said: "America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination, and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand."

That's what you've done throughout your career, and that's what almost everyone in this room has done. At the end of the day, it's an absolute confidence—absolute confidence—there's not a thing, a single thing, this country can't do.

I spent too much time with all of you not to know you feel it with every fiber in your being that there's nothing—nothing—this country is incapable of.

I must say, the President kids me occasionally—I know Harry Reid always calls me a Senate man. I am proud to have been a Senate man. I am proud to be President of the Senate. But that pride is exceeded only by the fact I'm proud to be Vice President of the United States, serving as Barack Obama's Vice President. It's been one of the great privileges—[*applause*]—one of the great privileges of my life.

As a matter of fact, if the President will forgive me, as we were walking out and he was, as he said, savoring the moment, looking out at the crowd and all those Americans assembled, I found myself—surprised me, even—I turned to him saying, thank you. Thanks. Thanks for the chance. Thanks for the chance to continue to serve.

And so, folks, I raise my glass to a man who never, never, never operates out of fear, only operates out of confidence—and I'm toasting you, Chuck. [*Laughter*] And a guy who I plan on working with—you can't get rid of me, man. Remember, I'm still part of the Senate. [*Laughter*]

God bless you, Chuck. You've done a great job. And, Lamar, you have as well. To Chuck Schumer. Good to see you, pal.

[*Vice President Biden offered a toast.*]

Sen. Schumer. The best parts of these events are unscripted. [*Laughter*]

I'd now like to introduce our Senate Majority Leader, my good friend and, really, foxhole buddy, a great man, Harry Reid, to offer the official toast to the President.

Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid. Americans today are wishing the President Godspeed for the next 4 years. People all over the world are looking at us, and our exemplary democracy, and wishing the President the best in the years to come.

I've had the good fortune for the last many years to work on a very close, personal basis with President Obama. I've watched him in the most difficult challenges that a person could face. I've watched him do this with brilliance, with patience, with courage, wisdom, and kindness, for which I have learned a great deal.

So, Mr. President, I toast and pray for you, your wonderful family, and our great country: Four more successful years.

Barack Obama.

[*Sen. Schumer offered a toast.*]

The President. Michelle and the Speaker of the House came to a meeting of the minds that I may be delaying the proceedings too much. And so I'm just going to be extraordinarily brief and say thank you: to my Vice President, who has not only been an extraordinary partner, but an extraordinary friend, and to Dr. Jill Biden, who has partnered with my wife with an extraordinary generosity on behalf of our men and women in uniform.

To the entire Cabinet that is here, I am grateful to you. Some of you are staying, and some of you are leaving, but I know the extraordinary sacrifices that you and my team have made to try to advance the cause of progress in this country, and I'm always going to be grateful to you for that.

To the Speaker of the House and Nancy Pelosi, to Democratic Leader Harry Reid, as well as Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, and to all the congressional leaders and all the Members of Congress who are here: I recognize that democracy is not always easy, and I recognize there are profound differences in this room, but I just want to say thank you for your service, and I want to thank your families for their service, because regardless of our political persuasions and perspectives, I know that all of us serve because we believe that we can make America for future generations.

And I'm confident that we can act at this moment in a way that makes a difference for our children and our children's children. I know that former President Carter, President Clinton, they understand the irony of the Presidential office, which is, the longer you're there the more humble you become and the more mindful you are that it is beyond your poor powers individually to move this great country. You can only do it because you have extraordinary partners and a spirit of good will, and most of all, because of the strength and resilience and fundamental goodness of the American people.

And so I would like to join all of you not only in toasting the extraordinary work that Chuck Schumer and Lamar Alexander and others have done to create this special day for us, but I also want to thank each and every one of you for not only your service in the past, but hopefully, your service in the future as well.

And I would like to offer one last toast, and that is to my extraordinary wife Michelle. There is controversy about the quality of the President, no controversy about the quality of our current First Lady. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, everybody. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. in the National Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Biden; and Sens. Charles E. Schumer, chairman, and Lamar Alexander, ranking member, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, in their capacity as members of the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies. The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Commander in Chief Ball
January 21, 2013

The President. Let me begin by just saying you all dress up pretty nice. I hope everybody is having a wonderful time. Now, those of you who are in uniform, you look outstanding. Your dates do look better though. I just want to point this out. [*Laughter*]

Now, I'm not going to give a long speech. What I really want to do is come down and express the extraordinary gratitude not just of me as your Commander in Chief, but more importantly, the thanks of all the American people.

I want to start by thanking some of our outstanding leaders who are here: our hosts, our senior enlisted advisers from all five branches of our military. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Marty Dempsey, who promised to sing sometime tonight, so you should hold him to it. [*Laughter*] The Vice Chairman, Sandy Winnefeld, and all our outstanding members of the Joint Chiefs. Our Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Vietnam veteran, Ric Shinseki, who is here.

And we're honored to be joined by some truly extraordinary Americans, our wounded warriors, who inspire us with their incredible strength and resolve. Our enlisted men and women and junior officers: the backbone of our military. Our amazing military families, including the families of the fallen—our Gold Star families—we will stand with you always.

The members of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen in the house. And the recipients of our Nation's highest military decoration—the Medal of Honor—we are honored by your presence.

Today we experienced the majesty of our democracy, a ritual only possible in a form of government that is of and by and for the people, a day made possible because there are patriots like each and every one of you who defend our freedom every single day.

So this little party is just another way to say something we can never say enough: thank you. Thank you for volunteering. Thank you for stepping up. Thank you for keeping us strong. Thank you for always making us proud. I have no greater honor than being your Commander in Chief.

It's because of you that, with honor, we were able to end the war in Iraq, because of you that we delivered justice to Usama bin Laden, because of you that it's even possible to give Afghans a chance to determine their own destiny. We are going forward, and we'll keep our military the finest fighting force that the world has ever known.

Now, tonight we're also joined by some of our servicemembers in Afghanistan. They can't see us, but we can see them on this monitor.

Who we got there? General, are you there? Abe?

Major General Robert B. "Abe" Abrams, USA. Sir, good evening. Mr. President, congratulations on your Inauguration. It is Major General Abrams, commanding general of the 3d Infantry Division and Regional Command–South. We're honored to be able to join you there this evening.

Sir, I'm joined tonight by some fantastic airmen and noncommissioned officers and soldiers serving here in Kandahar.

Sergeant First Class Orlando Jackson, USA. Congratulations, Mr. President. Sergeant First Class Orlando Jackson from Lake Charles, Louisiana, 3d Infantry Division, Falcon Brigade, Task Force Light Horse. I just wanted to congratulate you on a job well done.

Master Sergeant Robert Skowronski, USAF. Mr. President, Master Sergeant Robert Skow-

ronski, superintendent, 807th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron, hailing from Detroit, Michigan. I want to say, go Tigers!

Sergeant First Class David Wood, USA. Good evening, Mr. President. My name is Sergeant First Class David Wood. I'm out of Monument, Colorado, 3d Infantry Division, Falcon Brigade, Task Force Light Horse. Thank you very much for having us here at your party. Congratulations.

Master Sergeant James Godlewski, USAF. Good evening, Mr. President. Master Sergeant James Godlewski. I'm the operations superintendent, the 807th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron and the world's greatest Air Force. I want to say congratulations on tonight. And you guys have a blessed evening.

Maj. Gen. Abrams. Mr. President, we're honored to be able to join you tonight. And we've got one more thing for all of you there: Rock of the Marne!

The President. [*Laughter*] Well, listen, to all of you who are there, we know it's tough being away from your families. We know the incredible sacrifices and challenges that you meet every single day. But I can tell you that you've got a room full of patriots here. And although I've got to admit that they're a little spiffied up right now—[*laughter*]—their heart and soul, their dedication, their sense of duty is at one with every single one of the folks who are in Kandahar right now.

And I want you to know that when I was standing on the steps of the Capitol today, looking out over close to a million people, the single biggest cheer that I always get—and today was no different at my Inauguration—was when I spoke about the extraordinary men and women in uniform that preserve our freedom and keep our country strong. So know that every single day we are thinking of you.

We're going to make sure that you've got the equipment, the strategy, the mission that allows you to succeed and keep our country safe. Know that we are going to be looking after and thinking about your families every single day and that when you get back home, you're going to be greeted by a grateful nation and that you will be on our minds tonight and every single night until our mission in Afghanistan is completed.

Can everybody please give our comrades-in-arms a huge round of applause? And please, all of you give our very best to your families back home, because I know it's just as tough, if not tougher, for them to see you in harm's way and away from the family. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

Now, there's one last thing I've got to do. I've got a date with me here. She inspires me every day. She makes me a better man and a better President. The fact that she is so devoted to taking care of our troops and our military families is just one more sign of her extraordinary love and grace and strength. I'm just lucky to have her.

I said today at the lunch over at the Congress that some may dispute the quality of our President, but nobody disputes the quality of our First Lady.

Ladies and gentlemen, my better half and my dance partner, Michelle Obama.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:48 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to SMMC Michael P. Barrett, USMC; SMA Raymond F. Chandler III, USA; MCPOCG Michael P. Leavitt, USCG; CMSAF James A. Roy, USAF; MCPON Michael D. Stevens, USN; and former Tuskegee Airmen Homer Hogues, Clayton Lawrence, Ezra Hill, and Grant Williams.

Statement on the 40th Anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*
January 22, 2013

On the 40th anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade*, we reaffirm its historic commitment to protect the health and reproductive freedom of women across this country and stand by its guiding principle: that government should not intrude on our most private family matters and women should be able to make their own choices about their bodies and their health care. Today and every day, my administration continues our efforts to reduce unintended pregnancies, support maternal and child health, and minimize the need for abortion. On this anniversary, we recommit ourselves to supporting women and families in the choices they make and redouble our efforts to promote safe and healthy communities.

Statement on the Resignation of Ronald Kirk as United States Trade Representative
January 22, 2013

I want to thank Ambassador Kirk for his hard work on behalf of the American people over the past 4 years. There's no question Ron delivered results for the American people and for our economy. From bringing home new trade agreements with Korea, Colombia, and Panama and negotiating to open up new markets for American businesses, to cracking down on unfair trade practices around the world, he has been a tremendous advocate for the American worker. As a former mayor, Ron was relentless in making the case to the American public that a balanced, thoughtful trade policy can contribute to a stronger economic future for America. I appreciate his service and wish him the best of luck.

Remarks at the Staff Inaugural Ball
January 22, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! You all clean up pretty good. You are looking good.

Couple of acknowledgements I want to make. First of all, please give it up for DJ Mel Sandico. The U.S. Army Band is in the house. We're so proud; they can play anything, anything. Go ahead and make a request; they'll play it. They are outstanding. And we are so grateful for their service to our country each and every day.

Now, this is just a little gathering, little party, among friends. Represented here are our outstanding OFA staff and volunteers; our amazing PIC, that would be Presidential Inaugural Committee team.

The First Lady. This has been a great Inauguration. They've done a great job.

The President. Michelle just said this has been a great Inauguration, and you've done a great job.

We've got the DNC convention team that did an amazing job. We've got the DNC team that did an amazing job. And we've got the White House team, which is pretty good. They did an amazing job.

Audience member. And you!

The President. I'm here too, that's true. And the First Lady of the United States, bangs and all, looking very sparkly and twinkly. [*Laughter*] Now, I'm not going to speak long, mainly because I've been speaking a lot and you all have heard me before.

The First Lady. And the entertainment is pretty good.

The President. And more importantly, we've got a couple of people who are pretty good musicians named Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett in the house. This is like my—Michelle is like doing interpretive dance of everything I say. It's been a long weekend; she's getting a little silly now. [*Laughter*]

But my main job here tonight is real simple, and it's just to say thank you. Some of you were involved the very first time I ran, back in 2007, 2008. Some of you were 14 at the time and so just got involved this time out. You know who you are.

The First Lady. That's right.

The President. But regardless of whether you got involved 6 years ago or you got involved 6 months ago, what is true is that all of you have come to represent for me and Michelle our deepest hopes for America. The average age here is probably around 20-something, and that's only because I'm here, which brings the average age up quite a bit. But when I think about traveling around the country during the course of the campaign and getting to know some of you and meeting some of you and seeing the work you do in the White House—or the work that you did during the convention—and I meet young people who are so much smarter and more thoughtful and more caring about the future than I ever was at your age, so much more capable, so much more serious, so much more poised, it makes me know that America's future is in good hands.

As long as all of you understand the immense and incredible power that you possess when you work together, when you join voices, when you extend yourselves not just on behalf of your own ambitions, but on behalf of a larger cause, you cannot be stopped. And part of the reason I know that America will succeed is when I look at how you work together. What I saw in offices from Vegas to Richmond, to Colorado Springs, to Manchester, New Hampshire, to Orlando, Florida, it didn't matter—[*applause*]. It didn't matter where I was. I'd walk into a volunteer office, and what you saw was people from every walk of life: Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, young, gay, straight. It didn't matter where you came from. You came together with a mission in mind and a vision in mind. And you were willing to set aside whatever surface differences you had because you understood you were working on behalf of an America that was a little more just and a little more fair and a little more compassionate, and better stewards for our environment.

And seeing that kind of spirit operate day in, day out—no matter how hard the work, no matter how little you got paid, no matter how bad your candidate screwed up, it didn't matter, you just kept on going. And there were times during the course of this year where I might have gotten down, but you picked me back up. You lifted me up on your shoulders. And you said, yeah, we know he's gotten kind of old and gray haired and we know sometimes he stumbles, but we are going to carry him across the finish line. Because this is not about him, this is about us. This is about America. This is about what we believe. This is about what our values are. This is what our ideals are all about. We are going to go out there and change America. That's what you did every single day. And so this weekend belonged to you—to you.

So my final message—because I'm already breaking my promise, I said I wasn't going to talk long—is to say that you can't stop now. I know some of you got to go back to school. I know some of your parents are all like, okay, you did your own little thing, but now you've got to go back and get your degree. I know some of you've got some rent to pay, so you've got to——

The First Lady. Some loans.

The President. ——get some loans to repay. You may be making a whole range of career choices and decisions right now. And look, not all of you will end up staying in politics. Not all of you will end up pursuing professionally public service. But every single one of you, in your communities, in your neighborhoods, in your workplaces, wherever you decide to put down roots, wherever you decide to make a difference, as long as you retain that spirit that you've shown during the course of these campaigns—the idea that you're a citizen, that

America only works when you make it work, that you have the power to move this country and, as a consequence, the world—if you retain that sense and never lose it, then I tell you, not only is America going to be in good hands, but what's going to happen is you're going to influence your peers and your friends and the folks you live next to and your neighbors and people in your workplace. And suddenly, like Robert Kennedy described, you're like a stone thrown in a pool, and it starts rippling out. And you don't know where those ripples are going to go, and that's the future that I see for you.

I know that every single person here donated $10 to a memorial on behalf of Alex Okrent Memorial. And Alex was one of you: this incredibly thoughtful, talented, compassionate, caring young person, who decided to get involved because he thought he could make a difference. And tragically, he ended up leaving us while working in the campaign. Some of the people here were there when it happened. And it was heartbreaking, and it reminded us of how precious our time on this Earth is.

We don't have a lot of time. I know when you're young it seems like it goes on forever. It turns out things are fragile. And yet the thing that outlives each of us is what we do for somebody else, what difference did we make. And we know Alex made a difference. And so his impact outlives him. And that means——

*Audience member*s. [*Inaudible*]

The President. That's all right. Somebody is over there, and they've probably fainted because they've been standing too long. Many of you have been at rallies—there's one over here. We've got EMS folks here. People, bend your knees while you're here. [*Laughter*] And try to get hydrated as well.

The First Lady. You know, you've got to drink some water!

The President. Drink water is what I mean. Juice is okay too. [*Laughter*]

But in the same way that Alex left this indelible mark on my life and Michelle's life and many of your lives, you will leave an indelible mark as well, as long as you decide that you're going to spend your life giving something back.

You've already given me an incredible gift. You've given America an incredible gift. Don't stop. Keep on going. Don't stop. Stay fired up. Are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. I think Lady Gaga is fired up too.

God bless you, guys! I love you! Thank you! God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to musician Stefani J.A. "Lady Gaga" Germanotta; and Alex S. Okrent, an Obama for America staff member who died on July 13, 2012, while working at campaign headquarters in Chicago, IL. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 23. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks on the Nomination of Mary Jo White To Be Chair of the Security and Exchange Commission and the Renomination of Richard A. Cordray To Be Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

January 24, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Over the last 4 years, I've talked about how shared prosperity from Wall Street to Main Street depends on smart, commonsense regulations that protect the vast majority of Americans from the irresponsible actions of a few.

That's why we passed tough reforms to protect consumers and our financial system from the kinds of abuse that nearly brought the economy to its knees. Today, there are rules to help families—responsible families buy a home or send their child to college without worrying about being tricked out of their life savings. There are rules to make sure that financial firms which do the right thing aren't undermined by those that don't do the right thing. And there are rules to end taxpayer-funded Wall Street bailouts once and for all.

But it's not enough to change the law. We also need cops on the beat to enforce the law. And that's why today I am nominating Mary Jo White to lead the Security and Exchange Commission and Richard Cordray to continue leading the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

This guy is bothering me here——

[*At this point, the President swatted at a fly.*]

As a young girl, Mary Jo White was a big fan of the Hardy Boys. I was too, by the way.

Chair-designate White. Good. Good.

The President. Yes. As an adult, she's built a career the Hardy Boys could only dream of. Over a decade as a U.S. attorney in New York, she helped prosecute white-collar criminals and money launderers. In the early 1990s, she brought down John Gotti, the head of the Gambino crime syndicate. And she brought to justice the terrorists responsible for bombing the World Trade Center and the American Embassies in Africa. So I'd say that's a pretty good run. You don't want to mess with Mary Jo.

As one former SEC Chairman said, Mary Jo "does not intimidate easily." And that's important, because she has a big job ahead of her. The SEC played a critical role in protecting our financial system during the worst of the financial crisis. But there's much more work to be done to complete the task of reforming Wall Street and making sure that American investors are better informed and better protected going forward. And we need to keep going after irresponsible behavior in the financial industry so that taxpayers don't pay the price.

I am absolutely confident that Mary Jo has the experience and the resolve to tackle these complex issues and protect the American people in a way that is smart and in a way that is fair.

And I want to thank Elisse Walter, who has done an outstanding job holding down the fort as Chairwoman. And I expect the Senate to confirm Mary Jo as soon as possible so she can get to work.

My second nominee is a familiar face. A year and a half ago, I nominated Richard Cordray to lead the watchdog agency we created to give Americans the information they need to make sound financial choices and protect them from unscrupulous lenders and debt collectors.

As a former attorney general of Ohio with a long record of working with Democrats and Republicans on behalf of the American people, nobody questioned Richard's qualifications. But he wasn't allowed an up-or-down vote in the Senate, and as a consequence, I took action to appoint him on my own. And over the last year, Richard has proved to be a champion of American consumers.

Thanks to his leadership, we've made it tougher for families to be tricked into mortgages they can't afford. We've set clearer rules so that responsible lenders know how to operate fairly. We've launched a "Know Before You Owe" campaign to help parents and students make smart decisions about paying for college. We've cracked down on credit card companies that charge hidden fees and forced those companies to make things right. And through it all, Richard has earned a reputation as a straight shooter and somebody who's willing to bring every voice to the table in order to do what's right for consumers and our economy.

Now, Richard's appointment runs out at the end of the year, and he can't stay on the job unless the Senate finally gives him the vote that he deserves. Financial institutions have plenty of lobbyists looking out for their interests. The American people need Richard to keep standing up for them, and there's absolutely no excuse for the Senate to wait any longer to confirm him.

So I want to thank Mary Jo, Richard, and their families once again for agreeing to serve. And now I'd like to invite them to say a few words, starting with Mary Jo.

Chair-designate White. [*Inaudible*] Thank you, Mr. President, for the confidence that you have placed in me and the faith that you've shown in me by nominating me to be the next Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission. I'm deeply, deeply honored.

If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to committing all of my energies to working with my fellow commissioners and the extremely dedicated and talented men and women of the staff of the SEC to fulfill the agency's mission to protect investors and to ensure the strength, efficiency, and the transparency of our capital markets.

The SEC, long a vital and positive force for the markets, has a lot of hard and important work ahead of it. I would welcome the opportunity to lead those efforts and to build on the work of Chairman Mary Schapiro and Chairman Elisse Walter, who I'm very honored is present today.

And finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my husband John White, who is here today, on what is our 43d wedding anniversary——

The President. Today?

Chair-designate White. Today—for his strong support of me in seeking to engage in this very significant and challenging public service.

Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you. Richard.

Director Cordray. Thank you, Mr. President, for the confidence you've placed in me and our team at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. We understand that our mission is to stand on the side of consumers—our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters—and see that they're treated fairly.

For more than a year, we've been focused on making consumer finance markets work better for the American people. We approach this work with open minds, open ears, and great determination.

We all thank you and the Congress for the opportunity and the honor to serve our country in this important way. Thank you.

The President. Well, I just want to thank again Mary Jo and Richard for their willingness to serve. These are people with proven track records. They are going to look out for the American people, for American consumers, and make sure that our marketplace works better: more transparently, more efficiently, more effectively. So I again would urge the Senate to confirm both of them as quickly as possible.

And I also want to express congratulations to the Whites for their anniversary. If I had known, we would have maybe rolled out a cake or something. [*Laughter*] But have fun.

Chair-designate White. Thank you.

The President. I hope you enjoy it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Statement on the Opening of United States Armed Forces Combat Units to Women

January 24, 2013

Today, by moving to open more military positions—including ground combat units—to women, our Armed Forces have taken another historic step toward harnessing the talents and skills of all our citizens. This milestone reflects the courageous and patriotic service of women through more than two centuries of American history and the indispensable role of women in today's military. Many have made the ultimate sacrifice, including more than 150 women who have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan: patriots whose sacrifices show that valor knows no gender.

Earlier today I called Secretary of Defense Panetta to express my strong support for this decision, which will strengthen our military,

enhance our readiness, and be another step toward fulfilling our Nation's founding ideals of fairness and equality. I congratulate our military, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the rigor that they have brought to this process. As Commander in Chief, I am absolutely confident that—as with the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell"—the professionalism of our Armed Forces will ensure a smooth transition and keep our military the very best in the world. Today every American can be proud that our military will grow even stronger with our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters playing a greater role in protecting this country we love.

Statement on Procedural Rule Changes in the Senate
January 24, 2013

In my State of the Union last year, I urged Congress to take steps to fix the way they do business. Specifically, I asked them to address the fact that a simple majority is no longer enough to pass anything—even routine business—through the Senate. And today I am pleased that a bipartisan group of Senators has agreed to take action.

Too often over the past 4 years, a single Senator or a handful of Senators has been able to unilaterally block or delay bipartisan legislation for the sole purpose of making a political point. At a time when we face critical decisions on a whole range of issues—from preventing further gun violence, to reforming our broken immigration system, to getting our fiscal house in order and creating good-paying jobs—we cannot afford unnecessary obstruction. And I am hopeful that today's bipartisan agreement will pave the way for the Senate to take meaningful action in the days and weeks ahead.

I also want to thank leaders in Congress for changing the Senate rules in an effort to resurrect the longstanding tradition of considering consensus district court judicial nominations on a more routine basis. After being approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee, my judicial nominees have waited more than three times longer to receive confirmation votes than those of my predecessor, even though the overwhelming majority of my nominees have been confirmed with little, if any, dissent. These months of unnecessary delay have threatened our judiciary. Today's reforms are a positive step towards a fairer and more efficient system of considering district court nominees, and I urge the Senate to treat all of my judicial nominees in the same spirit.

Remarks on the Appointment of Denis R. McDonough as White House Chief of Staff
January 25, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the announcement of one of the worst kept secrets in Washington. [*Laughter*]

As President, I rely on an extraordinary team of men and women here at the White House every single day. And I rely on my Chief of Staff to keep up with them—and our entire Government—making sure that we're all moving in the same direction, making sure that my priorities are being carried out and that our policies are consistent with the commitments that I've made to the American people, and that we're delivering progress to the American people. As I said earlier this month, I could not be more grateful to Jack Lew for his amazing service, first as our OMB Director, then at the State Department, and ultimately, as my Chief of Staff.

As he prepares for his confirmation hearings and the challenge of leading our Treasury Department, I am pleased to announce my next Chief of Staff, and a great friend to me and everybody who works here at the White House, Mr. Denis McDonough.

Now, I have been counting on Denis for nearly a decade, since I first came to

Washington, when he helped set up my Senate office. Along with Pete Rouse, he was able to show me where the restrooms were and how you passed a bill. [*Laughter*] I should point out that even then, Denis had gray hair. [*Laughter*] I've been trying to catch up to him. [*Laughter*] But at that time, I relied on his intellect and his good judgment, and that has continued ever since. He's been one of my closest and most trusted advisers, on my Presidential campaign, on my transition team.

He has been an indispensable member of my national security team as well. Denis has played a key role in every major national security decision of my Presidency, from ending the war in Iraq to winding down the war in Afghanistan, from our response to natural disasters around the world like Haiti and the tsunami in Japan, to the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," to countless crises in between, day and night—and that includes many nights. I've actually begun to think that Denis likes pulling all-nighters. [*Laughter*] The truth is, nobody outworks Denis McDonough.

And part of the reason you saw such warmth of applause is that, in addition to being an incredible talent and such a hard worker, Denis is also a pretty humble guy. To so many of his friends and admirers, he's still just the dude from Stillwater, Minnesota. [*Laughter*] And given his humility, I don't think people always appreciate the breadth of his experience and the range of his talents. And it's precisely because of that intellect, that experience, his dedication, his determination, that I wanted Denis in this job.

As a veteran of Capitol Hill, where he was mentored by the likes of Lee Hamilton and Tom Daschle, Denis understands the importance of reaching across the aisle to deliver results for the American people, whether it's on jobs and the economy, health care or education, reducing the deficit or addressing climate change.

Denis is respected by leaders across our Government. Add it all up, and I think he's spent most of the past 4 years leading interagency meetings: hearing people out, listening to them, forging consensus, and then making sure that our policies are implemented and that everybody is held accountable. And he always holds himself accountable first and foremost. And it's no easy task, but through it all, Denis does it with class and integrity and thoughtfulness for other people's point of views. He is the consummate public servant. He plays it straight. And that's the kind of teamwork that I want in the White House.

Time and again, I've relied on Denis to help in our outreach to the American people as well, including immigrant and minority communities and faith communities. Denis is a man of deep faith, and he understands that in the end, our policies and our programs are measured in the concrete differences that they make in the lives of our fellow human beings and in the values that we advance as Americans.

Denis insists on knowing for himself the real-world impact of the decisions that we make. So, away from the cameras, without a lot of fanfare, he's visited our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan repeatedly, hearing their concerns, finding out what they need, and then making sure to follow up. He travels to Walter Reed—again, without fanfare—to spend time with our wounded warriors, getting to know them and what we as a nation can do to take care of them and their families. And then, he comes back here to the White House, and he gets it done. And that's the kind of focus, but also the kind of heart, that I want in this White House.

Now, don't get me wrong, Denis can be tough. It probably comes from being one of eleven children: You've got to be tough. [*Laughter*] Two of his sisters are here today, by the way, Mary and Anna. And I know they could—they're just beaming. [*Laughter*] They could not be more proud of their brother. Maybe it comes from his college football days as defensive back under the legendary John Gagliardi. I always tease Denis that he made up for modest talents with extraordinary dedication and a high threshold for pain. [*Laughter*] This does remind me of perhaps the one topic on which Denis and I will never agree, and that is Vikings versus Bears.

There's another reason we all love Denis so much, and that's his decency, his respect for those around him. Ask any of the staff who are here today, and they'll tell you that despite the unbelievable pressures of service at this level, Denis is still the first to think about a colleague or to write a handwritten note saying thank you or to ask about your family. That's the spirit that I want in this White House.

And this, of course, is reflected in his incredible love for his own family. Kari, Addie, Liam, Teddy, I know that Dad has been at work a lot during the week and on weekends, but—and I guarantee he'd much rather be with you than with me. [*Laughter*] The next job that he's going to have is going to be demanding too, but the one reason he does this is because he wants to make sure that this world is a better place for all of you. Dad will probably have to stop riding his bike to work. As Chief of Staff, I don't think that's allowed. [*Laughter*] But he does what he does because he cares and loves you guys so much and he wants to make sure that the next generation is inheriting the kind of America that we all want. So I'm grateful to the entire McDonough family for putting up with us.

Denis, you're not just one of my closest friends, but you're also one of my closest advisers, and like everybody here, I cannot imagine the White House without you. Thank you for signing up for this very, very difficult job, as Jack Lew will testify. [*Laughter*] I know you'll always give it to me straight, as only a friend can, telling me not only what I want to hear, but more importantly, what I need to hear to make the best possible decisions on behalf of the American people.

So for me, for Michelle, for all your friends and colleagues who are here today, thank you for taking this assignment. Congratulations.

I just have one other thing to add. We made a number of personnel announcements today. There is going to be an incredible team that Denis will help lead. But I thought I'd take the occasion to just embarrass somebody. Some of you may know that today is David Plouffe's last day in the White House. [*Laughter*] I had to hide this in the end of my remarks because I knew he wouldn't want me to bring it up. So we had some secret squirrel stuff going on here to—[*laughter*]—avoid him thinking that we were going to talk about him.

But as many of you know, David has been with me from the very start of this enterprise running for President. I can't tell you how lucky I have been to have him manage our campaign back in 2008, then join the White House during these very challenging last 2 years. He's built a well-deserved reputation as being a numbers genius and a pretty tough combatant when it comes to politics. But what people don't always realize, because he doesn't like to show it, is the reason he does this stuff is because he cares deeply about people. And he cares about justice, and he cares about making sure that everybody gets a shot in life. And those values have motivated him to do incredible things, and were it not for him, we would not have been as effective a White House and I probably wouldn't be here.

So I thought it was worthwhile for us just to say, even if he doesn't want us to say it, thank you to David Plouffe for his—[*inaudible*].

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Rep. Lee H. Hamilton; former Sen. Thomas A. Daschle; John P. Gagliardi, former head football coach, Saint John's University; and Kari McDonough, wife of Chief of Staff McDonough, and their children Addie, Liam, and Teddy.

Statement on the Resignation of Christopher P. Lu as Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary
January 25, 2013

Chris Lu is one of my longest serving and closest advisors, first crafting my legislative agenda in the Senate, then leading my Presidential transition, and most recently, managing my relations with the Cabinet. Through his dedication and tireless efforts, Chris has overseen one of the most stable and effective Cabinets in history, a Cabinet that has produced extraordinary accomplishments over the past 4 years. For that reason, I have asked Chris to consider other opportunities to serve in my administration, and after he enjoys some time off, I hope he will consider those opportunities. I know I speak on behalf of the entire Cabinet in thanking Chris for his friendship and exceptional service to our Nation.

The President's Weekly Address
January 26, 2013

Hi, everybody. Here in America, we know the free market is the greatest force for economic progress the world has ever known. But we also know the free market works best for everybody when we have smart, commonsense rules in place to prevent irresponsible behavior.

That's why we passed tough reforms to protect consumers and our financial system from the kind of abuse that nearly brought our economy to its knees. And that's why we've taken steps to end taxpayer-funded bailouts and make sure businesses and individuals who do the right thing aren't undermined by those who don't.

But it's not enough to change the law, we also need cops on the beat to enforce the law. And that's why, on Thursday, I nominated Mary Jo White to lead the Securities and Exchange Commission and Richard Cordray to continue leading the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Mary Jo White has decades of experience cracking down on white-collar criminals and bringing mobsters and terrorists to justice. At the SEC, she will help complete the task of reforming Wall Street and keep going after irresponsible behavior in the financial industry so that taxpayers don't pay the price.

Richard Cordray is a champion for American consumers. After the Senate refused to allow Richard an up-or-down vote when I nominated him in 2011, I took action to appoint him on my own. And since then, he's helped protect Americans from predatory lenders, launched a "Know Before You Owe" campaign to help families make smart decisions about paying for college, and cracked down on credit card companies that charge hidden fees. But Richard's appointment runs out at the end of the year, and in order for him to stay on the job, the Senate needs to finally give him the vote he deserves.

As President, my top priority is simple: to do everything in my power to fight for middle class families and give every American the tools they need to reach the middle class.

That means bringing in people like Mary Jo and Richard whose job it is to stand up for you. It means encouraging businesses to create more jobs and pay higher wages and improving education and job training so that more people can get the skills that businesses are looking for. It means reforming our immigration system and keeping our children safe from the menace of gun violence. And it means bringing down our deficit in a balanced way by making necessary reforms and asking every American to pay their fair share.

I am honored and humbled to continue to serve as your President. And I'm more hopeful than ever that 4 years from now, with your help, this country will be more prosperous,

more open, and more committed to the principles on which we were founded.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:30 p.m. on January 25 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on January 26. In the address, the President referred to Mary Jo White, partner, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 26.

Statement on Senator Thomas R. Harkin's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
January 26, 2013

By the time Senator Harkin finishes his fifth term, he will have represented the people of Iowa in the United States Congress for an incredible 40 years. He has served in the U.S. Senate longer than any Democrat in Iowa's history. During his tenure, he has fought passionately to improve quality of life for Americans with disabilities and their families, to reform our education system, and ensure that every American has access to affordable health care. Senator Harkin will be missed, and Michelle and I join Iowans in thanking him for his longstanding service and wish him and his wife Ruth all the best in the future.

Statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day
January 27, 2013

On January 27th, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we honor the memories of the 6 million Jews and millions of other innocent victims whose lives were tragically taken during the Holocaust over 60 years ago. Those who experienced the horrors of the cattle cars, ghettos, and concentration camps have witnessed humanity at its very worst and know too well the pain of losing loved ones to senseless violence.

But while this is a time for mourning and reflection, it is also the time for action. On this day, we recall the courage, spirit, and determination of those who heroically resisted the Nazis, exemplifying the very best of humanity. And like these courageous individuals, we must commit ourselves to resisting hate and persecution in all its forms. The United States, along with the international community, resolves to stand in the way of any tyrant or dictator who commits crimes against humanity and stay true to the principle of "never again."

By remaining vigilant against those who seek to perpetrate violence and murder, we honor those we lost during one of the darkest periods in human history. And we keep their memory alive for generations to come.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Law Enforcement Officials
January 28, 2013

Well, Vice President Biden and I just want to thank the police chiefs and sheriffs who are here today representing law enforcement officials all across the country who obviously share our deep concern about issues of gun safety and how we can protect our communities and keep our kids safe.

A couple of weeks ago, I appeared along with Joe to present the administration's ideas in terms of steps that we have to take. And I issued a number of executive actions that can—could be taken unilaterally in order to improve our collection of data, to make sure that we're coordinating more effectively with State and

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 though.

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.

Remarks at Del Sol High School in Las Vegas, Nevada
January 29, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Well, it is good to be back in Las Vegas! And it is good to be among so many good friends.

Let me start off by thanking everybody at Del Sol High School for hosting us. Go Dragons! Let me especially thank your outstanding principal, Lisa Primas.

There are all kinds of notable guests here, but I just want to mention a few. First of all, our outstanding Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, is here. Our wonderful Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar; former Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis. Two of the outstanding members of the congressional delegation from Nevada, Steve Horsford and Dina Titus; your own mayor, Carolyn Goodman.

But we also have some mayors that flew in because they know how important the issue we're going to talk about today is: Marie Lopez Rogers from Avondale, Arizona; Kasim Reed from Atlanta, Georgia; Greg Stanton from Phoenix, Arizona; and Ashley Swearengin from Fresno, California.

And all of you are here, as well as some of the top labor leaders in the country. And we are just so grateful. Some outstanding business leaders are here as well. And of course, we've got wonderful students here, so I could not be prouder of our students.

Now, those of you have a seat, feel free to take a seat. I don't mind.

Audience member. I love you, Mr. President!

The President. I love you back.

Now, last week, I had the honor of being sworn in for a second term as President of the United States. And during my Inaugural Address, I talked about how making progress on the defining challenges of our time doesn't require us to settle every debate or ignore every difference that we may have, but it does require us to find common ground and move forward in common purpose. It requires us to act.

I know that some issues will be harder to lift than others. Some debates will be more contentious. That's to be expected. But the reason I came here today is because of a challenge where the differences are dwindling, where a broad consensus is emerging, and where a call for action can now be heard coming from all across America. I'm here today because the time has come for commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform. The time is now. [*Applause*] Now is the time. Now is the time. Now is the time.

Audience members. Si, se puede! Si, se puede! Si, se puede!

The President. Now is the time.

I'm here because most Americans agree that it's time to fix a system that's been broken for way too long. I'm here because business leaders, faith leaders, labor leaders, law enforcement, and leaders from both parties are coming together to say now is the time to find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as the land of opportunity. Now is the time to do this so we can strengthen our economy and strengthen our country's future.

Think about it: We define ourselves as a nation of immigrants. That's who we are in our bones. The promise we see in those who come here from every corner of the globe, that's always been one of our greatest strengths. It keeps our workforce young. It keeps our country on the cutting edge. And it's helped build the greatest economic engine the world has ever known.

After all, immigrants helped start businesses like Google and Yahoo! They created entire new industries that, in turn, created new jobs and new prosperity for our citizens. In recent years, one in four high-tech startups in America were founded by immigrants. One in four new small-business owners were immigrants, including right here in Nevada: folks who came here seeking opportunity and now want to share that opportunity with other Americans.

But we all know that today, we have an immigration system that's out of date and badly broken; a system that's holding us back instead

of helping us grow our economy and strengthen our middle class.

Right now we have 11 million undocumented immigrants in America, 11 million men and women from all over the world who live their lives in the shadows. Yes, they broke the rules. They crossed the border illegally. Maybe they overstayed their visas. Those are the facts. Nobody disputes them. But these 11 million men and women are now here. Many of them have been here for years. And the overwhelming majority of these individuals aren't looking for any trouble. They're contributing members of the community. They're looking out for their families. They're looking out for their neighbors. They're woven into the fabric of our lives.

Every day, like the rest of us, they go out and try to earn a living. Often, they do that in a shadow economy, a place where employers may offer them less than the minimum wage or make them work overtime without extra pay. And when that happens, it's not just bad for them, it's bad for the entire economy. Because all the businesses that are trying to do the right thing—that are hiring people legally, paying a decent wage, following the rules—they're the ones who suffer. They've got to compete against companies that are breaking the rules. And the wages and working conditions of American workers are threatened too.

So if we're truly committed to strengthening our middle class and providing more ladders of opportunity to those who are willing to work hard to make it into the middle class, we've got to fix the system.

We have to make sure that every business and every worker in America is playing by the same set of rules. We have to bring this shadow economy into the light so that everybody is held accountable: businesses for who they hire and immigrants for getting on the right side of the law. That's common sense. And that's why we need comprehensive immigration reform.

And, now, there's another economic reason why we need reform. It's not just about the folks who come here illegally and have the effect they have on our economy. It's also about the folks who try to come here legally but have a hard time doing so and the effect that has on our economy.

Right now there are brilliant students from all over the world sitting in classrooms at our top universities. They're earning degrees in the fields of the future, like engineering and computer science. But once they finish school, once they earn that diploma, there's a good chance they'll have to leave our country. Now, think about that.

Intel was started with the help of an immigrant who studied here and then stayed here. Instagram was started with the help of an immigrant who studied here and then stayed here. Right now in one of those classrooms, there's a student wrestling with how to turn their big idea—their Intel or Instagram—into a big business. We're giving them all the skills they need to figure that out, but then we're going to turn around and tell them to start that business and create those jobs in China or India or Mexico or someplace else. That's not how you grow new industries in America. That's how you give new industries to our competitors. That's why we need comprehensive immigration reform.

Now, now during my first term, we took steps to try and patch up some of the worst cracks in the system.

First, we strengthened security at the borders so that we could finally stem the tide of illegal immigrants. We put more boots on the ground on the southern border than at any time in our history. And today, illegal crossings are down nearly 80 percent from their peak in 2000.

Second, we focused our enforcement efforts on criminals who are here illegally and who endanger our communities. And today, deportations of criminals is at its highest level ever.

And third, we took up the cause of the dreamers: the young people who were brought to this country as children, young people who have grown up here, built their lives here, have futures here. We said that if you're able to meet some basic criteria, like pursuing an education, then we'll consider offering you the chance to come out of the shadows so that you can live here and work here legally, so that you

can finally have the dignity of knowing you belong.

But because this change isn't permanent, we need Congress to act, and not just on the DREAM Act. We need Congress to act on a comprehensive approach that finally deals with the 11 million undocumented immigrants who are in the country right now. That's what we need.

Now, the good news is that for the first time in many years, Republicans and Democrats seem ready to tackle this problem together. Members of both parties, in both Chambers, are actively working on a solution. Yesterday a bipartisan group of Senators announced their principles for comprehensive immigration reform, which are very much in line with the principles I've proposed and campaigned on for the last few years. So, at this moment, it looks like there's a genuine desire to get this done soon, and that's very encouraging.

But this time, action must follow. We can't allow immigration reform to get bogged down in an endless debate. We've been debating this a very long time. So it's not as if we don't know technically what needs to get done. As a consequence, to help move this process along, today I'm laying out my ideas for immigration reform. And my hope is that this provides some key markers to Members of Congress as they craft a bill, because the ideas I'm proposing have traditionally been supported by both Democrats like Ted Kennedy and Republicans like President George W. Bush. You don't get that matchup very often. [*Laughter*] So we know where the consensus should be.

Now, of course, there will be rigorous debate about many of the details, and every stakeholder should engage in real give and take in the process. But it's important for us to recognize that the foundation for bipartisan action is already in place. And if Congress is unable to move forward in a timely fashion, I will send up a bill based on my proposal and insist that they vote on it right away.

So the principles are pretty straightforward. There are a lot of details behind it. We're going to hand out a bunch of paper so that everybody will know exactly what we're talking about. But the principles are pretty straightforward.

First, I believe we need to stay focused on enforcement. That means continuing to strengthen security at our borders. It means cracking down more forcefully on businesses that knowingly hire undocumented workers. To be fair, most businesses want to do the right thing, but a lot of them have a hard time figuring out who's here legally, who's not. So we need to implement a national system that allows businesses to quickly and accurately verify someone's employment status. And if they still knowingly hire undocumented workers, then we need to ramp up the penalties.

Second, we have to deal with the 11 million individuals who are here illegally. We all agree that these men and women should have to earn their way to citizenship. But for comprehensive immigration reform to work, it must be clear from the outset that there is a pathway to citizenship.

We've got to lay out a path: a process that includes passing a background check, paying taxes, paying a penalty, learning English, and then going to the back of the line, behind all the folks who are trying to come here legally. That's only fair, right?

So that means it won't be a quick process, but it will be a fair process. And it will lift these individuals out of the shadows and give them a chance to earn their way to a green card and eventually to citizenship.

And the third principle is we've got to bring our legal immigration system into the 21st century because it no longer reflects the realities of our time. For example, if you are a citizen, you shouldn't have to wait years before your family is able to join you in America. You shouldn't have to wait years.

If you're a foreign student who wants to pursue a career in science or technology or a foreign entrepreneur who wants to start a business with the backing of American investors, we should help you do that here. Because if you succeed, you'll create American businesses and American jobs. You'll help us grow our economy. You'll help us strengthen our middle class.

So that's what comprehensive immigration reform looks like: smarter enforcement, a pathway to earned citizenship, improvements in the legal immigration system so that we continue to be a magnet for the best and the brightest all around the world. It's pretty straightforward.

The question now is simple: Do we have the resolve as a people, as a country, as a Government to finally put this issue behind us? I believe that we do. [*Applause*] I believe that we do. I believe we are finally at a moment where comprehensive immigration reform is within our grasp.

But I promise you this: The closer we get, the more emotional this debate is going to become. Immigration's always been an issue that enflames passions. That's not surprising. There are few things that are more important to us as a society than who gets to come here and call our country home, who gets the privilege of becoming a citizen of the United States of America. That's a big deal.

When we talk about that in the abstract, it's easy sometimes for the discussion to take on a feeling of us versus them And when that happens, a lot of folks forget that most of us used to be them. We forget that.

It's really important for us to remember our history. Unless you're one of the first Americans, a Native American, you came from someplace else. Somebody brought you.

Ken Salazar, he's of Mexican American descent, but he points out that his family's been living where he lives for 400 years, so he didn't immigrate anywhere. [*Laughter*]

The Irish who left behind a land of famine, the Germans who fled persecution, the Scandinavians who arrived eager to pioneer out west, the Polish, the Russians, the Italians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the West Indians, the huddled masses who came through Ellis Island on one coast and Angel Island on the other—all those folks, before they were us, they were them.

And when each new wave of immigrants arrived, they faced resistance from those who were already here. They faced hardship. They faced racism. They faced ridicule. But over time, as they went about their daily lives, as they earned a living, as they raised a family, as they built a community, as their kids went to school here, they did their part to build a nation.

They were the Einsteins and the Carnegies. But they were also the millions of women and men whose names history may not remember, but whose actions helped make us who we are, who built this country hand by hand, brick by brick. They all came here knowing that what makes somebody an American is not just blood or birth, but allegiance to our founding principles and the faith in the idea that anyone from anywhere can write the next great chapter of our story.

And that's still true today. Just ask Alan Aleman. Alan is here this afternoon; where is Alan? He's around here; there he is right here. Now, Alan was born in Mexico. He was brought to this country by his parents when he was a child. Growing up, Alan went to an American school, pledged allegiance to the American flag, felt American in every way. And he was, except for one: on paper.

In high school, Alan watched his friends come of age: driving around town with their new licenses, earning some extra cash from their summer jobs at the mall. He knew he couldn't do those things. But it didn't matter that much. What mattered to Alan was earning an education so that he could live up to his God-given potential.

Last year, when Alan heard the news that we were going to offer a chance for folks like him to emerge from the shadows—even if it's just for 2 years at a time—he was one of the first to sign up. And a few months ago, he was one of the first people in Nevada to get approved. In that moment, Alan said: "I felt the fear vanish. I felt accepted."

So today, Alan's in his second year at the College of Southern Nevada. Alan is studying to become a doctor. He hopes to join the Air Force. He's working hard every single day to build a better life for himself and his family. And all he wants is the opportunity to do his part to build a better America.

So, in the coming weeks, as the idea of reform becomes more real and the debate becomes more heated, and there are folks who are trying to pull this thing apart, remember Alan and all those who share the same hopes and the same dreams. Remember that this is not just a debate about policy. It's about people. It's about men and women and young people who want nothing more than the chance to earn their way into the American story.

And throughout our history, that has only made our Nation stronger. And it's how we will make sure that this century is the same as the last: an American century, welcoming of everybody who aspires to do something more and is willing to work hard to do it and is willing to pledge that allegiance to our flag.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Sergey M. Brin, cofounder and former president, Google Inc.; Jerry Yang, cofounder and former chief executive officer, Yahoo! Inc.; Andrew S. Grove, cofounder and former chief executive officer, Intel Corp.; and Mike Krieger, cofounder, Instagram, Inc.

Videotaped Remarks on the Situation in Syria
January 29, 2013

For nearly 2 years, the Asad regime has waged a brutal war against the Syrian people, murdering innocent men, women, and children in their homes, in bread lines, and at universities. In the face of this barbarism, the United States has joined with nations around the world in calling for an end to the Asad regime and a transition that leads to a peaceful, inclusive, and democratic Syria, where the rights of all Syrians are protected. We've worked to isolate Asad and his regime, impose sanctions that starve the regime of funds, recognize the Syrian opposition coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, call for accountability for perpetrators of atrocities, and provide humanitarian relief to Syrians in need.

The relief we send doesn't say "Made in America," but make no mistake, our aid reflects the commitment of the American people. American aid means food and clean water for millions of Syrians. American aid means medicine and treatment for hundreds of thousands of patients in Damascus, Dara'a, and Homs. It means immunizations for 1 million Syrian children. American aid means winter supplies for more than half a million people in Aleppo, Homs, and Dayr az Zawr. And we're working with allies and partners so that this aid reaches those in need.

Today we're taking another step. I've approved an additional $155 million in humanitarian aid for people in Syria and refugees fleeing the violence. Here, I want to speak directly to the people of Syria. This new aid will mean more warm clothing for children and medicine for the elderly, flour and wheat for your families, and blankets, boots, and stoves for those huddled in damaged buildings. It will mean health care for victims of sexual violence and field hospitals for the wounded. Even as we work to end the violence against you, this aid will help address some of the immediate needs you face each day.

This new commitment will bring America's total humanitarian aid to Syria to $365 million, making us the largest single donor of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. Today I also call on the international community to do more to help these Syrians in need and to contribute to the latest U.N. humanitarian appeal.

We're under no illusions. The days ahead will continue to be very difficult. But what's clear is that the regime continues to weaken and lose control of territory. The opposition continues to grow stronger. More Syrians are standing up for their dignity. The Asad regime will come to an end. The Syrian people will have their chance to forge their own future.

And they will continue to find a partner in the United States of America.

NOTE: In his remarks, the President referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. The Office of the Press Secretary also released an Arabic language transcript of this address. Recording information was unavailable.

Statement on the Resignation of Raymond H. LaHood as Secretary of Transportation
January 29, 2013

I want to thank Secretary LaHood for his dedication, his hard work, and his years of service to the American people, including the outstanding work he's done over the last 4 years as Secretary of Transportation. I also want to thank Ray for his friendship. Years ago, we were drawn together by a shared belief that those of us in public service owe an allegiance not to party or faction, but to the people we were elected to represent. And Ray has never wavered in that belief.

As Secretary of Transportation, he has fought to create jobs and grow our economy by rebuilding our roads, bridges, and transit systems. Under his leadership, we have made significant investments in our passenger rail system and laid the groundwork for the high-speed rail network of the future. And every American who travels by air, rail, or highway can thank Ray for his commitment to making our entire transportation system safer and stronger. I am grateful to Ray for everything he's done, and I wish him only the best going forward.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John F. Kerry as Secretary of State
January 29, 2013

I am pleased that the Senate has confirmed John Kerry as our next Secretary of State with overwhelming bipartisan support. From his decorated service in Vietnam to his decades in the Senate as a champion of American global leadership, John's distinguished career has prepared him to guide American diplomacy in the years ahead.

John has earned the respect of leaders around the world and the confidence of Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, and I am confident he will make an extraordinary Secretary of State. I look forward to his counsel and partnership in the years ahead as we ensure American leadership in the world and advance the interests and values that keep our Nation strong.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Regarding the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013
January 29, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 902 of the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013, I hereby designate as emergency requirements all funding so designated by the Congress in the Act pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, as outlined in the enclosed list of accounts.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report Regarding the Waiver of Sanctions Against North Korea
January 31, 2013

Dear _____:

Pursuant to section 1405 of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008 (Public Law 110–252) (the "Act"), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing the enclosed report prepared by my Administration. The report includes information related to the issuance of any waivers under the authority of section 1405 of the Act of certain sanctions against North Korea and to certain other matters relating to North Korea.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Barbara A. Mikulski, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, vice chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Carl M. Levin, chairman, and James M. Inhofe, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Robert P. Corker, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Harold D. Rogers, chairman, and Nita M. Lowey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, chairman, and Adam Smith, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; and Edward R. Royce, chairman, and Eliot L. Engel, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medal of Science and the National Medal of Technology and Innovation
February 1, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Please, everyone have a seat. Well, it is my incredible pleasure and honor to welcome this incredibly talented group of men and women in the White House. And I want to congratulate them on earning America's highest honor for invention and discovery: the National Medals of Science and the National Medals of Technology and Innovation.

Before we start, I want to acknowledge the head of the National Science Foundation, Dr. Subra Suresh, as well as the members of my Cabinet who are with us here today. Where is everybody? Where did Subra go? [*Laughter*] There you go. All right, I just wanted to make sure they all showed up.

I especially want to thank Secretary Steven Chu, who announced this morning that he will be leaving the Department of Energy. That will be a loss for us. Steve has been a great friend, a tremendous colleague over the past 4 years, working on a whole range of energy issues, but also designing a cap to plug a hole in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico when nobody else could figure it out. And that's typical of the incredible contributions that he's made to this country. Because of his leadership, this country is further along on the path to energy independence. It's better positioned for the jobs and industries of the future.

So, Steve, you have earned more than your fair share of relaxation time, but we are grateful for your extraordinary service. So thank you.

Now, this is the most collection of brainpower we've had under this roof in a long time—[*laughter*]—maybe since the last time we gave

out these medals. I have no way to prove that, and I know this crowd likes proof. [*Laughter*] But I can't imagine too many people competing with those who we honor here today.

If there is one idea that sets this country apart, one idea that makes us different from every other nation on Earth, it's that here in America, success does not depend on where you were born or what your last name is. Success depends on the ideas that you can dream up, the possibilities that you envision, and the hard work, the blood, sweat, and tears you're willing to put in to make them real.

We don't always recognize the genius behind these ideas right away. The New York Times once described Robert Goddard's belief that rockets could one day go to the Moon as, quote, "lacking the knowledge ladled out daily in high schools." [*Laughter*] One engineer called Einstein's brand-new theory of relativity "voodoo nonsense." But with enough time, we usually come around. And we don't give folks the same treatment that Galileo got when he came up with new ideas. [*Laughter*] And today, it's clearer than ever that our future as a nation depends on keeping that spirit of curiosity and innovation alive in our time.

So these honorees are at the forefront of that mission. Thanks to the sacrifices they've made, the chances they've taken, the gallons of coffee they've consumed—[*laughter*]—we now have batteries that power everything from cell phones to electric cars. We have a map of the human genome and new ways to produce renewable energy. We're learning to grow organs in the lab and better understand what's happening in our deepest oceans. And if that's not enough, the people on this stage are also going to be responsible for devising a formula to tame frizzy hair—[*laughter*]—as well as inspiring the game Tetris.

But what also makes these individuals unique is how they've gotten here: the obstacles they've overcome and the commitments they've made to push the boundaries of our understanding.

Jim Gates's father, for example, was in the Army, and by the time Jim was in sixth grade, he had attended six different schools. But he still remembers the day he came home and saw his father standing on the porch with a big smile on his face. And that's how Jim knew he had gotten into MIT, on his way to becoming one of our foremost experts in supersymmetry and string theory.

When Gholam Peyman first accepted a position at the University of Illinois, his office was a converted restroom. [*Laughter*] But he carved out enough space for himself, his secretary, and his lab equipment. And today, he's known as the father of LASIK eye surgery.

Sandra Moore Faber had a passion for astronomy from the very beginning. But when she visited one of our Nation's top observatories as a grad student, they didn't have a dorm for female astronomers, so Sandra ended up sleeping on the sofa in the caretaker's cottage. Now, luckily, that didn't slow her down, and she became one of the world's foremost experts in the evolution of the universe.

You know, in a global economy where the best jobs follow talent—whether in Calcutta or Cleveland—we need to do everything we can to encourage that same kind of passion, make it easier for more young people to blaze a new trail.

Right now only about a third of undergraduate students are graduating with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math, areas that will be crucial if we expect to complete the work that has been done by these folks and compete for the jobs of the future. And that's why we've worked to make more affordable college opportunities and set a goal of training 100,000 new math and science teachers over the next decade. And we're working to train 2 million Americans at our community colleges with the skills businesses are looking for right now.

We also need to do something about all the students who come here from around the world to study, but we then send home once they graduate. On Tuesday, I was in Las Vegas talking about the need for comprehensive immigration reform. And one important piece of that reform is allowing more of the best and brightest minds from around the world to start businesses, initiate new discoveries, create jobs

here in the United States of America. If we want to grow our economy and strengthen the middle class, we need an immigration system built for the 21st century. It's that simple.

One of the scientists being honored today is Jan Vilcek. Jan was born in Slovakia to Jewish parents who fled the Nazis during World War II. To keep their young son safe, his parents placed him in an orphanage run by Catholic nuns. And later, he and his mother were taken in by some brave farmers in a remote Slovak village and hidden until the war was over. And today, Jan is a pioneer in the study of the immune system and the treatment of inflammatory diseases like arthritis.

People like Jan obviously had enormous talent. In some fundamental ways, they were destined to be on this stage. The minds they were born with, the drive they innately possess, the positive forces that shaped their lives were more powerful than the forces aligned against them. So they beat the odds. But even with all those gifts, every one of today's honorees also had somebody who offered them a hand: a teacher who sparked their interest, a scholarship that paved the way, and an opportunity to come to America and bring even the most distant dream within our reach.

And that reminds us of our obligations to each other and to this country. We can—no matter how many talented folks there are in this country, if we're not offering a hand up, a lot of those folks are going to miss out on what might be their destiny. We can make it easier for our young people to learn the skills of the future. We can attract the brightest minds to our shore. We can celebrate and lift up and spotlight researchers and scientists like the ones here today, so that somewhere, a boy on an Army base or a girl looking through a telescope or a young scientist working out of a converted bathroom can make it their goal to stand where these honorees will be standing when they receive their medals.

That's what we can do and that's what we must do. That's what I intend to do as long as I'm President.

So I want to congratulate these extraordinary Americans once again for all their accomplishments. I want to wish our Military Aides the best of luck as they attempt to read the citations. [*Laughter*] Because I can assure you they practiced hard on this all week long.

You good? You feel good? [*Laughter*] All right. There are a lot of syllables in some of these things. [*Laughter*] I won't know the difference, but they will. [*Laughter*]

Congratulations, everybody.

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Scott Phy, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citations and the President presented the medals, assisted by Lt. Cmdr. Tiffany Hill, USN, Navy Aide to the President.*]

The President. That wasn't bad. [*Laughter*]

Well, again, I just want to congratulate all the honorees here today. Can everybody please give them one more big round of applause? [*Applause*]

We are so grateful to all of you. The incredible contributions that you've made have enhanced our lives in immeasurable ways, in ways that are practical, but also inspirational.

And so we know that you are going to continue to inspire and in many cases teach the next generation of inventors and scientists who will discover things that we can't even dream of at this point. So thank you so much for everything that you've done.

I hope that all of you enjoy this wonderful reception. Feel free to party here. [*Laughter*] This looks like a somewhat wild crowd. [*Laughter*] So just remember there are Secret Service here—[*laughter*]—if you guys get out of hand. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. Participating in the ceremony were National Medal of Science recipients Allen J. Bard; Sallie W. Chisholm; Sidney D. Drell; Sandra M. Faber; S. James Gates, Jr.; Solomon W. Golomb; John B. Goodenough; M. Frederick Hawthorne; Leroy Hood; Barry C. Mazur; Lucy Shapiro; and Anne M. Treisman; and National Medal of Technology and Innovation recipients Frances H. Arnold; George Carruthers; Robert Langer;

Norman R. McCombs; Gholam A. Peyman; Arthur H. Rosenfield; Jan T. Vilcek; Rangaswamy Srinivasan; James Wynne; and Edward Campbell, accepting on behalf of Raytheon BBN Technologies in Cambridge, MA. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

Statement on the Resignation of Steven Chu as Secretary of Energy
February 1, 2013

I want to thank Secretary Chu for his dedicated service on behalf of the American people. As a Nobel Prize–winning scientist, Steve brought to the Energy Department a unique understanding of both the urgent challenge presented by climate change and the tremendous opportunity that clean energy represents for our economy. And during his time as Secretary, Steve helped my administration move America towards real energy independence. Over the past 4 years, we have doubled the use of renewable energy, dramatically reduced our dependence on foreign oil, and put our country on a path to win the global race for clean energy jobs. Thanks to Steve, we also expanded support for our brightest engineers and entrepreneurs as they pursue groundbreaking innovations that could transform our energy future. I am grateful that Steve agreed to join in my Cabinet, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Statement on the Death of Edward I. Koch
February 1, 2013

Ed Koch was an extraordinary mayor, irrepressible character, and quintessential New Yorker. He took office at a time when New York was in fiscal crisis and helped his city achieve economic renewal, expand affordable housing, and extend opportunity to more of its people. In public office and beyond, his energy, force of personality, and commitment to causes ranging from civic issues to the security of the State of Israel always informed and enlivened the public discourse. Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to Ed's loved ones and to the city that survives him.

Statement on the Resignation of Mark J. Sullivan as Director of the United States Secret Service
February 1, 2013

I want to thank Mark Sullivan for nearly 30 years of service to our Nation at the United States Secret Service, a tenure that saw the agency protect five First Families, including my own. Mark started out in the Detroit field office before joining the Presidential Protective Division. And since 2006, as Director, Mark has led the agency with incredible dedication and integrity. The Secret Service is best known for protecting our Nation's leaders, but every day they also protect the American people. From securing large events such as Presidential Inaugurations to safeguarding our financial system, the men and women of the agency perform their mission with professionalism and dedication. That is a testament to Mark and his steadfast leadership, which will be missed. Michelle and I wish him all the best.

The President's Weekly Address
February 2, 2013

Hi, everybody. In the coming weeks, we face some important decisions about how to pay down our debt in a way that grows our economy and creates good jobs, decisions that will make a real difference in the strength and pace of our recovery.

We began this year with economists and business leaders saying that we are poised to grow in 2013, and there are real signs of progress. Home prices are starting to climb again. Car sales are at a 5-year high. Manufacturing is roaring back. Our businesses created 2.2 million jobs last year. And we just learned that our economy created more jobs over the last few months than economists originally thought.

But this week, we also received the first estimate of America's economic growth over the last few months. And it reminded us that bad decisions in Washington can get in the way of our economic progress.

We all agree that it's critical to cut unnecessary spending. But we can't just cut our way to prosperity. It hasn't worked in the past, and it won't work today. It could slow down our recovery, it could weaken our economy, and it could cost us jobs, not just now, but in the future.

What we need instead is a balanced approach, an approach that says let's cut what we can't afford, but let's make the investments we can't afford to live without: investments in education and infrastructure, research and development, the things that will help America compete for the best jobs and new industries.

Already, Republicans and Democrats have worked together to reduce our deficits by $2.5 trillion. That's a good start. But to get the rest of the way, we need a balanced set of reforms.

For example, we need to lower the cost of health care in programs like Medicare that are the biggest drivers of our deficit, without just passing the burden off to seniors. And these reforms must go hand in hand with eliminating excess spending in our Tax Code so that the wealthiest individuals and biggest corporations can't take advantage of loopholes and deductions that aren't available to most Americans.

Two thousand thirteen can be a year of solid growth, more jobs, and higher wages. But that will only happen if we put a stop to self-inflicted wounds in Washington. Everyone in Washington needs to focus not on politics, but on what's right for the country, on what's right for you and your families. That's how we'll get our economy growing faster, that's how we'll strengthen our middle class, and that's how we'll build a country that rewards the effort and determination of every single American.

Thanks. And have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:50 p.m. on February 1 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on February 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 1, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 2.

Remarks at the Minneapolis Police Department's Special Operations Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota
February 4, 2013

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, it is good to be back in Minnesota. It is good to be back. Although I was commenting that they don't really have winter in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] So I've gotten soft over these last 4 years. When I was in Chicago, this was nothing. Now it's something. [*Laughter*] But I'm grateful for all of you being here today. I want to thank Chief Harteau and the entire Minneapolis Police Department for having me here today.

There are a number of other people that I just want to acknowledge here. First of all, a wonderful man and one of America's greatest public servants is here: Walter Mondale, former Vice President. Your outstanding Governor, Mark Dayton, is here. Two great mayors: Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis and Mayor Chris Coleman of St. Paul. And your outstanding congressional delegation: Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Al Franken, Representative Keith Ellison, and Representative Betty McCollum.

And I should acknowledge my outstanding Attorney General—what's your name again? [*Laughter*] He does a great job every single day, and I could not be prouder of Eric Holder for his leadership on this issue in particular.

Now, I just had a chance to sit down with some local police officers, but also community leaders, as well as folks who themselves had been victims or whose families had been victims of gun violence, to hear their ideas about how we can protect our kids and address the broader epidemic of gun violence in this country. Because if we're serious about preventing the kinds of tragedies that happened in Newtown or the tragedies that happen every day in places like Chicago or Philadelphia or Minneapolis, then law enforcement and other community leaders must have a seat at the table.

All the folks standing here behind me today, they're the ones on the front line of this fight. They see the awful consequences: the lives lost, the families shattered. They know what works, they know what doesn't work, and they know how to get things done without regard for politics.

So we've had a very productive discussion. And one of the things that struck me was that even though those who were sitting around that table represented very different communities, from big cities to small towns, they all believe it's time to take some basic, commonsense steps to reduce gun violence. We may not be able to prevent every massacre or random shooting. No law or set of laws can keep our children completely safe. But if there's even one thing we can do, if there's just one life we can save, we've got an obligation to try.

That's been the philosophy here in Minneapolis. A few years back, you suffered a spike in violent crime involving young people. So this city came together. You launched a series of youth initiatives that have reduced the number of young people injured by guns by 40 percent—40 percent. So when it comes to protecting our children from gun violence, you've shown that progress is possible. We've still got to deal with the 60 percent that remains, but that 40 percent means lives saved, parents whose hearts aren't broken, communities that aren't terrorized and afraid.

We don't have to agree on everything to agree it's time to do something. That's my main message here today.

And each of us has a role to play. A few weeks ago, I took action on my own to strengthen background checks, to help schools get more resource officers if they want them, and to direct the Centers for Disease Control to study the causes of violence. Because for a long time, even looking at the evidence was considered somehow tough politics. And so Congress had taken the approach that we don't want to know. Well, that's never the answer to a problem, is not wanting to know what is going on.

So we've been able to take some steps through administrative action. But while these steps are important, real and lasting change also requires Congress to do its part and to do it soon, not to wait. The good news is that we're starting to see a consensus emerge about the action Congress needs to take.

The vast majority of Americans—including a majority of gun owners—support requiring criminal background checks for anyone trying to buy a gun. So right now Democrats and Republicans in the Senate are working on a bill that would ban anyone from selling a gun to somebody legally prohibited from owning one. That's common sense. There's no reason why we can't get that done. That is not a liberal idea or a conservative idea, it's not a Democratic or Republican idea, that is a smart idea. We want to keep those guns out of hands of folks who shouldn't have them.

Senators from both parties have also come together and proposed a bill that would crack down on people who buy guns only to turn them around and sell them to criminals. It's a bill that would keep more guns off the street and out of the hands of people with the intent of doing harm.

And by the way, in addition to reducing violence on the streets, it would also make life a lot easier and a lot safer for the people standing behind me here today.

We shouldn't stop there. We should restore the ban on military-style assault weapons and a 10-round limit for magazines. And that deserves a vote in Congress, because weapons of war have no place on our streets or in our schools or threatening our law enforcement officers. Our law enforcement officers should never be outgunned on the streets.

But we also know that if we're going to solve the problem of gun violence, then we've got to look at root causes as well. That means we should make it easier for young people to get access to mental health treatment. We should help communities like this one keep more cops on the beat. And since Congress hasn't confirmed a director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in 6 years, they should confirm your U.S. attorney from Minnesota, Todd Jones, who is here today and who I've nominated for this post.

These are commonsense measures supported by Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, and many of them are responsible gun owners. And we're seeing Members of Congress from both parties put aside their differences and work together to make many of them a reality.

But if there's one thing that I've learned over the last 4 years, it's that you can't count on anything in Washington until it's done. And nothing is done yet. There's been a lot of talk, a lot of conversation, a lot of publicity, but we haven't actually taken concrete steps yet.

Last week, the Senate held its first hearing since Newtown on the need to address gun violence and the best way to move forward, and the first people to offer testimony were Gabby Giffords and her husband Mark Kelly. They talked about how a complex problem like this has no single solution, but if we still had a 10-round limit on magazines, for example, the gunman who shot Gabby may never have been able to inflict 33 gunshot wounds in 15 seconds. Fifteen seconds, 33 rounds fired. Some of the six people who lost their lives that day in Tucson might still be with us.

Now, changing the status quo is never easy; this will be no exception. The only way we can reduce gun violence in this country is if the American people decide it's important. If you decide it's important. If parents and teachers, police officers and pastors, hunters and sportsmen, Americans of every background stand up and say this time it's got to be different, we've suffered too much pain to stand by and do nothing.

And by the way, it's really important for us to engage with folks who don't agree with us on everything, because we hope that we can find some areas where we do agree. And we have to recognize that there are going to be regional differences and geographic differences. The experience that people have of guns in an urban neighborhood may not be the same as in a rural community.

But we know, for example, from polling that universal background checks are universally supported, just about, by gun owners. The majority of gun owners, overwhelming majority of gun owners, think that's a good idea. So if we've got lobbyists in Washington claiming to speak for gun owners saying something different, we need to go to the source and reach out to people directly. We can't allow those filters to get in the way of common sense.

That's why I need everybody who's listening to keep the pressure on your Member of Congress to do the right thing. Ask them if they support commonsense reforms like requiring universal background checks or restoring the ban on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Tell them there's no legislation to eliminate all guns, there's no legislation being proposed to subvert the Second Amendment. Tell them specifically what we're talking about, things that the majority of Americans, when they're asked, support. And tell

them now is the time for action. That we're not going to wait until the next Newtown or the next Aurora. We're not going to wait until after we lose more innocent Americans on street corners all across the country. We're not going to wait until somebody else's father or son are murdered.

Some of the officers here today know what it's like to look into the eyes of a parent or a grandparent, a brother or a sister who has just lost a loved one to an act of violence; to see the pain and the heartbreak from wondering why this precious life, this piece of your heart was in the wrong place at the wrong time. It changes you. You're not the same afterwards.

And obviously, whatever that experience is like is nothing compared to the experience that those families are actually going through. And it makes you realize that if there's even one thing we can do to keep our children and our community safe, if there's just one step we can take to prevent more families from feeling what they feel after they've lost a loved one, we've got an obligation to take that step. We've got an obligation to give our police officers and our communities the tools they need to make some of the same progress that's been made here in Minneapolis.

There won't be perfect solutions. We're not going to save every life. But we can make a difference. And that's our responsibility as Americans. And that's what I'll do every single day as long I've got the honor of serving as your President.

So thank you. God bless you. God bless these United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to former Rep. Gabrielle D. Giffords and her husband Mark E. Kelly; and Jared L. Loughner, convicted gunman in the January 8, 2011, shootings in Tucson, AZ.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire
February 4, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13396 of February 7, 2006, with respect to the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire is to continue in effect beyond February 7, 2013.

The situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire, which has been addressed by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1572 of November 15, 2004, and subsequent resolutions, has resulted in the massacre of large numbers of civilians, widespread human rights abuses, significant political violence and unrest, and fatal attacks against international peacekeeping forces. Since the inauguration of President Alassane Ouattara in May 2011, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire has made progress in advancing democratic freedoms and economic development. While the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and its people continue to make progress towards peace and prosperity, the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 4, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
February 5, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody.

I wanted to say a few words about the looming deadlines and decisions that we face on our budget and on our deficit, and these are decisions that will have real and lasting impacts on the strength and pace of our recovery.

Economists and business leaders from across the spectrum have said that our economy is poised for progress in 2013. And we've seen signs of this progress over the last several weeks. Home prices continue to climb. Car sales are at a 5-year high. Manufacturing has been strong. And we've created more than 6 million jobs in the last 35 months.

But we've also seen the effects that political dysfunction can have on our economic progress. The drawn-out process for resolving the fiscal cliff hurt consumer confidence. The threat of massive automatic cuts have already started to affect business decisions. So we've been reminded that while it's critical for us to cut wasteful spending, we can't just cut our way to prosperity. Deep, indiscriminate cuts to things like education and training, energy and national security will cost us jobs, and it will slow down our recovery. It's not the right thing to do for the economy; it's not the right thing for folks who are out there still looking for work.

And the good news is, this doesn't have to happen. For all the drama and disagreements that we've had over the past few years, Democrats and Republicans have still been able to come together and cut the deficit by more than $2.5 trillion through a mix of spending cuts and higher rates on taxes for the wealthy. A balanced approach has achieved more than $2.5 trillion in deficit reduction. That's more than halfway towards the $4 trillion in deficit reduction that economists and elected officials from both parties believe is required to stabilize our debt. So we've made progress. And I still believe that we can finish the job with a balanced mix of spending cuts and more tax reform.

The proposals that I put forward during the fiscal cliff negotiations in discussions with Speaker Boehner and others are still very much on the table. I just want to repeat: The deals that I put forward, the balanced approach of spending cuts and entitlement reform and tax reform that I put forward are still on the table.

I've offered sensible reforms to Medicare and other entitlements, and my health care proposals achieve the same amount of savings by the beginning of the next decade as the reforms that have been proposed by the bipartisan Bowles-Simpson fiscal commission. These reforms would reduce our Government's bill——

[*At this point, there was a loud crash.*]

What's up, cameraman? [*Laughter*] Come on, guys. [*Laughter*] They're breaking my flow all the time. [*Laughter*]

These reforms would reduce our Government's bills by reducing the cost of health care, not shifting all those costs on to middle class seniors or the working poor or children with disabilities, but nevertheless, achieving the kinds of savings that we're looking for.

But in order to achieve the full $4 trillion in deficit reductions that is the stated goal of economists and our elected leaders, these modest reforms in our social insurance programs have to go hand in hand with a process of tax reform so that the wealthiest individuals and corporations can't take advantage of loopholes and deductions that aren't available to most Americans.

Leaders in both parties have already identified the need to get rid of these loopholes and deductions. There's no reason why we should keep them at a time when we're trying to cut down on our deficit. And if we are going to

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 derailing 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 underrepresented 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,

creating thousands of new jobs and nearly doubling our use of renewable energy in this country. He has helped to forge what is probably the strongest working relationship with tribal leaders that the Federal Government has seen in modern times. And when the unexpected has happened—like the Gulf oil spill or Hurricane Sandy—he has been on the ground making sure that people get help right away and we deal with these challenges as professionally as possible.

So I really like Ken Salazar, if you haven't gotten the point. [*Laughter*] Ken is now ready to head back to Colorado and spend more time with Hope and his family. And so, in addition to just saying thank you, Ken, for the extraordinary work that you've done, Ken is also going to have the opportunity to introduce his successor. And I am extraordinarily proud today to nominate another strong and capable leader to take the reins at Interior, and that is Ms. Sally Jewell.

In high school, Sally's aptitude test showed she had a knack for mechanical reasoning and spatial ability. [*Laughter*] We checked. We do thorough vetting before nominations. [*Laughter*] Of course, her recommended professions after she took these tests were to be a nurse or a teacher, just like all the other girls in her class. And it wasn't until she was an undergraduate at the University of Washington studying to be a dentist when Sally realized her boyfriend's homework was more interesting than hers, and she decided to become an engineer.

After graduation, Sally went on to work in the oil fields of Oklahoma and Colorado. Later, she brought her experience in the energy sector to banking, where she spent 19 years determining what makes companies succeed and fail. And most recently, as the CEO of REI, a position that she's held for the last 8 years, Sally has helped turn a stalling outdoor retailer into one of America's most successful and environmentally conscious companies. Last year, REI donated almost $4 million to protect trails and parks, and 20 percent of the electricity used in their stores comes from renewable sources.

So even as Sally has spent the majority of her career outside of Washington—where, I might add, the majority of our interior is located—[*laughter*]—she is an expert on the energy and climate issues that are going to shape our future. She is committed to building our nation-to-nation relationship with Indian Country. She knows the link between conservation and good jobs. She knows that there's no contradiction between being good stewards of the land and our economic progress, that in fact, those two things need to go hand in hand. She has shown that a company with more than $1 billion in sales can do the right thing for our planet.

Sally's broad expertise and set of values I know are going to serve her well as she takes on these new challenges. She's got a wonderful and supportive family, who, I understand, enjoy the great outdoors just like she does. So they've got a vested interest in making sure that the Department of the Interior is doing the right thing. And when Sally is confirmed, I'm willing to bet that she will be the first Secretary of the Interior who frequently hikes Mailbox Peak in her native Washington State and who once spent a month climbing mountains in Antarctica, which is just not something I'd think of doing—[*laughter*]—because it seems like it would be cold, and I was born in Hawaii. [*Laughter*]

So for Sally, the toughest part of this job will probably be sitting behind a desk. I suspect she'll want to get out of the office quite a bit. But again, I want to thank Ken Salazar and the entire Salazar family for their extraordinary service, their extraordinary friendship. The Department of the Interior is stronger, this country is stronger, our natural resources are in a better place because of his extraordinary service. I could not be more thrilled with the work that Sally, I know, is going to do in following that path that Ken has carved. I expect the Senate to confirm her as quickly as possible.

And with that, I'd like to invite both of them to say a few words, starting with my dear friend, Ken Salazar.

Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar. Thank you, Mr. President. Is it the same one I have?

The President. No, that's Sally's. [*Laughter*] I just didn't want to get them mixed up.

[*At this point, Secretary Salazar and Secretary-designate Jewell each made brief remarks, with Secretary-designate Jewell concluding as follows.*]

Secretary-designate Jewell. I'm excited to take this new challenge. Thank you so much.

The President. You're going to do great.

Secretary-designate Jewell. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Counselor to the President Peter M. Rouse, in his former capacity as the President's chief of staff during his tenure in the U.S. Senate; and Esperanza "Hope" Salazar, wife of Secretary Salazar. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Salazar and Secretary-designate Jewell.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast
February 7, 2013

Thank you very much. Please have a seat.

Mark, thank you for that introduction. I thought he was going to talk about my gray hair. [*Laughter*] It is true that my daughters are gorgeous. [*Laughter*] That's because my wife is gorgeous. And my goal is to improve my gene pool.

To Mark and Jeff, thank you for your wonderful work on behalf of this breakfast. To all of those who work so hard to put this together, to the heads of state, Members of Congress, and my Cabinet, religious leaders, and distinguished guests, to our outstanding speaker, to all the faithful who've journeyed to our Capital: Michelle and I are truly honored to be with you this morning.

But before I begin, I hope people don't mind me taking a moment of personal privilege. I want to say a quick word about a close friend of mine and yours, Joshua DuBois. Now, some of you may not know Joshua, but Joshua has been at my side—in work and in prayer—for years now. He is a young reverend, but wise in years. He's worked on my staff. He's done an outstanding job as the head of our Faith-Based Office.

Every morning, he sends me, via e-mail, a daily meditation: a snippet of Scripture for me to reflect on. And it has meant the world to me. And despite my pleas, tomorrow will be his last day in the White House. So this morning I want to publicly thank Joshua for all that he's done, and I know that everybody joins me in wishing him all the best in his future endeavors, including getting married.

It says something about us—as a nation, as a people—that every year, for 61 years now, this great prayerful tradition has endured. It says something about us that every year, in times of triumph and in tragedy, in calm and in crisis, we come together, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as brothers and sisters and as children of God. Every year, in the midst of all our busy and noisy lives, we set aside one morning to gather as one community, united in prayer.

And we do so because we're a nation ever humbled by our history and we're ever attentive to our imperfections, particularly the imperfections of our President. We come together because we're a people of faith. We know that faith is something that must be cultivated. Faith is not a possession, faith is a process.

I was struck by the passage that was read earlier from the Book of Hebrews: "Without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and He rewards those who diligently seek Him." He rewards those who diligently seek Him, not just for one moment or one day, but for every moment and every day.

As Christians, we place our faith in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus Christ. But so many other Americans also know the close embrace of

faith: Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Sikhs. And all Americans, whether religious or secular, have a deep abiding faith in this Nation.

Recently, I had occasion to reflect on the power of faith. A few weeks ago, during the Inauguration, I was blessed to place my hand on the Bibles of two great Americans, two men whose faith still echoes today. One was the Bible owned by President Abraham Lincoln, and the other, the Bible owned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As I prepared to take the sacred oath, I thought about these two men, and I thought of how, in times of joy and pain and uncertainty, they turned to their Bibles to seek the wisdom of God's words and thought of how, for as long as we've been a nation, so many of our leaders—our Presidents and our preachers, our legislators and our jurists—have done the same. Each one faced their own challenges, each one finding in Scripture their own lessons from the Lord.

And as I was looking out on the crowd during Inauguration, I thought of Dr. King. We often think of him standing tall in front of the endless crowds, stirring the Nation's conscience with a bellowing voice and a mighty dream. But I also thought of his doubts and his fears, for those moments came as well: the lonely moments when he was left to confront the presence of long-festering injustice and undisguised hate; imagined the darkness and the doubt that must have surrounded him when he was in that Birmingham jail, and the anger that surely rose up in him the night his house was bombed with his wife and child inside, and the grief that shook him as he eulogized those four precious girls taken from this Earth as they gathered in a house of God.

And I was reminded that, yes, Dr. King was a man of audacious hope and a man of relentless optimism. But he was always—he was also a man occasionally brought to his knees in fear and in doubt and in helplessness. And in those moments, we know that he retreated alone to a quiet space so he could reflect and he could pray and he could grow his faith.

And I imagine he turned to certain verses that we now read. I imagine him reflecting on Isaiah: that we wait upon the Lord; that the Lord shall renew those who wait; that they shall mount up with wings as eagles, and they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

We know that in Scripture, Dr. King found strength, and in the Bible, he found conviction. In the words of God, he found a truth about the dignity of man that, once realized, he never relinquished.

We know Lincoln had such moments as well. To see this country torn apart, to see his fellow citizens waging a ferocious war that pitted brother against brother, family against family, that was as heavy a burden as any President will ever have to bear.

We know Lincoln constantly met with troops and visited the wounded and honored the dead. And the toll mounted day after day, week after week. And you can see in the lines of his face the toll that the war cost him. But he did not break. Even as he buried a beloved son, he did not break. Even as he struggled to overcome melancholy, despair, grief, he did not break.

And we know that he surely found solace in Scripture, that he could acknowledge his own doubts, that he was humbled in the face of the Lord. And that, I think, allowed him to become a better leader. It's what allowed him, in what may be one of the greatest speeches ever written, in his Second Inaugural, to describe the Union and the Confederate soldier alike: both reading the same Bible, both prayed to the same God, but "the prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes."

In Lincoln's eyes, the power of faith was humbling, allowing us to embrace our limits in knowing God's will. And as a consequence, he was able to see God in those who vehemently opposed him.

Today, the divisions in this country are, thankfully, not as deep or destructive as when Lincoln led, but they are real. The differences in how we hope to move our Nation forward are less pronounced than when King marched, but they do exist. And as we debate what is right and what is just, what is the surest way to create a more hopeful—for our

children, how we're going to reduce our deficit, what kind of tax plans we're going to have, how we're going to make sure that every child is getting a great education. And, Doctor, it is very encouraging to me that you turned out so well by your mom not letting you watch TV. I'm going to tell my daughters that when they complain. [*Laughter*] In the midst of all these debates, we must keep that same humility that Dr. King and Lincoln and Washington and all our great leaders understood is at the core of true leadership.

In a democracy as big and as diverse as ours, we will encounter every opinion. And our task as citizens—whether we are leaders in government or business or spreading the word—is to spend our days with open hearts and open minds, to seek out the truth that exists in an opposing view, and to find the common ground that allows for us as a nation, as a people, to take real and meaningful action. And we have to do that humbly, for no one can know the full and encompassing mind of God. And we have to do it every day, not just at a prayer breakfast.

I have to say I've—this is now our fifth prayer breakfast, and it is always just a wonderful event. But I do worry sometimes that as soon as we leave the prayer breakfast, everything we've been talking about the whole time at the prayer breakfast seems to be forgotten, on the same day of the prayer breakfast. [*Laughter*] I mean, you'd like to think that the shelf life wasn't so short. [*Laughter*] But I go back to the Oval Office, and I start watching the cable news networks, and it's like we didn't pray. [*Laughter*]

And so my hope is that humility, that that carries over every day, every moment. While God may reveal His plan to us in portions, the expanse of His plan is for God, and God alone, to understand: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Until that moment, until we know and are fully known, all we can do is live our lives in a godly way and assume that those we deal with every day, including those in an opposing party, they're groping their way, doing their best, going through the same struggles we're going through.

And in that pursuit, we are blessed with guidance. God has told us how He wishes for us to spend our days. His Commandments are there to be followed. Jesus is there to guide us, the Holy Spirit to help us. Love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself. See in everyone, even in those with whom you disagree most vehemently, the face of God. For we are all His children.

That's what I thought of as I took the oath of office a few weeks ago and touched those Bibles: the comfort that Scripture gave Lincoln and King and so many leaders throughout our history, the verses they cherished, and how those words of God are there for us as well, waiting to be read any day that we choose. I thought about how their faith gave them the strength to meet the challenges of their time, just as our faith can give us the strength to meet the challenges of ours. And most of all, I thought about their humility and how we don't seem to live that out the way we should every day, even when we give lip service to it.

As President, sometimes I have to search for the words to console the inconsolable. Sometimes I search Scripture to determine how best to balance life as a President and as a husband and as a father. I often search for Scripture to figure out how I can be a better man as well as a better President. And I believe that we are united in these struggles. But I also believe that we are united in the knowledge of a redeeming Savior, whose grace is sufficient for the multitude of our sins and whose love is never failing.

And most of all, I know that all Americans—men and women of different faiths and, yes, those of no faith that they can name—are, nevertheless, joined together in common purpose, believing in something that is bigger than ourselves and the ideals that lie at the heart of our Nation's founding, that as a people we are bound together.

And so this morning, let us summon the common resolve that comes from our faith. Let

us pray to God that we may be worthy of the many blessings He has bestowed upon our Nation. Let us retain that humility not just during this hour, but for every hour. And let me suggest that those of us with the most power and influence need to be the most humble. And let us promise Him and to each other, every day as the Sun rises over America, that it will rise over a people who are striving to make this a more perfect Union.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:03 a.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Mark L. Pryor and Jefferson B. Sessions III, in their capacity as cochairs, and Benjamin S. Carson, director, Pediatric Neurosurgery Division of Johns Hopkins Hospital, in his capacity as keynote speaker, of the National Prayer Breakfast.

Remarks at the House Democratic Issues Conference in Leesburg, Virginia
February 7, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Xavier, thank you for that very gracious introduction and your outstanding leadership.

Let me begin by saying that I could not be happier that one of my most important friends and partners is still leading our Democrats in the House of Representatives. I love Nancy Pelosi. Give her a big round of applause. Love Nancy Pelosi. Also, she just generates good-looking grandbabies. [*Laughter*] They're all so handsome and sharp and beautiful.

To Steny Hoyer and Jim Clyburn, as well as Xavier and Joe Crowley, thank you so much for the great work that you guys are doing each and every day. And to Steve Israel, who worked tirelessly to bring on 49 new outstanding members of this caucus. I am looking forward to spending time with all 49 of you. And hopefully, we'll be seeing you over at the White House and at various events, but obviously, I know that you came here to get something done. And I am looking forward to working with you every single day to make sure that we're doing right by the people who sent us here.

Now, I actually just changed the format here. I called an audible, because originally, the way this was scheduled was I was just going to talk and then I was going to shake some hands, and I thought, since this is not a shy bunch, it might make sense for me to take some questions and some advice I'm sure you guys have for me. [*Laughter*] So what I'm going to do is I'm just going to make s few points at the top, and then what I'd like is maybe Xavier or Steve or somebody can come up here, you can call on folks, and we'll spend a little time with Q and A before I get a chance to say hello to everybody.

And part of the reason I want to keep my remarks short is because I just made a pretty long speech a couple of weeks ago, and I'm about to make another one next week, and I don't want you guys tired of me. [*Laughter*]

But obviously, I'm deeply grateful to have been reelected, and I'm humbled by the support that I received from all across the country. And I said at the National Prayer Breakfast this morning—and I was telling the truth—I genuinely am humbled. The fascinating thing about this job is the longer you're in it, the more humble you get and the more you recognize your own imperfections. And you try to make up with effort and hard work those gaps in your personality or your intelligence that become so apparent to everybody on the daily news every day. [*Laughter*]

But even as I think it's important to be humbled by the privilege of this office and the privilege of serving in the United States Congress, even as it's important not to read too much into any particular political victory—because this country is big, it is diverse, it is contentious, and we don't have a monopoly on wisdom, and we need to remember that—despite all those things, I think it's also important for us to feel confident and bold about the values we care about and what we stand for.

And I tried to do that in my Inauguration speech, and I'm hoping that we all do that over the next 4 years. Because when I think about what it means to be a Democrat in this day and age, I start with the basic proposition that we are all created equal, that we're all endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. And my governing philosophy and my interest in public service grows out of how we make that Union more perfect for more people, day in, day out.

And that starts with an economy that works for everybody. Throughout my campaign, and throughout many of your campaigns, we talked about this bedrock notion that our economy succeeds and our economy grows when everybody is getting a fair shot and everybody is getting a fair shake and everybody is playing by the same rules. That we have an economy in which we're growing a vibrant middle class; that it grows from the middle out and the bottom up, not from the top down.

And over the next 4 years, as I work with this caucus and every caucus, the question I will ask myself on every item, every issue is, is this helping to make sure that everybody has got a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same rules. Because I believe that is a growth agenda—not just an equity agenda, not just a fairness agenda—that is a growth agenda. That is when we have grown fastest.

And that means that what you'll hear from me next week, I'm going to be talking about making sure that we're focused on job creation here in the United States of America. It means that we're focused on education and that every young person is equipped with the skills they need to compete in the 21st century. It means that we've got an energy agenda that can make us less dependent on foreign oil, but also that we're cultivating the kind of clean energy strategy that will maintain our leadership well into the future.

It means that we're going to talk about, yes, deficits and taxes and sequesters and potential Government shutdowns and debt ceiling. We'll talk about that stuff, but all from the perspective of how are we making sure that somebody who works hard in this country—a cop or a teacher or a construction worker or a receptionist—that they can make it if they work hard and that their kids can make it and dream even bigger dreams than they have achieved.

And obviously, a lot of what we'll be working on initially over the next few weeks is going to be on how do we deal with the sequester issue. And I just want to make this quick point. I had a press conference this week in which I reiterated, I am prepared, eager, and anxious to do a big deal, a big package that ends this governance by crisis, where every 2 weeks or every 2 months or every 6 months, we are threatening this hard-won recovery, where finally housing is starting to pick up, and commercial real estate is starting to do better, and the unemployment numbers are still too high, but we're seeing some job growth, and businesses are investing and manufacturing is doing well; and we continue to have these self-inflicted crises here in Washington that suddenly leads everybody to tap the brakes.

And so what I said this week was, I want to do something big to provide certainty and steadiness for the economy and for American families. And that means a balanced package that will reduce our long-term deficit and debt, but that still allows us to invest in those things that we need to grow right now, because that's also a deficit reduction agenda, us growing faster.

And in order to have a balanced package, that means that—we've already done a lot of cuts. We've done some revenue now. And so the rest of the way moving forward, we can do some additional reforms and make our health care programs work better and make them more efficient, and we can cut out programs that we don't need. But it also means that we've got to be able to close some tax loopholes and deductions that the average American cannot take advantage of, to raise the revenue to actually do the job in a way that allows us to continue to grow.

Now, the reason this is relevant is because I gather—and I haven't gotten this from firsthand sources, but from secondhand sources in the press—that our friends on the other side of

the aisle, their position is: We're concerned about the sequester. We recognize that just cutting the Federal spending with a meat ax, as opposed to scalpel, is probably damaging; it will damage our national security; it will damage our educational system. We'll have kids getting kicked off of Head Start. It will mean people who have disabled kids suddenly having less help.

They recognize that the sequester is a bad idea, but what they've suggested is that the only way to replace it now is for us to cut Social Security, cut Medicare, and not close a single loophole, not raise any additional revenue from the wealthiest Americans or corporations who have a lot of lawyers and accountants who are able to maneuver and manage and work and game the system.

And I have to tell you, if that's an argument that they want to have before the court of public opinion, that is an argument I'm more than willing to engage in. Because I believe the American people understand that yes, we need to reduce the deficit, but it shouldn't just be on the backs of seniors; it shouldn't just be on the backs of young people who are trying to get a college education; it should not just be on the backs of parents who are trying to give their kids a better start in life; that all of us have to participate; and that if, in fact, it's important for us to make sure we've got a strong national defense and that we reduce our spending in a smart way, we sure as heck should be willing to ask those of us who are luckiest in this society to close a few loopholes and deductions that the average American doesn't get.

And if that's the choice that we've got, I promise you we can win that debate, because we're on the right side of this argument. And I expect that you guys will be with me on that.

Last point I'll make: Obviously, economic growth is a priority, but making sure that we're opening up opportunity for everybody is also important. And that's why immigration reform is so critical. I said this is going to be a top priority and an early priority of my administration. I am heartened to see Republicans and Democrats starting to be in a serious conversation about getting this done. Now is the time.

I recognize that the politics aren't always easy. There are regional variations. I understand that in some places this may end up being a tough issue. But what I also know is that part of our strength is our youth and our dynamism and our history of attracting talent from all around the globe. And I've seen that talent in some of the young DREAMers that I've met who want to serve in our military, want to get an engineering degree, want to help build this country, want to start a business. And I want to make sure that that American future is secured.

So we need to get immigration reform done. And I'm going to be pushing hard to get it done early.

And we're also going to have to make sure that we keep the American people safe, which means that we're going to continue to work, even as we draw down our troops in Afghanistan, to go after those who would attack America.

And we've got to be mindful about steps we can take to end the cycle of gun violence in this country. And we should do so recognizing that, again, there are regional differences here, and we should respect those, and guns mean something different for somebody who grew up on a farm in a rural community than somebody who grew up in an inner city, and they're different realities, and we have to respect them. But what we know is the majority of responsible gun owners recognize we cannot have a situation in which 20 more of our children or a 100 more of our children or a 1,000 more of our children are shot and killed in a senseless fashion, and that there are some commonsense steps that we can take and build a consensus around. And we cannot be—we cannot shy away from taking those steps.

So the bottom line is this, people: We've got a lot of work to do. What we've learned over the last 4 years—at least what I've learned over the last 4 years—is that it won't be smooth; it won't be simple. There will be frustrations. There will be times when you guys are mad at me—[*laughter*]—and I'll occasionally read about it. But as long as we keep in mind why we came here in the first place, as long as we

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 Usama 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

reforming our Tax Code. As we speak, both the House and Senate are working towards budget proposals that, I hope, will lay out this kind of balanced path going forward.

But the budget process takes time. And right now, if Congress doesn't act by March 1, a series of harmful, automatic cuts to job-creating investment and defense spending, also known as the sequester, are scheduled to take effect. And the result could be a huge blow to middle class families and our economy as a whole.

If the sequester is allowed to go forward, thousands of Americans who work in fields like national security, education, or clean energy are likely to be laid off. Firefighters and food inspectors could also find themselves out of work, leaving our communities vulnerable. Programs like Head Start would be cut, and lifesaving research into diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's could be scaled back. Small businesses could be prevented from getting the resources and support they need to keep their doors open. People with disabilities who are waiting for their benefits could be forced to wait even longer. All our economic progress could be put at risk.

And then there's the impact on our military readiness. Already, the threat of deep cuts has forced the Navy to delay an aircraft carrier that was supposed to deploy to the Persian Gulf. As our military leaders have made clear, changes like this affect our ability to respond to threats in an unstable part of the world. And we'll be forced to make even more tough decisions in the weeks ahead if Congress fails to act.

The good news is, there's another option. Two months ago, we faced a similar deadline, and instead of making deep, indiscriminate cuts that would have cost jobs and slowed down our recovery, Democrats and Republicans came together and made responsible cuts and manageable changes to our Tax Code that will bring down our deficit. This time, Congress should pass a similar set of balanced cuts and close more tax loopholes until they can find a way to replace the sequester with a smarter, longer term solution.

Right now most Members of Congress, including many Republicans, don't think it's a good idea to put thousands of jobs at risk and do unnecessary damage to our economy. And yet the current Republican plan puts the burden of avoiding those cuts mainly on seniors and middle class families. They'd rather ask more from the vast majority of Americans and put our recovery at risk than close even a single tax loophole that benefits the wealthy.

Over the last few years, we've made good progress towards reducing our deficit in a balanced way. There's no reason we can't keep chipping away at this problem. And there's certainly no reason that middle class families and small businesses should suffer just because Washington couldn't come together and eliminate a few special interest tax loopholes or Government programs that just don't work. At a time when economists and business leaders from across the spectrum have said that our economy is poised for progress, we shouldn't allow self-inflicted wounds to put that progress in jeopardy.

So my message to Congress is this: Let's keep working together to solve this problem, and let's give our workers and our businesses the support they need to grow and to thrive.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:50 p.m. on February 8 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on February 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 8, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 9.

Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Clinton L. Romesha

February 11, 2013

The President. Please be seated, everybody. Good afternoon. And on behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House.

Every day at the White House, we receive thousands of letters from folks all across America. And at night, upstairs in my study, I read a few. About 3 years ago, I received a letter from a mom in West Virginia. Her son, Stephan, a specialist in the Army, just 21 years old, had given his life in Afghanistan. She had received the condolence letter that I'd sent to her family, as I send to every family of the fallen. And she wrote me back: "Mr. President," she said, "you wrote me a letter telling me that my son was a hero. I just wanted you to know what kind of hero he was."

"My son was a great soldier," she wrote. "As far back as I can remember, Stephan wanted to serve his country." She spoke of how he "loved his brothers in B Troop," how he "would do anything for them." And of the brave actions that would cost Stephan his life, she wrote, "His sacrifice was driven by pure love."

Today we are honored to be joined by Stephan's mother Vanessa and his father Larry. Please stand, Vanessa and Larry.

We're joined by the families of the seven other patriots who also gave their lives that day. Can we please have them stand so we can acknowledge them as well.

We're joined by members of Bravo Troop, whose courage that day was driven by pure love. And we gather to present the Medal of Honor to one of these soldiers: Staff Sergeant Clinton L. Romesha.

Clint, this is our Nation's highest military decoration. It reflects the gratitude of our entire country. So we're joined by Members of Congress; leaders from across our Armed Forces, including Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marty Dempsey, Army Secretary John McHugh, and Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno. We are especially honored to be joined by Clint's 4th Infantry Division—"Iron Horse"—soldiers, and members of the Medal of Honor Society, who today welcome you into their ranks.

Now, despite all this attention, you may already have a sense that Clint is a pretty humble guy. We just spent some time together in the Oval Office. He grew up in Lake City, California, population less than a hundred. We welcomed his family, including mom and dad, Tish and Gary. Clint—I hope he doesn't mind—he shared that Clint was actually born at home. These days, Clint works in the oilfields of North Dakota. He is a man of faith, and after more than a decade in uniform, he says the thing he looks forward to the most is just being a husband and a father.

In fact, this is not even the biggest event for Clint this week because tomorrow he and his wife Tammy will celebrate their 13th wedding anniversary. Clint and Tammy, this is probably not the kind of intimate anniversary you planned. [*Laughter*] But we're so glad that you're here, along with your three beautiful children: Dessi, Gwen, and Colin. Colin is not as shy as Clint. [*Laughter*] He was in the Oval Office, and he was racing around pretty good and sampled a number of the apples before he found the one that was just right. [*Laughter*]

Now, to truly understand the extraordinary actions for which Clint is being honored, you need to understand the almost unbelievable conditions under which he and B Troop served. This was a time, in 2009, when many of our troops still served in small, rugged outposts, even as our commanders were shifting their focus to larger towns and cities. So Combat Outpost Keating was a collection of buildings of concrete and plywood with trenches and sandbags.

Of all the outposts in Afghanistan, Keating was among the most remote. It sat at the bottom of a steep valley, surrounded by mountains, terrain that a later investigation said gave "ideal" cover for insurgents to attack. COP Keating, the investigation found, was "tactically

indefensible." But that's what these soldiers were asked to do: defend the indefensible.

The attack came in the morning, just as the Sun rose. Some of our guys were standing guard. Most, like Clint, were still sleeping. The explosions shook them out of their beds and sent them rushing for their weapons. And soon, the awful odds became clear: These 53 Americans were surrounded by more than 300 Taliban fighters.

What happened next has been described as one of the most intense battles of the entire war in Afghanistan. The attackers had the advantage: the high ground, the mountains above. And they were unleashing everything they had: rocket-propelled grenades, heavy machineguns, mortars, snipers taking aim. To those Americans down below, the fire was coming in from every single direction. They'd never seen anything like it.

With gunfire impacting all around him, Clint raced to one of the barracks and grabbed a machinegun. He took aim at one of the enemy machine teams and took it out. A rocket-propelled grenade exploded, sending shrapnel into his hip, his arm, and his neck. But he kept fighting, disregarding his own wounds, and tending to an injured comrade instead.

Then, over the radio, came words no soldier ever wants to hear: "Enemy in the wire." The Taliban had penetrated the camp. They were taking over buildings. The combat was close, at times as close as 10 feet. When Clint took aim at three of them, they never took another step.

But still, the enemy advanced. So the Americans pulled back, to buildings that were easier to defend, to make one last stand. One of them was later compared to the Alamo—one of them later compared it to the Alamo. Keating, it seemed, was going to be overrun. And that's when Clint Romesha decided to retake that camp.

Clint gathered up his guys, and they began to fight their way back, storming one building, then another, pushing the enemy back, having to actually shoot up at the enemy in the mountains above. By now, most of the camp was on fire. Amid the flames and smoke, Clint stood in a doorway, calling in airstrikes that shook the earth all around them.

Over the radio, they heard comrades who were pinned down in a Humvee. So Clint and his team unloaded everything they had into the enemy positions. And with that cover, three wounded Americans made their escape, including a grievously injured Stephan Mace.

But more Americans, their bodies, were still out there. And Clint Romesha lives the Soldier's Creed: "I will never leave a fallen comrade." So he and his team started charging as enemy fire poured down. And they kept charging: 50 meters; 80 meters; ultimately, a 100-meter run through a hail of bullets. And they reached their fallen friends, and they brought them home.

Now, throughout history, the question has often been asked, why? Why do those in uniform take such extraordinary risks? And what compels them to such courage? You ask Clint and any of these soldiers who are here today, and they'll tell you. Yes, they fight for their country, and they fight for our freedom. Yes, they fight to come home to their families. But most of all, they fight for each other, to keep each other safe and to have each other's backs.

When I called Clint to tell him that he would receive this medal, he said he was honored, but he also said, "It wasn't just me out there; it was a team effort." And so today we also honor this American team, including those who made the ultimate sacrifice: Private First Class Kevin Thomson, who would have turned 26 years old today; Sergeant Michael Scusa; Sergeant Joshua Kirk; Sergeant Christopher Griffin; Staff Sergeant Justin Gallegos; Staff Sergeant Vernon Martin; Sergeant Joshua Hardt; and Specialist Stephan Mace.

Each of these patriots gave their lives looking out for each other. In a battle that raged all day, that brand of selflessness was displayed again and again and again: soldiers exposing themselves to enemy fire to pull a comrade to safety, tending to each other's wounds, performing "buddy transfusions"—giving each other their own blood. And if you seek a measure of that day, you need to look no further than the medals and ribbons that

grace their chests: for their sustained heroism, 37 Army Commendation Medals; for their wounds, 27 Purple Hearts; for their valor, 18 Bronze Stars; for their gallantry, 9 Silver Stars.

These men were outnumbered, outgunned, and almost overrun. Looking back, one of them said, "I'm surprised any of us made it out." But they are here today, and I would ask these soldiers, this band of brothers, to stand and accept the gratitude of our entire Nation.

There were many lessons from COP Keating. One of them is that our troops should never, ever, be put in a position where they have to defend the indefensible. But that's what these soldiers did for each other, in sacrifice, driven by pure love. And because they did, eight grieving families were at least able to welcome their soldiers home one last time. And more than 40 American soldiers are alive today to carry on, to keep alive the memory of their fallen brothers, to help make sure that this country that we love so much remains strong and free.

What was it that turned the tide that day? How was it that so few Americans prevailed against so many? As we prepare for the reading of the citation, I leave you with the words of Clint himself, because they say something about our Army and they say something about America. They say something about our spirit, which will never be broken. "We weren't going to be beat that day," Clint said. "You're not going to back down in the face of adversity like that. We were just going to win, plain and simple."

God bless you, Clint Romesha, and all of your team. God bless all who serve. And God bless the United States of America.

With that, I'd like the citation to be read.

[*At this point, Maj. Gary Marlowe, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citation. The President then presented the medal, assisted by Lt. Col. Owen G. Ray, USA, Army Aide to the President. Following the presentation of the medal, Maj. Gen. Donald L. Rutherford, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains, said a prayer.*]

The President. Well, thank you, everybody. Most of all, thank you for Clint and the entire team for their extraordinary service and devotion to our country.

We're going to have an opportunity to celebrate, and there's going to be a wonderful reception. I hear the food around here is pretty good; I know the band is good; and Colin really needs to get down. [*Laughter*]

So enjoy, everybody. Give our newest recipient of the Medal of Honor a big round of applause once again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Martishia Rogers and Gary Romesha, parents of S. Sgt. Romesha. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citation.

Statement on the Resignation of Karen G. Mills as Administrator of the Small Business Administration
February 11, 2013

I want to thank Administrator Mills for her outstanding work on behalf of America's small-business owners and entrepreneurs. I asked Karen to lead the Small Business Administration because I knew she had the skills and experience to help America's small businesses recover from the worst economic crisis in generations, and that's exactly what she's done. Over the last 4 years, Karen has made it easier for small businesses to interact with the Federal Government by reducing paperwork and cutting through redtape. She has played a leading role in my administration's efforts to support startups and entrepreneurs. And she was instrumental in the passage of the Small Business Jobs Act. Because of Karen's hard work

and dedication, our small businesses are better positioned to create jobs and our entire economy is stronger. I want to thank Karen and am grateful for her service.

Statement on the Resignation of Pope Benedict XVI
February 11, 2013

On behalf of Americans everywhere, Michelle and I wish to extend our appreciation and prayers to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Michelle and I warmly remember our meeting with the Holy Father in 2009, and I have appreciated our work together over these last 4 years. The Church plays a critical role in the United States and the world, and I wish the best to those who will soon gather to choose His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI's successor.

Statement on the Situation in North Korea
February 12, 2013

North Korea announced today that it conducted a third nuclear test. This is a highly provocative act that, following its December 12 ballistic missile launch, undermines regional stability, violates North Korea's obligations under numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions, contravenes its commitments under the September 19, 2005, Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks and increases the risk of proliferation. North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs constitute a threat to U.S. national security and to international peace and security. The United States remains vigilant in the face of North Korean provocations and steadfast in our defense commitments to allies in the region.

These provocations do not make North Korea more secure. Far from achieving its stated goal of becoming a strong and prosperous nation, North Korea has instead increasingly isolated and impoverished its people through its ill-advised pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The danger posed by North Korea's threatening activities warrants further swift and credible action by the international community. The United States will also continue to take steps necessary to defend ourselves and our allies. We will strengthen close coordination with allies and partners and work with our six-party partners, the United Nations Security Council, and other U.N. member states to pursue firm action.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Prevent Violence Against Women
February 12, 2013

Today the Senate passed a strong bipartisan bill to reauthorize and strengthen the Violence Against Women Act. This important step shows what we can do when we come together across party lines to take up a just cause. The bill passed by the Senate will help reduce homicides that occur from domestic violence, improve the criminal justice response to rape and sexual assault, address the high rates of dating violence experienced by young women, and provide justice to the most vulnerable among us. I want to thank Senator Leahy and his colleagues from both sides of the aisle for the leadership they have shown on behalf of victims of abuse. It's now time for the House to follow suit and send this bill to my desk so that I can sign it into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 47.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union
February 12, 2013

Please, everybody, have a seat. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, fellow Americans: Fifty-one years ago, John F. Kennedy declared to this Chamber that "the Constitution makes us not rivals for power, but partners for progress." "It is my task," he said, "to report the state of the Union; to improve it is the task of us all."

Tonight, thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, there is much progress to report. After a decade of grinding war, our brave men and women in uniform are coming home. After years of grueling recession, our businesses have created over 6 million new jobs. We buy more American cars than we have in 5 years and less foreign oil than we have in 20. Our housing market is healing, our stock market is rebounding, and consumers, patients, and homeowners enjoy stronger protections than ever before.

So together, we have cleared away the rubble of crisis, and we can say with renewed confidence that the state of our Union is stronger.

But we gather here knowing that there are millions of Americans whose hard work and dedication have not yet been rewarded. Our economy is adding jobs, but too many people still can't find full-time employment. Corporate profits have skyrocketed to alltime highs, but for more than a decade, wages and incomes have barely budged.

It is our generation's task, then, to reignite the true engine of America's economic growth: a rising, thriving middle class.

It is our unfinished task to restore the basic bargain that built this country: the idea that if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like or who you love.

It is our unfinished task to make sure that this Government works on behalf of the many, and not just the few; that it encourages free enterprise, rewards individual initiative, and opens the doors of opportunity to every child across this great Nation.

The American people don't expect government to solve every problem. They don't expect those of us in this Chamber to agree on every issue. But they do expect us to put the Nation's interests before party. They do expect us to forge reasonable compromise where we can. For they know that America moves forward only when we do so together and that the responsibility of improving this Union remains the task of us all.

Now, our work must begin by making some basic decisions about our budget, decisions that will have a huge impact on the strength of our recovery.

Over the last few years, both parties have worked together to reduce the deficit by more than $2.5 trillion, mostly through spending cuts, but also by raising tax rates on the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. As a result, we are more than halfway towards the goal of $4 trillion in deficit reduction that economists say we need to stabilize our finances.

Now we need to finish the job. And the question is, how?

In 2011, Congress passed a law saying that if both parties couldn't agree on a plan to reach our deficit goal, about a trillion dollars' worth of budget cuts would automatically go into effect this year. These sudden, harsh, arbitrary cuts would jeopardize our military readiness. They'd devastate priorities like education and energy and medical research. They would certainly slow our recovery and cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs. And that's why Democrats, Republicans, business leaders, and economists have already said that these cuts—known here in Washington as the sequester—are a really bad idea.

Now, some in Congress have proposed preventing only the defense cuts by making even bigger cuts to things like education and job training, Medicare, and Social Security benefits. That idea is even worse.

Yes, the biggest driver of our long-term debt is the rising cost of health care for an aging population. And those of us who care deeply

about programs like Medicare must embrace the need for modest reforms; otherwise, our retirement programs will crowd out the investments we need for our children and jeopardize the promise of a secure retirement for future generations.

But we can't ask senior citizens and working families to shoulder the entire burden of deficit reduction while asking nothing more from the wealthiest and the most powerful. We won't grow the middle class simply by shifting the cost of health care or college onto families that are already struggling or by forcing communities to lay off more teachers and more cops and more firefighters. Most Americans—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents—understand that we can't just cut our way to prosperity. They know that broad-based economic growth requires a balanced approach to deficit reduction, with spending cuts and revenue and with everybody doing their fair share. And that's the approach I offer tonight.

On Medicare, I'm prepared to enact reforms that will achieve the same amount of health care savings by the beginning of the next decade as the reforms proposed by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles Commission.

Already, the Affordable Care Act is helping to slow the growth of health care costs. And the reforms I'm proposing go even further. We'll reduce taxpayer subsidies to prescription drug companies and ask more from the wealthiest seniors. We'll bring down costs by changing the way our Government pays for Medicare, because our medical bills shouldn't be based on the number of tests ordered or days spent in the hospital; they should be based on the quality of care that our seniors receive. And I am open to additional reforms from both parties, so long as they don't violate the guarantee of a secure retirement. Our Government shouldn't make promises we cannot keep, but we must keep the promises we've already made.

To hit the rest of our deficit reduction target, we should do what leaders in both parties have already suggested and save hundreds of billions of dollars by getting rid of tax loopholes and deductions for the well off and the well connected. After all, why would we choose to make deeper cuts to education and Medicare just to protect special interest tax breaks? How is that fair? Why is it that deficit reduction is a big emergency justifying making cuts in Social Security benefits, but not closing some loopholes? How does that promote growth?

Now is our best chance for bipartisan, comprehensive tax reform that encourages job creation and helps bring down the deficit. We can get this done. The American people deserve a Tax Code that helps small businesses spend less time filling out complicated forms and more time expanding and hiring; a Tax Code that ensures billionaires with high-powered accountants can't work the system and pay a lower rate than their hard-working secretaries; a Tax Code that lowers incentives to move jobs overseas and lowers tax rates for businesses and manufacturers that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America. That's what tax reform can deliver. That's what we can do together.

I realize that tax reform and entitlement reform will not be easy. The politics will be hard for both sides. None of us will get a hundred percent of what we want. But the alternative will cost us jobs, hurt our economy, visit hardship on millions of hard-working Americans. So let's set party interests aside and work to pass a budget that replaces reckless cuts with smart savings and wise investments in our future. And let's do it without the brinksmanship that stresses consumers and scares off investors. The greatest nation on Earth cannot keep conducting its business by drifting from one manufactured crisis to the next. We can't do it.

Let's agree right here, right now to keep the people's Government open and pay our bills on time and always uphold the full faith and credit of the United States of America. The American people have worked too hard, for too long, rebuilding from one crisis to see their elected officials cause another.

Now, most of us agree that a plan to reduce the deficit must be part of our agenda. But let's be clear: Deficit reduction alone is not an economic plan. A growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs, that must be the north

star that guides our efforts. Every day, we should ask ourselves three questions as a nation: How do we attract more jobs to our shores? How do we equip our people with the skills they need to get those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

Now, a year and a half ago, I put forward an American Jobs Act that independent economists said would create more than 1 million new jobs. And I thank the last Congress for passing some of that agenda. I urge this Congress to pass the rest. But tonight I'll lay out additional proposals that are fully paid for and fully consistent with the budget framework both parties agreed to just 18 months ago. Let me repeat: Nothing I'm proposing tonight should increase our deficit by a single dime. It is not a bigger Government we need, but a smarter Government that sets priorities and invests in broad-based growth. That's what we should be looking for.

Our first priority is making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing. After shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have added about 500,000 jobs over the past 3. Caterpillar is bringing jobs back from Japan. Ford is bringing jobs back from Mexico. And this year, Apple will start making Macs in America again.

There are things we can do right now to accelerate this trend. Last year, we created our first manufacturing innovation institute in Youngstown, Ohio. A once-shuttered warehouse is now a state-of-the-art lab where new workers are mastering the 3–D printing that has the potential to revolutionize the way we make almost everything. There's no reason this can't happen in other towns.

So tonight I'm announcing the launch of three more of these manufacturing hubs, where businesses will partner with the Department of Defense and Energy to turn regions left behind by globalization into global centers of high-tech jobs. And I ask this Congress to help create a network of 15 of these hubs and guarantee that the next revolution in manufacturing is made right here in America. We can get that done.

Now, if we want to make the best products, we also have to invest in the best ideas. Every dollar we invested to map the human genome returned $140 to our economy—every dollar. Today, our scientists are mapping the human brain to unlock the answers to Alzheimer's. They're developing drugs to regenerate damaged organs, devising new materials to make batteries 10 times more powerful. Now is not the time to gut these job-creating investments in science and innovation, now is the time to reach a level of research and development not seen since the height of the space race. We need to make those investments.

Today, no area holds more promise than our investments in American energy. After years of talking about it, we're finally poised to control our own energy future. We produce more oil at home than we have in 15 years. We have doubled the distance our cars will go on a gallon of gas and the amount of renewable energy we generate from sources like wind and solar, with tens of thousands of good American jobs to show for it. We produce more natural gas than ever before, and nearly everyone's energy bill is lower because of it. And over the last 4 years, our emissions of the dangerous carbon pollution that threatens our planet have actually fallen.

But for the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change. Now, it's true that no single event makes a trend. But the fact is, the 12 hottest years on record have all come in the last 15. Heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods—all are now more frequent and more intense. We can choose to believe that Superstorm Sandy and the most severe drought in decades and the worst wildfires some States have ever seen were all just a freak coincidence. Or we can choose to believe in the overwhelming judgment of science and act before it's too late.

Now, the good news is we can make meaningful progress on this issue while driving strong economic growth. I urge this Congress to get together, pursue a bipartisan, market-based solution to climate change, like the one John McCain and Joe Lieberman worked on together a few years ago. But if Congress won't act soon to protect future generations, I will. I

will direct my Cabinet to come up with executive actions we can take, now and in the future, to reduce pollution, prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change, and speed the transition to more sustainable sources of energy.

And 4 years ago, other countries dominated the clean energy market and the jobs that came with it. And we've begun to change that. Last year, wind energy added nearly half of all new power capacity in America. So let's generate even more. Solar energy gets cheaper by the year; let's drive down costs even further. As long as countries like China keep going all in on clean energy, so must we.

Now, in the meantime, the natural gas boom has led to cleaner power and greater energy independence. We need to encourage that. And that's why my administration will keep cutting redtape and speeding up new oil and gas permits. That's got to be part of an all-of-the-above plan. But I also want to work with this Congress to encourage the research and technology that helps natural gas burn even cleaner and protects our air and our water.

In fact, much of our new-found energy is drawn from lands and waters that we, the public, own together. So tonight I propose we use some of our oil and gas revenues to fund an energy security trust that will drive new research and technology to shift our cars and trucks off oil for good. If a nonpartisan coalition of CEOs and retired generals and admirals can get behind this idea, then so can we. Let's take their advice and free our families and businesses from the painful spikes in gas prices we've put up with for far too long.

I'm also issuing a new goal for America: Let's cut in half the energy wasted by our homes and businesses over the next 20 years. We'll work with the States to do it. Those States with the best ideas to create jobs and lower energy bills by constructing more efficient buildings will receive Federal support to help make that happen.

America's energy sector is just one part of an aging infrastructure badly in need of repair. Ask any CEO where they'd rather locate and hire, a country with deteriorating roads and bridges or one with high-speed rail and Internet, high-tech schools, self-healing power grids. The CEO of Siemens America—a company that brought hundreds of new jobs to North Carolina—said that if we upgrade our infrastructure, they'll bring even more jobs. And that's the attitude of a lot of companies all around the world. And I know you want these job-creating projects in your district. I've seen all those ribbon-cuttings. [*Laughter*]

So tonight I propose a Fix-It-First program to put people to work as soon as possible on our most urgent repairs, like the nearly 70,000 structurally deficient bridges across the country. And to make sure taxpayers don't shoulder the whole burden, I'm also proposing a partnership to rebuild America that attracts private capital to upgrade what our businesses need most: modern ports to move our goods, modern pipelines to withstand a storm, modern schools worthy of our children. Let's prove there's no better place to do business than here in the United States of America, and let's start right away. We can get this done.

And part of our rebuilding effort must also involve our housing sector. The good news is, our housing market is finally healing from the collapse of 2007. Home prices are rising at the fastest pace in 6 years. Home purchases are up nearly 50 percent, and construction is expanding again.

But even with mortgage rates near a 50-year low, too many families with solid credit who want to buy a home are being rejected. Too many families who never missed a payment and want to refinance are being told no. That's holding our entire economy back. We need to fix it.

Right now there's a bill in this Congress that would give every responsible homeowner in America the chance to save $3,000 a year by refinancing at today's rates. Democrats and Republicans have supported it before, so what are we waiting for? Take a vote and send me that bill. Why are—why would we be against that? Why would that be a partisan issue, helping folks refinance? Right now overlapping regulations keep responsible young families from buying their first home. What's holding

us back? Let's streamline the process and help our economy grow.

These initiatives in manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, housing, all these things will help entrepreneurs and small-business owners expand and create new jobs. But none of it will matter unless we also equip our citizens with the skills and training to fill those jobs.

And that has to start at the earliest possible age. Study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But today, fewer than 3 in 10 4-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program. Most middle class parents can't afford a few hundred bucks a week for a private preschool. And for poor kids who need help the most, this lack of access to preschool education can shadow them for the rest of their lives. So tonight I propose working with States to make high-quality preschool available to every single child in America. That's something we should be able to do.

Every dollar we invest in high-quality early childhood education can save more than $7 later on: by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing violent crime. In States that make it a priority to educate our youngest children, like Georgia or Oklahoma, studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance.

Let's also make sure that a high school diploma puts our kids on a path to a good job. Right now countries like Germany focus on graduating their high school students with the equivalent of a technical degree from one of our community colleges. So those German kids, they're ready for a job when they graduate high school. They've been trained for the jobs that are there. Now at schools like P–TECH in Brooklyn, a collaboration between New York Public Schools and City University of New York and IBM, students will graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree in computers or engineering. We need to give every American student opportunities like this.

And 4 years ago, we started Race to the Top, a competition that convinced almost every State to develop smarter curricula and higher standards, all for about 1 percent of what we spend on education each year. Tonight I'm announcing a new challenge to redesign America's high schools so they better equip graduates for the demands of a high-tech economy. And we'll reward schools that develop new partnerships with colleges and employers and create classes that focus on science, technology, engineering, and math: the skills today's employers are looking for to fill the jobs that are there right now and will be there in the future.

Now, even with better high schools, most young people will need some higher education. It's a simple fact: The more education you've got, the more likely you are to have a good job and work your way into the middle class. But today, skyrocketing costs price too many young people out of a higher education or saddle them with unsustainable debt.

Through tax credits, grants, and better loans, we've made college more affordable for millions of students and families over the last few years. But taxpayers can't keep on subsidizing higher and higher and higher costs for higher education. Colleges must do their part to keep costs down, and it's our job to make sure that they do.

So tonight I ask Congress to change the Higher Education Act so that affordability and value are included in determining which colleges receive certain types of Federal aid. And tomorrow my administration will release a new college scorecard that parents and students can use to compare schools based on a simple criterion: where you can get the most bang for your educational buck.

Now, to grow our middle class, our citizens have to have access to the education and training that today's jobs require. But we also have to make sure that America remains a place where everyone who's willing to work—everybody who's willing to work hard—has the chance to get ahead.

Our economy is stronger when we harness the talents and ingenuity of striving, hopeful immigrants. And right now leaders from the business, labor, law enforcement, faith communities, they all agree that the time has come to pass comprehensive immigration reform. Now is the time to do it. Now is the time to get it done. [*Applause*] Now is the time to get it done.

Real reform means stronger border security, and we can build on the progress my administration has already made: putting more boots on the southern border than at any time in our history and reducing illegal crossings to their lowest levels in 40 years.

Real reform means establishing a responsible pathway to earned citizenship, a path that includes passing a background check, paying taxes and a meaningful penalty, learning English, and going to the back of the line behind the folks trying to come here legally.

And real reform means fixing the legal immigration system to cut waiting periods and attract the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers that will help create jobs and grow our economy.

In other words, we know what needs to be done. And as we speak, bipartisan groups in both Chambers are working diligently to draft a bill, and I applaud their efforts. So let's get this done. Send me a comprehensive immigration reform bill in the next few months, and I will sign it right away. And America will be better for it. Let's get it done. [*Applause*] Let's get it done.

But we can't stop there. We know our economy is stronger when our wives, our mothers, our daughters can live their lives free from discrimination in the workplace and free from the fear of domestic violence. Today the Senate passed the Violence Against Women's Act that Joe Biden originally wrote almost 20 years ago. And I now urge the House to do the same. Good job, Joe. And I ask this Congress to declare that women should earn a living equal to their efforts, and finally pass the "Paycheck Fairness Act" this year.

We know our economy is stronger when we reward an honest day's work with honest wages. But today, a full-time worker making the minimum wage earns $14,500 a year. Even with the tax relief we put in place, a family with two kids that earns the minimum wage still lives below the poverty line. That's wrong. That's why, since the last time this Congress raised the minimum wage, 19 States have chosen to bump theirs even higher.

Tonight let's declare that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty and raise the Federal minimum wage to $9 an hour. We should be able to get that done.

This single step would raise the incomes of millions of working families. It could mean the difference between groceries or the food bank, rent or eviction, scraping by or finally getting ahead. For businesses across the country, it would mean customers with more money in their pockets. And a whole lot of folks out there would probably need less help from government. In fact, working folks shouldn't have to wait year after year for the minimum wage to go up while CEO pay has never been higher. So here's an idea that Governor Romney and I actually agreed on last year: Let's tie the minimum wage to the cost of living so that it finally becomes a wage you can live on.

Tonight let's also recognize that there are communities in this country where no matter how hard you work, it is virtually impossible to get ahead: factory towns decimated from years of plants packing up; inescapable pockets of poverty, urban and rural, where young adults are still fighting for their first job. America is not a place where the chance of birth or circumstance should decide our destiny. And that's why we need to build new ladders of opportunity into the middle class for all who are willing to climb them.

Let's offer incentives to companies that hire Americans who've got what it takes to fill that job opening, but have been out of work so long that no one will give them a chance anymore. Let's put people back to work rebuilding vacant homes in rundown neighborhoods. And this year, my administration will begin to partner with 20 of the hardest hit towns in America to get these communities back on their feet.

Now, we'll work with local leaders to target resources at public safety and education and housing.

We'll give new tax credits to businesses that hire and invest. And we'll work to strengthen families by removing the financial deterrents to marriage for low-income couples and do more to encourage fatherhood, because what makes you a man isn't the ability to conceive a child, it's having the courage to raise one. And we want to encourage that. We want to help that.

Stronger families. Stronger communities. A stronger America. It is this kind of prosperity—broad, shared, built on a thriving middle class—that has always been the source of our progress at home. It's also the foundation of our power and influence throughout the world.

Tonight we stand united in saluting the troops and civilians who sacrifice every day to protect us. Because of them, we can say with confidence that America will complete its mission in Afghanistan and achieve our objective of defeating the core of Al Qaida.

Already, we have brought home 33,000 of our brave service men and women. This spring, our forces will move into a support role, while Afghan security forces take the lead. Tonight I can announce that over the next year, another 34,000 American troops will come home from Afghanistan. This drawdown will continue, and by the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will be over.

Beyond 2014, America's commitment to a unified and sovereign Afghanistan will endure, but the nature of our commitment will change. We're negotiating an agreement with the Afghan Government that focuses on two missions: training and equipping Afghan forces so that the country does not again slip into chaos and counterterrorism efforts that allow us to pursue the remnants of Al Qaida and their affiliates.

Today, the organization that attacked us on 9/11 is a shadow of its former self. It's true, different Al Qaida affiliates and extremist groups have emerged, from the Arabian Peninsula to Africa. The threat these groups pose is evolving. But to meet this threat, we don't need to send tens of thousands of our sons and daughters abroad or occupy other nations. Instead, we'll need to help countries like Yemen and Libya and Somalia provide for their own security and help allies who take the fight to terrorists, as we have in Mali. And where necessary, through a range of capabilities, we will continue to take direct action against those terrorists who pose the gravest threat to Americans.

Now, as we do, we must enlist our values in the fight. That's why my administration has worked tirelessly to forge a durable legal and policy framework to guide our counterterrorism efforts. Throughout, we have kept Congress fully informed of our efforts. I recognize that in our democracy, no one should just take my word for it that we're doing things the right way. So, in the months ahead, I will continue to engage Congress to ensure not only that our targeting, detention, and prosecution of terrorists remains consistent with our laws and system of checks and balances, but that our efforts are even more transparent to the American people and to the world.

Of course, our challenges don't end with Al Qaida. America will continue to lead the effort to prevent the spread of the world's most dangerous weapons. The regime in North Korea must know they will only achieve security and prosperity by meeting their international obligations. Provocations of the sort we saw last night will only further isolate them, as we stand by our allies, strengthen our own missile defense, and lead the world in taking firm action in response to these threats.

Likewise, the leaders of Iran must recognize that now is the time for a diplomatic solution, because a coalition stands united in demanding that they meet their obligations, and we will do what is necessary to prevent them from getting a nuclear weapon.

At the same time, we'll engage Russia to seek further reductions in our nuclear arsenals and continue leading the global effort to secure nuclear materials that could fall into the wrong hands, because our ability to influence others depends on our willingness to lead and meet our obligations.

America must also face the rapidly growing threat from cyber attacks. Now, we know hackers steal people's identities and infiltrate private e-mails. We know foreign countries and companies swipe our corporate secrets. Now our enemies are also seeking the ability to sabotage our power grid, our financial institutions, our air traffic control systems. We cannot look back years from now and wonder why we did nothing in the face of real threats to our security and our economy.

And that's why, earlier today, I signed a new Executive order that will strengthen our cyber defenses by increasing information sharing and developing standards to protect our national security, our jobs, and our privacy.

But now Congress must act as well, by passing legislation to give our Government a greater capacity to secure our networks and deter attacks. This is something we should be able to get done on a bipartisan basis.

Now, even as we protect our people, we should remember that today's world presents not just dangers, not just threats, it presents opportunities. To boost American exports, support American jobs and level the playing field in the growing markets of Asia, we intend to complete negotiations on a Trans-Pacific Partnership. And tonight I'm announcing that we will launch talks on a comprehensive Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the European Union, because trade that is fair and free across the Atlantic supports millions of good-paying American jobs.

We also know that progress in the most impoverished parts of our world enriches us all, not only because it creates new markets, more stable order in certain regions of the world, but also because it's the right thing to do. In many places, people live on little more than a dollar a day. So the United States will join with our allies to eradicate such extreme poverty in the next two decades by connecting more people to the global economy, by empowering women, by giving our young and brightest minds new opportunities to serve and helping communities to feed and power and educate themselves, by saving the world's children from preventable deaths, and by realizing the promise of an AIDS-free generation, which is within our reach.

You see, America must remain a beacon to all who seek freedom during this period of historic change. I saw the power of hope last year in Rangoon, in Burma, when Aung San Suu Kyi welcomed an American President into the home where she had been imprisoned for years; when thousands of Burmese lined the streets, waving American flags, including a man who said: "There is justice and law in the United States. I want our country to be like that."

In defense of freedom, we'll remain the anchor of strong alliances from the Americas to Africa, from Europe to Asia. In the Middle East, we will stand with citizens as they demand their universal rights and support stable transitions to democracy.

We know the process will be messy, and we cannot presume to dictate the course of change in countries like Egypt, but we can and will insist on respect for the fundamental rights of all people. We'll keep the pressure on a Syrian regime that has murdered its own people and support opposition leaders that respect the rights of every Syrian. And we will stand steadfast with Israel in pursuit of security and a lasting peace.

These are the messages I'll deliver when I travel to the Middle East next month. And all this work depends on the courage and sacrifice of those who serve in dangerous places at great personal risk: our diplomats, our intelligence officers, and the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. As long as I'm Commander in Chief, we will do whatever we must to protect those who serve their country abroad, and we will maintain the best military the world has ever known.

We'll invest in new capabilities, even as we reduce waste and wartime spending. We will ensure equal treatment for all servicemembers and equal benefits for their families, gay and straight. We will draw upon the courage and skills of our sisters and daughters and moms, because women have proven under fire that they are ready for combat.

We will keep faith with our veterans, investing in world-class care—including mental health care—for our wounded warriors, supporting our military families, giving our veterans the benefits and education and job opportunities that they have earned. And I want to thank my wife Michelle and Dr. Jill Biden for their continued dedication to serving our military families as well as they have served us. Thank you, honey. Thank you, Jill.

Defending our freedom, though, is not just the job of our military alone. We must all do our part to make sure our God-given rights are protected here at home. That includes one of the most fundamental rights of a democracy: the right to vote. Now, when any American, no matter where they live or what their party, are denied that right because they can't afford to wait for 5 or 6 or 7 hours just to cast their ballot, we are betraying our ideals.

So tonight I'm announcing a nonpartisan commission to improve the voting experience in America. And it definitely needs improvement. I'm asking two long-time experts in the field—who, by the way, recently served as the top attorneys for my campaign and for Governor Romney's campaign—to lead it. We can fix this, and we will. The American people demand it, and so does our democracy.

Of course, what I've said tonight matters little if we don't come together to protect our most precious resource: our children. It has been 2 months since Newtown. I know this is not the first time this country has debated how to reduce gun violence. But this time is different. Overwhelming majorities of Americans—Americans who believe in the Second Amendment—have come together around commonsense reform, like background checks that will make it harder for criminals to get their hands on a gun. Senators of both parties are working together on tough new laws to prevent anyone from buying guns for resale to criminals. Police chiefs are asking our help to get weapons of war and massive ammunition magazines off our streets, because these police chiefs, they're tired of seeing their guys and gals being outgunned.

Each of these proposals deserves a vote in Congress. Now, if you want to vote no, that's your choice. But these proposals deserve a vote. Because in the 2 months since Newtown, more than a thousand birthdays, graduations, anniversaries have been stolen from our lives by a bullet from a gun—more than a thousand.

One of those we lost was a young girl named Hadiya Pendleton. She was 15 years old. She loved Fig Newtons and lip gloss. She was a majorette. She was so good to her friends, they all thought they were her best friend. Just 3 weeks ago, she was here, in Washington, with her classmates, performing for her country at my Inauguration. And a week later, she was shot and killed in a Chicago park after school, just a mile away from my house.

Hadiya's parents, Nate and Cleo, are in this Chamber tonight, along with more than two dozen Americans whose lives have been torn apart by gun violence. They deserve a vote. They deserve a vote. [*Applause*] They deserve a vote. Gabby Giffords deserves a vote. The families of Newtown deserve a vote. The families of Aurora deserve a vote. The families of Oak Creek and Tucson and Blacksburg, and the countless other communities ripped open by gun violence, they deserve a simple vote. They deserve a simple vote.

Our actions will not prevent every senseless act of violence in this country. In fact, no laws, no initiatives, no administrative acts will perfectly solve all the challenges I've outlined tonight. But we were never sent here to be perfect. We were sent here to make what difference we can, to secure this Nation, expand opportunity, uphold our ideals through the hard, often frustrating, but absolutely necessary work of self-government.

We were sent here to look out for our fellow Americans the same way they look out for one another, every single day, usually without fanfare, all across this country. We should follow their example.

We should follow the example of a New York City nurse named Menchu Sanchez. When Hurricane Sandy plunged her hospital into darkness, she wasn't thinking about how her own home was faring. Her mind was on the

20 precious newborns in her care and the rescue plan she devised that kept them all safe.

We should follow the example of a North Miami woman named Desiline Victor. When Desiline arrived at her polling place, she was told the wait to vote might be 6 hours. And as time ticked by, her concern was not with her tired body or aching feet, but whether folks like her would get to have their say. And hour after hour, a throng of people stayed in line to support her, because Desiline is 102 years old. And they erupted in cheers when she finally put on a sticker that read, "I voted." [*Applause*] There's Desiline.

We should follow the example of a police officer named Brian Murphy. When a gunman opened fire on a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and Brian was the first to arrive—and he did not consider his own safety. He fought back until help arrived and ordered his fellow officers to protect the safety of the Americans worshiping inside, even as he lay bleeding from 12 bullet wounds. And when asked how he did that, Brian said, "That's just the way we're made."

That's just the way we're made. We may do different jobs and wear different uniforms and hold different views than the person beside us. But as Americans, we all share the same proud title: We are citizens. It's a word that doesn't just describe our nationality or legal status. It describes the way we're made. It describes what we believe. It captures the enduring idea that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future generations; that our rights are wrapped up in the rights of others; and that well into our third century as a nation, it remains the task of us all, as citizens of these United States, to be the authors of the next great chapter of our American story.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 p.m. in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson, Cochairs, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform; former Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman; Eric A. Spiegel, president and chief executive officer, Siemens Corporation; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; Member of Parliament and National League for Democracy Party Leader Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma; Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; former White House Counsel Robert F. Bauer and Benjamin L. Ginsberg, partner, Patton Boggs LLP, in their capacity as Cochairs of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration; Nathaniel Pendleton and Cleopatra Crowley-Pendleton, parents of Hadiya Z. Pendleton, who was killed in Chicago, IL, on January 29; former Rep. Gabrielle D. Giffords; Menchu de Luna Sanchez, registered nurse, New York University Langone Medical Center; and Lt. Brian Murphy, Oak Creek Police Department in Oak Creek, WI. He also referred to S. 47.

Directive on Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience
February 12, 2013

Presidential Policy Directive/PPD–21

Subject: Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience

The Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) on Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience advances a national unity of effort to strengthen and maintain secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure.

Introduction

The Nation's critical infrastructure provides the essential services that underpin American society. Proactive and coordinated efforts are necessary to strengthen and maintain secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure—including assets, networks, and systems—that are vital to public confidence and the Nation's safety, prosperity, and well-being.

The Nation's critical infrastructure is diverse and complex. It includes distributed networks, varied organizational structures and operating models (including multinational ownership), interdependent functions and systems in both the physical space and cyberspace, and governance constructs that involve multi-level authorities, responsibilities, and regulations. Critical infrastructure owners and operators are uniquely positioned to manage risks to their individual operations and assets, and to determine effective strategies to make them more secure and resilient.

Critical infrastructure must be secure and able to withstand and rapidly recover from all hazards. Achieving this will require integration with the national preparedness system across prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

This directive establishes national policy on critical infrastructure security and resilience. This endeavor is a shared responsibility among the Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) entities, and public and private owners and operators of critical infrastructure (herein referred to as "critical infrastructure owners and operators"). This directive also refines and clarifies the critical infrastructure-related functions, roles, and responsibilities across the Federal Government, as well as enhances overall coordination and collaboration. The Federal Government also has a responsibility to strengthen the security and resilience of its own critical infrastructure, for the continuity of national essential functions, and to organize itself to partner effectively with and add value to the security and resilience efforts of critical infrastructure owners and operators.

Policy

It is the policy of the United States to strengthen the security and resilience of its critical infrastructure against both physical and cyber threats. The Federal Government shall work with critical infrastructure owners and operators and SLTT entities to take proactive steps to manage risk and strengthen the security and resilience of the Nation's critical infrastructure, considering all hazards that could have a debilitating impact on national security, economic stability, public health and safety, or any combination thereof. These efforts shall seek to reduce vulnerabilities, minimize consequences, identify and disrupt threats, and hasten response and recovery efforts related to critical infrastructure.

The Federal Government shall also engage with international partners to strengthen the security and resilience of domestic critical infrastructure and critical infrastructure located outside of the United States on which the Nation depends.

U.S. efforts shall address the security and resilience of critical infrastructure in an integrated, holistic manner to reflect this infrastructure's interconnectedness and interdependency. This directive also identifies energy and communications systems as uniquely critical due to the enabling functions they provide across all critical infrastructure sectors.

Three strategic imperatives shall drive the Federal approach to strengthen critical infrastructure security and resilience:

1) Refine and clarify functional relationships across the Federal Government to advance the national unity of effort to strengthen critical infrastructure security and resilience;

2) Enable effective information exchange by identifying baseline data and systems requirements for the Federal Government; and

3) Implement an integration and analysis function to inform planning and operations decisions regarding critical infrastructure.

All Federal department and agency heads are responsible for the identification, prioritization, assessment, remediation, and security of their respective internal critical infrastructure that supports primary mission essential functions. Such infrastructure shall be addressed in the plans and execution of the requirements in the National Continuity Policy.

Federal departments and agencies shall implement this directive in a manner consistent with applicable law, Presidential directives,

and Federal regulations, including those protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. In addition, Federal departments and agencies shall protect all information associated with carrying out this directive consistent with applicable legal authorities and policies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation of this directive requires a national unity of effort pursuant to strategic guidance from the Secretary of Homeland Security. That national effort must include expertise and day-to-day engagement from the Sector-Specific Agencies (SSAs) as well as the specialized or support capabilities from other Federal departments and agencies, and strong collaboration with critical infrastructure owners and operators and SLTT entities. Although the roles and responsibilities identified in this directive are directed at Federal departments and agencies, effective partnerships with critical infrastructure owners and operators and SLTT entities are imperative to strengthen the security and resilience of the Nation's critical infrastructure.

Secretary of Homeland Security

The Secretary of Homeland Security shall provide strategic guidance, promote a national unity of effort, and coordinate the overall Federal effort to promote the security and resilience of the Nation's critical infrastructure. In carrying out the responsibilities assigned in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, the Secretary of Homeland Security evaluates national capabilities, opportunities, and challenges in protecting critical infrastructure; analyzes threats to, vulnerabilities of, and potential consequences from all hazards on critical infrastructure; identifies security and resilience functions that are necessary for effective public-private engagement with all critical infrastructure sectors; develops a national plan and metrics, in coordination with SSAs and other critical infrastructure partners; integrates and coordinates Federal cross-sector security and resilience activities; identifies and analyzes key interdependencies among critical infrastructure sectors; and reports on the effectiveness of national efforts to strengthen the Nation's security and resilience posture for critical infrastructure.

Additional roles and responsibilities for the Secretary of Homeland Security include:

1) Identify and prioritize critical infrastructure, considering physical and cyber threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences, in coordination with SSAs and other Federal departments and agencies;

2) Maintain national critical infrastructure centers that shall provide a situational awareness capability that includes integrated, actionable information about emerging trends, imminent threats, and the status of incidents that may impact critical infrastructure;

3) In coordination with SSAs and other Federal departments and agencies, provide analysis, expertise, and other technical assistance to critical infrastructure owners and operators and facilitate access to and exchange of information and intelligence necessary to strengthen the security and resilience of critical infrastructure;

4) Conduct comprehensive assessments of the vulnerabilities of the Nation's critical infrastructure in coordination with the SSAs and in collaboration with SLTT entities and critical infrastructure owners and operators;

5) Coordinate Federal Government responses to significant cyber or physical incidents affecting critical infrastructure consistent with statutory authorities;

6) Support the Attorney General and law enforcement agencies with their responsibilities to investigate and prosecute threats to and attacks against critical infrastructure;

7) Coordinate with and utilize the expertise of SSAs and other appropriate Federal departments and agencies to map geospatially, image, analyze, and sort critical

infrastructure by employing commercial satellite and airborne systems, as well as existing capabilities within other departments and agencies; and

8) Report annually on the status of national critical infrastructure efforts as required by statute.

Sector-Specific Agencies

Each critical infrastructure sector has unique characteristics, operating models, and risk profiles that benefit from an identified Sector-Specific Agency that has institutional knowledge and specialized expertise about the sector. Recognizing existing statutory or regulatory authorities of specific Federal departments and agencies, and leveraging existing sector familiarity and relationships, SSAs shall carry out the following roles and responsibilities for their respective sectors:

1) As part of the broader national effort to strengthen the security and resilience of critical infrastructure, coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other relevant Federal departments and agencies and collaborate with critical infrastructure owners and operators, where appropriate with independent regulatory agencies, and with SLTT entities, as appropriate, to implement this directive;

2) Serve as a day-to-day Federal interface for the dynamic prioritization and coordination of sector-specific activities;

3) Carry out incident management responsibilities consistent with statutory authority and other appropriate policies, directives, or regulations;

4) Provide, support, or facilitate technical assistance and consultations for that sector to identify vulnerabilities and help mitigate incidents, as appropriate; and

5) Support the Secretary of Homeland Security's statutorily required reporting requirements by providing on an annual basis sector-specific critical infrastructure information.

Additional Federal Responsibilities

The following departments and agencies have specialized or support functions related to critical infrastructure security and resilience that shall be carried out by, or along with, other Federal departments and agencies and independent regulatory agencies, as appropriate.

1) The Department of State, in coordination with DHS, SSAs, and other Federal departments and agencies, shall engage foreign governments and international organizations to strengthen the security and resilience of critical infrastructure located outside the United States and to facilitate the overall exchange of best practices and lessons learned for promoting the security and resilience of critical infrastructure on which the Nation depends.

2) The Department of Justice (DOJ), including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), shall lead counterterrorism and counterintelligence investigations and related law enforcement activities across the critical infrastructure sectors. DOJ shall investigate, disrupt, prosecute, and otherwise reduce foreign intelligence, terrorist, and other threats to, and actual or attempted attacks on, or sabotage of, the Nation's critical infrastructure. The FBI also conducts domestic collection, analysis, and dissemination of cyber threat information, and shall be responsible for the operation of the National Cyber Investigative Joint Task Force (NCIJTF). The NCIJTF serves as a multi-agency national focal point for coordinating, integrating, and sharing pertinent information related to cyber threat investigations, with representation from DHS, the Intelligence Community (IC), the Department of Defense (DOD), and other agencies as appropriate. The Attorney General and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall collaborate to carry out their respective critical infrastructure missions.

3) The Department of the Interior, in collaboration with the SSA for the Government Facilities Sector, shall identify, prioritize, and coordinate the security and resilience efforts for national monuments and icons and incorporate measures to reduce risk to these critical assets, while also promoting their use and enjoyment.

4) The Department of Commerce (DOC), in collaboration with DHS and other relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall engage private sector, research, academic, and government organizations to improve security for technology and tools related to cyber-based systems, and promote the development of other efforts related to critical infrastructure to enable the timely availability of industrial products, materials, and services to meet homeland security requirements.

5) The IC, led by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), shall use applicable authorities and coordination mechanisms to provide, as appropriate, intelligence assessments regarding threats to critical infrastructure and coordinate on intelligence and other sensitive or proprietary information related to critical infrastructure. In addition, information security policies, directives, standards, and guidelines for safeguarding national security systems shall be overseen as directed by the President, applicable law, and in accordance with that direction, carried out under the authority of the heads of agencies that operate or exercise authority over such national security systems.

6) The General Services Administration, in consultation with DOD, DHS, and other departments and agencies as appropriate, shall provide or support government-wide contracts for critical infrastructure systems and ensure that such contracts include audit rights for the security and resilience of critical infrastructure.

7) The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is to oversee its licensees' protection of commercial nuclear power reactors and non-power nuclear reactors used for research, testing, and training; nuclear materials in medical, industrial, and academic settings, and facilities that fabricate nuclear fuel; and the transportation, storage, and disposal of nuclear materials and waste. The NRC is to collaborate, to the extent possible, with DHS, DOJ, the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other Federal departments and agencies, as appropriate, on strengthening critical infrastructure security and resilience.

8) The Federal Communications Commission, to the extent permitted by law, is to exercise its authority and expertise to partner with DHS and the Department of State, as well as other Federal departments and agencies and SSAs as appropriate, on: (1) identifying and prioritizing communications infrastructure; (2) identifying communications sector vulnerabilities and working with industry and other stakeholders to address those vulnerabilities; and (3) working with stakeholders, including industry, and engaging foreign governments and international organizations to increase the security and resilience of critical infrastructure within the communications sector and facilitating the development and implementation of best practices promoting the security and resilience of critical communications infrastructure on which the Nation depends.

9) Federal departments and agencies shall provide timely information to the Secretary of Homeland Security and the national critical infrastructure centers necessary to support cross-sector analysis and inform the situational awareness capability for critical infrastructure.

Three Strategic Imperatives

1) *Refine and Clarify Functional Relationships across the Federal Government to Advance the National Unity of Effort to Strength-*

en Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience

An effective national effort to strengthen critical infrastructure security and resilience must be guided by a national plan that identifies roles and responsibilities and is informed by the expertise, experience, capabilities, and responsibilities of the SSAs, other Federal departments and agencies with critical infrastructure roles, SLTT entities, and critical infrastructure owners and operators.

During the past decade, new programs and initiatives have been established to address specific infrastructure issues, and priorities have shifted and expanded. As a result, Federal functions related to critical infrastructure security and resilience shall be clarified and refined to establish baseline capabilities that will reflect this evolution of knowledge, to define relevant Federal program functions, and to facilitate collaboration and information exchange between and among the Federal Government, critical infrastructure owners and operators, and SLTT entities.

As part of this refined structure, there shall be two national critical infrastructure centers operated by DHS—one for physical infrastructure and another for cyber infrastructure. They shall function in an integrated manner and serve as focal points for critical infrastructure partners to obtain situational awareness and integrated, actionable information to protect the physical and cyber aspects of critical infrastructure. Just as the physical and cyber elements of critical infrastructure are inextricably linked, so are the vulnerabilities. Accordingly, an integration and analysis function (further developed in Strategic Imperative 3) shall be implemented between these two national centers.

The success of these national centers, including the integration and analysis function, is dependent on the quality and timeliness of the information and intelligence they receive from the SSAs and other Federal departments and agencies, as well as from critical infrastructure owners and operators and SLTT entities.

These national centers shall not impede the ability of the heads of Federal departments and agencies to carry out or perform their responsibilities for national defense, criminal, counterintelligence, counterterrorism, or investigative activities.

2) *Enable Efficient Information Exchange by Identifying Baseline Data and Systems Requirements for the Federal Government*

A secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure requires the efficient exchange of information, including intelligence, between all levels of governments and critical infrastructure owners and operators. This must facilitate the timely exchange of threat and vulnerability information as well as information that allows for the development of a situational awareness capability during incidents. The goal is to enable efficient information exchange through the identification of requirements for data and information formats and accessibility, system interoperability, and redundant systems and alternate capabilities should there be a disruption in the primary systems.

Greater information sharing within the government and with the private sector can and must be done while respecting privacy and civil liberties. Federal departments and agencies shall ensure that all existing privacy principles, policies, and procedures are implemented consistent with applicable law and policy and shall include senior agency officials for privacy in their efforts to govern and oversee information sharing properly.

3) *Implement an Integration and Analysis Function to Inform Planning and Operational Decisions Regarding Critical Infrastructure*

The third strategic imperative builds on the first two and calls for the implementation of an integration and analysis function for critical infrastructure that includes operational and strategic analysis on incidents, threats, and emerging risks. It shall reside at the intersection of the two national centers as identified in Strategic Imperative 1, and it shall include the capability to collate, assess, and integrate vulnerability and consequence information with threat streams and hazard information to:

a. Aid in prioritizing assets and managing risks to critical infrastructure;

b. Anticipate interdependencies and cascading impacts;

c. Recommend security and resilience measures for critical infrastructure prior to, during, and after an event or incident; and

d. Support incident management and restoration efforts related to critical infrastructure.

This function shall not replicate the analysis function of the IC or the National Counterterrorism Center, nor shall it involve intelligence collection activities. The IC, DOD, DOJ, DHS, and other Federal departments and agencies with relevant intelligence or information shall, however, inform this integration and analysis capability regarding the Nation's critical infrastructure by providing relevant, timely, and appropriate information to the national centers. This function shall also use information and intelligence provided by other critical infrastructure partners, including SLTT and nongovernmental analytic entities.

Finally, this integration and analysis function shall support DHS's ability to maintain and share, as a common Federal service, a near real-time situational awareness capability for critical infrastructure that includes actionable information about imminent threats, significant trends, and awareness of incidents that may affect critical infrastructure.

Innovation and Research and Development

The Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the SSAs, DOC, and other Federal departments and agencies, shall provide input to align those Federal and Federally-funded research and development (R&D) activities that seek to strengthen the security and resilience of the Nation's critical infrastructure, including:

1) Promoting R&D to enable the secure and resilient design and construction of critical infrastructure and more secure accompanying cyber technology;

2) Enhancing modeling capabilities to determine potential impacts on critical infrastructure of an incident or threat scenario, as well as cascading effects on other sectors;

3) Facilitating initiatives to incentivize cybersecurity investments and the adoption of critical infrastructure design features that strengthen all-hazards security and resilience; and

4) Prioritizing efforts to support the strategic guidance issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Implementation of the Directive

The Secretary of Homeland Security shall take the following actions as part of the implementation of this directive.

1) *Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience Functional Relationships.* Within 120 days of the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall develop a description of the functional relationships within DHS and across the Federal Government related to critical infrastructure security and resilience. It should include the roles and functions of the two national critical infrastructure centers and a discussion of the analysis and integration function. When complete, it should serve as a roadmap for critical infrastructure owners and operators and SLTT entities to navigate the Federal Government's functions and primary points of contact assigned to those functions for critical infrastructure security and resilience against both physical and cyber threats. The Secretary shall coordinate this effort with the SSAs and other relevant Federal departments and agencies. The Secretary shall provide the description to the President through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

2) *Evaluation of the Existing Public-Private Partnership Model.* Within 150 days of the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the SSAs, other relevant Federal departments and agencies, SLTT entities, and critical infrastructure

owners and operators, shall conduct an analysis of the existing public-private partnership model and recommend options for improving the effectiveness of the partnership in both the physical and cyber space. The evaluation shall consider options to streamline processes for collaboration and exchange of information and to minimize duplication of effort. Furthermore, the analysis shall consider how the model can be flexible and adaptable to meet the unique needs of individual sectors while providing a focused, disciplined, and effective approach for the Federal Government to coordinate with the critical infrastructure owners and operators and with SLTT governments. The evaluation shall result in recommendations to enhance partnerships to be approved for implementation through the processes established in the Organization of the National Security Council System directive.

3) *Identification of Baseline Data and Systems Requirements for the Federal Government to Enable Efficient Information Exchange.* Within 180 days of the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the SSAs and other Federal departments and agencies, shall convene a team of experts to identify baseline data and systems requirements to enable the efficient exchange of information and intelligence relevant to strengthening the security and resilience of critical infrastructure. The experts should include representatives from those entities that routinely possess information important to critical infrastructure security and resilience; those that determine and manage information technology systems used to exchange information; and those responsible for the security of information being exchanged. Interoperability with critical infrastructure partners; identification of key data and the information requirements of key Federal, SLTT, and private sector entities; availability, accessibility, and formats of data; the ability to exchange various classifications of information; and the security of those systems to be used; and appropriate protections for individual privacy and civil liberties should be included in the analysis. The analysis should result in baseline requirements for sharing of data and interoperability of systems to enable the timely exchange of data and information to secure critical infrastructure and make it more resilient. The Secretary shall provide that analysis to the President through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

4) *Development of a Situational Awareness Capability for Critical Infrastructure.* Within 240 days of the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall demonstrate a near real-time situational awareness capability for critical infrastructure that includes threat streams and all-hazards information as well as vulnerabilities; provides the status of critical infrastructure and potential cascading effects; supports decision making; and disseminates critical information that may be needed to save or sustain lives, mitigate damage, or reduce further degradation of a critical infrastructure capability throughout an incident. This capability should be available for and cover physical and cyber elements of critical infrastructure, and enable an integration of information as necessitated by the incident.

5) *Update to National Infrastructure Protection Plan.* Within 240 days of the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall provide to the President, through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, a successor to the National Infrastructure Protection Plan to address the implementation of this directive, the requirements of Title II of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 as amended, and alignment with the National Preparedness Goal and System required by PPD–8. The plan shall include the identification of a risk management framework to be used to strengthen the security and resilience of critical infrastructure; the methods to be used to prioritize critical infrastructure; the protocols to be used to synchronize communication and actions within the Federal Government; and a metrics and analysis process to be used to measure the Nation's ability to manage and reduce risks to critical infrastructure. The updated plan shall also reflect the identified functional relationships within DHS and across

the Federal Government and the updates to the public-private partnership model. Finally, the plan should consider sector dependencies on energy and communications systems, and identify pre-event and mitigation measures or alternate capabilities during disruptions to those systems. The Secretary shall coordinate this effort with the SSAs, other relevant Federal departments and agencies, SLTT entities, and critical infrastructure owners and operators.

6) *National Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience R&D Plan.* Within 2 years of the date of this directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the OSTP, the SSAs, DOC, and other Federal departments and agencies, shall provide to the President, through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, a National Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience R&D Plan that takes into account the evolving threat landscape, annual metrics, and other relevant information to identify priorities and guide R&D requirements and investments. The plan should be issued every 4 years after its initial delivery, with interim updates as needed.

Policy coordination, dispute resolution, and periodic in-progress reviews for the implementation of this directive shall be carried out consistent with PPD–1, including the use of Interagency Policy Committees coordinated by the National Security Staff.

Nothing in this directive alters, supersedes, or impedes the authorities of Federal departments and agencies, including independent regulatory agencies, to carry out their functions and duties consistent with applicable legal authorities and other Presidential guidance and directives, including, but not limited to, the designation of critical infrastructure under such authorities.

This directive revokes Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD–7, Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization, and Protection, issued December 17, 2003. Plans developed pursuant to HSPD–7 shall remain in effect until specifically revoked or superseded.

Designated Critical Infrastructure Sectors and Sector-Specific Agencies

This directive identifies 16 critical infrastructure sectors and designates associated Federal SSAs. In some cases co-SSAs are designated where those departments share the roles and responsibilities of the SSA. The Secretary of Homeland Security shall periodically evaluate the need for and approve changes to critical infrastructure sectors and shall consult with the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism before changing a critical infrastructure sector or a designated SSA for that sector. The sectors and SSAs are as follows:

Chemical:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Commercial Facilities:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Communications:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Critical Manufacturing:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Dams:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Defense Industrial Base:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Defense
Emergency Services:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Energy:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Energy
Financial Services:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of the Treasury
Food and Agriculture:
Co-Sector-Specific Agencies: U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of Health and Human Services
Government Facilities:
Co-Sector-Specific Agencies: Department of Homeland Security and General Services Administration

Healthcare and Public Health:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Health and Human Services
Information Technology:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Nuclear Reactors, Materials, and Waste:
Sector-Specific Agency: Department of Homeland Security
Transportation Systems:
Co-Sector-Specific Agencies: Department of Homeland Security and Department of Transportation
Water and Wastewater Systems:
Sector-Specific Agency: Environmental Protection Agency

Definitions

For purposes of this directive:

The term "all hazards" means a threat or an incident, natural or manmade, that warrants action to protect life, property, the environment, and public health or safety, and to minimize disruptions of government, social, or economic activities. It includes natural disasters, cyber incidents, industrial accidents, pandemics, acts of terrorism, sabotage, and destructive criminal activity targeting critical infrastructure.

The term "collaboration" means the process of working together to achieve shared goals.

The terms "coordinate" and "in coordination with" mean a consensus decision-making process in which the named coordinating department or agency is responsible for working with the affected departments and agencies to achieve consensus and a consistent course of action.

The term "critical infrastructure" has the meaning provided in section 1016(e) of the USA Patriot Act of 2001 (42 U.S.C. 5195c(e)), namely systems and assets, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States that the incapacity or destruction of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination of those matters.

The term "Federal departments and agencies" means any authority of the United States that is an "agency" under 44 U.S.C. 3502(1), other than those considered to be independent regulatory agencies, as defined in 44 U.S.C. 3502(5).

The term "national essential functions" means that subset of Government functions that are necessary to lead and sustain the Nation during a catastrophic emergency.

The term "primary mission essential functions" means those Government functions that must be performed in order to support or implement the performance of the national essential functions before, during, and in the aftermath of an emergency.

The term "national security systems" has the meaning given to it in the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (44 U.S.C. 3542(b)).

The term "resilience" means the ability to prepare for and adapt to changing conditions and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions. Resilience includes the ability to withstand and recover from deliberate attacks, accidents, or naturally occurring threats or incidents.

The term "Sector-Specific Agency" (SSA) means the Federal department or agency designated under this directive to be responsible for providing institutional knowledge and specialized expertise as well as leading, facilitating, or supporting the security and resilience programs and associated activities of its designated critical infrastructure sector in the all-hazards environment.

The terms "secure" and "security" refer to reducing the risk to critical infrastructure by physical means or defense cyber measures to intrusions, attacks, or the effects of natural or manmade disasters.

NOTE: The text of this directive was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on the afternoon of February 12, but was embargoed for release until the delivery of the President's State of the Union Address. An original was not available for verification of the content of this directive. The related Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Facilities of the Linamar Corporation in Arden, North Carolina

February 13, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, North Carolina! It is good to be back. I love coming to Asheville. Love coming to Asheville. The—Michelle and I always talk about how after this whole Presidency thing, and we're looking for a little spot to—you know?

Audience member. Come on down.

The President. Come on down. Play a little golf, do a little hiking, fishing, barbecue. There are two things that keep bringing me back here. Number one is I really like the people. And number two is 12 Bones, which I will be stopping on the way back to the airport. [*Laughter*]

Now, I want to start off by thanking Stratton for the wonderful introduction. And what made it wonderful was not only did he do a great job, but it was really brief. [*Laughter*] And I also want to thank Frank and Jim and everybody at Linamar for hosting us and giving me this terrific tour of the plant.

I want to point out two elected officials who are with us here today—first of all, your mayor, Terry Bellamy. Where is Mayor Bellamy? There she is. Good to see you. Plus, you got a wonderful mayor. I like that in you too. And also, Congressman Mel Watt is here. So give Congressman Watt a big round of applause.

So last night I delivered the State of the Union Address. And I talked about steps we can take right now to strengthen our recovery, but also to build up our middle class. And I said that while we're seeing some signs of solid progress—car sales are up, housing is starting to recover—we're still a ways away from where we need to be. There are still too many Americans who are out there every day, they're pounding the pavement; they're looking for work. You guys probably know friends or family members who are still pretty strapped, having a difficult time. And while it's true that corporate profits have skyrocketed to an alltime high, it's also true that for more than a decade now, wages and incomes haven't gone up at all, just about.

So we've got a lot of work to do. And our job—and this is a job for everybody; it's not a Democratic thing or a Republican thing—our job as Americans is to restore that basic bargain that says if you work hard, if you're willing to meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead. [*Applause*] You can get ahead. It doesn't matter what you look like. It doesn't matter where you come from. That's what we should be focused on: How do we make sure that people who are willing to work hard can make a decent living and look after their family?

Because the true engine of America's economic growth has always been our middle class. Now, there are a lot of countries that have folks at the top who are doing real well and a bunch of folks at the bottom, but part of what set America apart was ordinary folks, if they worked hard, they could do well. Our middle class—when it's growing, when it's thriving, when there are ladders of opportunity for people to do a little bit better each year and then make sure that their kids are doing even better than them—that's the American Dream. That's what we've got to fight for. That has to be the north star that guides everything we do.

And as I said last night, we should be asking ourselves three questions every single day. It doesn't matter whether you're in North Carolina or Texas or California or Oregon. It doesn't matter. Wherever we are, three things we should be asking. Number one, how do we bring more jobs to America? Number two, how do we equip people with the skills they need to do those jobs? And number three, how do we make sure that once they have a job, it leads to a decent living?

I believe we reward effort and determination with wages that allow working families to raise their kids and get ahead. And that's part of the reason why I said last night that it's time for an increase in the minimum wage, because if you work full time, you shouldn't be poverty—in poverty.

I also believe we provide our people skills and training by investing in education, and that has to start early. It has to start early. So I talked about making sure that kids are getting an early childhood education, making sure that our high schools are preparing our children for a high-tech economy, and making sure that colleges are affordable and accessible to every single American.

And I believe we attract new jobs to America by investing in new sources of energy and new infrastructure and the next generation of high-wage, high-tech American manufacturing. I believe in manufacturing. I think it makes our country stronger.

So that's what we can do together. And that's why I wanted to come down here to Asheville, because there's a good story to tell here. I know that a few years ago, manufacturing comebacks in North Carolina, a manufacturing comeback in Asheville, may not have seemed real likely, because Volvo had just left town. This plant had gone dark. Twenty-eight—22—228 jobs had vanished. And that was a big blow for this area, because part of what happens is, when those manufacturing jobs go away, then suddenly, the restaurant has fewer customers, and suppliers for the plant start withering. And it's hard for everybody. It has a ripple effect.

But then, local officials started reaching out to companies, offering new incentives to take over this plant. Some of the workers who got laid off, like Stratton, went back to school, and they learned new skills. And then, a year later, Linamar showed up. They were looking for a place to build some big parts. And these parts are big, I've got to say—[*laughter*]—hubs and wheels and anchors for 400-ton mining trucks. And while they could have gone any place in the world, they saw this incredible potential right here in Asheville. They saw the most promise in this workforce, so they chose to invest in Asheville, in North Carolina, in the United States of America.

So to date, Linamar has hired 160 workers. It will be 200 by the end of the year, and it's just going to keep on going after that. So the folks at Linamar said, they came to Asheville to grow their business. They came here to stay and put down some roots.

And the good news is, what's happening here is happening all around the country. Because just as it's becoming more and more expensive to do business in places like China, America is getting more competitive and more productive.

And after shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have now added about 500,000 jobs over the past 3 years. All right? And I mentioned this last night: Caterpillar, which I know you guys supply, they're bringing jobs back from Japan. Ford is bringing jobs back from Mexico. After placing plants in other countries like China, Intel is opening its most advanced plant here in the United States. Apple is starting to make Macs in America again.

So we're seeing this trend of what we call insourcing, not just outsourcing. And the reason is because America has got outstanding workers. We're starting to produce more homegrown energy, which is driving down our energy costs. And obviously, we've still got the biggest market in the world. And if we try to improve our infrastructure a little bit more, then we're going to be even that much more competitive.

Now, I want to be honest with you. We're not going to bring back every job that's been lost to outsourcing and automation over the last decade. Now, I was talking to some of the guys who were showing me their facilities, who had been in manufacturing for 20 years, and they explained how things had changed. It used to be you had to—you wanted to do the kind of stuff you guys are doing here, everything was done manually. Right? Now you've got a computer, and you're punching in stuff. So it's changed, and that means that you can just produce a lot more with fewer people.

But there are things we can do right now to accelerate the resurgence of American manufacturing.

Number one, we can create more centers for high-tech manufacturing in America. Last year, my administration created our first manufacturing innovation institute. We put it in

Youngstown, Ohio, which had been really hard hit when manufacturing started going overseas. And so you had a once-shuttered warehouse, it's now a state-of-the art lab where new workers are mastering what's called 3–D printing, which has the potential to revolutionize the way we make everything. That's the future. And there's no reason that those same kinds of projects can't take root in other cities and towns.

So last night I announced the launch of three more institutes. And I'm calling on Congress to help us set up 15 institutes: global centers of high-tech jobs and advanced manufacturing around the country.

The second thing we need to do is make our Tax Code more competitive. Right now companies get all kinds of tax breaks for moving jobs and profits overseas, but companies that stay here get hit with one of the highest tax rates in the world. That doesn't make any sense. So what I'm proposing is that we reform our Tax Code, stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas, reward companies that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America. That makes sense.

Number three, if you're a manufacturing town, especially one that's taken a hit—that's seen a company close up shop or a plant shut down—I want to partner with local leaders to help you attract new investment. Because once that investment starts coming in, things can start turning around. And that means infrastructure gets modernized and research facilities get built, and suddenly, a community that was knocked down is getting back up, and they're attracting new manufacturers who want to come and expand and hire.

So I want us to focus on, if a place like—when Asheville lost the Volvo plant, we've got to come in here real quick and help them figure out, all right, what is it that we need to attract a new employer.

Number four, we've got to help our workers get the training to compete for the industries of tomorrow. At least a couple of the guys that I had a chance to meet as we were taking the tour told me they were out of work for a year, in one case, 2 years. In part because we kept unemployment insurance in place so folks could get back on their feet, they were able to go back to school and now are gainfully employed. No job in America should go unfilled because somebody doesn't have the right skills to get that job—nobody.

So if there is a job open, we should train those folks right away, so that they can do the job. And that's why I'm proposing a national goal of training 2 million Americans with skills that will lead directly to a job. And we know this works. After Linamar came to town, they started working with AB-Tech, one of the community colleges here in Asheville. And AB-Tech and Linamar worked together to do something that is really smart. Rather than have kids just—or in some cases not kids, older workers—show up and they're taking a bunch of classes, but they don't know how this is directly going to lead to a job, what you do is you customize the class to train people so they can come and work at the plant and they're getting experience that's directly applicable to what's being done here at the job.

That's good for the community. It's good for Linamar because they're getting workers who they know can do the job. It's good for the folks who are going to the community college because they know if they work hard and they do well in the class, there's a job waiting for them. It's good for the economy as a whole.

So those are four commonsense steps that we can take right now to strengthen manufacturing in America. Now, there's no magic bullet here. It's just some commonsense stuff. People still have to work hard. Companies like Linamar still have to make good products. But the point is, is that if we can just do a few things, then over time, what happens is we start rebuilding our manufacturing base in a way that strengthens our economy as a whole.

Now, I'm doing what I can just through administrative action, but I need Congress to help. I need Congress to do their part. [*Applause*] I need Congress to do their part. I need Congress to take up these initiatives, because we've come too far and we've worked too hard to turn back now.

And you think about all that this city and all of you have been through over the last few years. Think about folks like Jeff Brower. Now, Jeff was in the trucking industry for over a decade. Two years ago, he got laid off, lost his job as a diesel mechanic. That's a tough thing to go through, even though Jeff's a pretty tough guy. But he bounced back. He decided it was time for him to change careers. He decided it was time to get some new skills. He went to AB-Tech, took a class in automated machining. A few months ago, Jeff got his diploma. He graduated on a Wednesday, interviewed at this plant on Thursday. By Friday, he was working as a machine operator.

Where's Jeff? There he is, right here. Now, obviously, Jeff is pretty good at interviews—[*laughter*]—because he just got hired like that. I hope he can give me some advice. [*Laughter*]

But here's the thing. The reason Jeff did all that—obviously, a lot of it was to support himself and his family—but it wasn't just to punch a clock at a new plant or pick up a paycheck from a new company. It was to make sure he could have a better future for his family and for his community and his country. Jeff said: "Getting my foot in the door has opened my eyes to bigger horizons. And I want to keep on going." I want to keep on going.

So that's our story. That's the American story. We don't give up. We get up. We innovate. We adapt. We learn new skills. We keep going. And I just want everybody here to know at this plant—but everybody in Asheville, everybody in North Carolina, and everybody all across the country—I want you to know as long as you're out here fighting every day to better your lives and to better the lives of your children, then I'll be back in Washington fighting for you. I will be back there fighting for you, because there's nothing we can't do and no possibilities we can't reach when we're working together. We just have to work together.

And we've got to stop with some of the politics that we see in Washington sometimes that's focused on who's up and who's down. Let's just focus on the same kind of common sense and cooperation that we're seeing at this plant and we see all across the country.

So thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Stratton Taylor, employee, Frank Hasenfratz, chairman of the board of directors, Jim Jarrell, president and chief operating officer, and Jeff Brower, machinist, Linamar Corp.; and Mayor Terry M. Bellamy of Asheville, NC.

Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday
February 13, 2013

Michelle and I join with Christians here and around the world in marking Ash Wednesday. This is a day of both reflection and joy, a time to ponder the meaning of repentance and restoration. As we enter Lent, we join millions in renewing our faith and remembering our commitment to love and serve one another.

Joint Statement by President Obama, President Herman Van Rompuy of the European Council, and President José Manuel Durão Barroso of the European Commission
February 13, 2013

We, the Leaders of the United States and the European Union, are pleased to announce that, based on recommendations from the U.S.-EU High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth co-chaired by United States Trade Representative Kirk and European Trade Commissioner De Gucht, the United States and the European Union will each initiate the

internal procedures necessary to launch negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

The transatlantic economic relationship is already the world's largest, accounting for half of global economic output and nearly one trillion dollars in goods and services trade, and supporting millions of jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

We are committed to making this relationship an even stronger driver of our prosperity. In that regard, we welcome the High Level Working Group's recommendations on how we can expand further our transatlantic trade and investment partnership, promoting greater growth and supporting more jobs.

A high-standard Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership would advance trade and investment liberalization and address regulatory and other non-tariff barriers.

Through this negotiation, the United States and the European Union will have the opportunity not only to expand trade and investment across the Atlantic, but also to contribute to the development of global rules that can strengthen the multilateral trading system.

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

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya
February 13, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13566 of February 25, 2011, is to continue in effect beyond February 25, 2013.

Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, his government, and close associates took extreme measures against the people of Libya, including by using weapons of war, mercenaries, and wanton violence against unarmed civilians. In addition, there was a serious risk that Libyan state assets would be misappropriated by Qadhafi, members of his government, members of his family, or his close associates if those assets were not protected. The foregoing circumstances, the prolonged attacks, and the increased numbers of Libyans seeking refuge in other countries caused a deterioration in the security of Libya, posed a serious risk to its stability, and led me to declare a national emergency to deal with this threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

We are in the process of winding down the sanctions in response to developments in Libya, including the fall of Qadhafi and his government and the establishment of a democratically elected government. We are working closely with the new Libyan government and with the international community to effectively and appropriately ease restrictions on sanctioned entities, including by taking actions consistent with the U.N. Security Council's decision to lift sanctions against the Central Bank of Libya and two other entities on December 16, 2011. The situation in Libya, however, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States and we need to protect against this threat and the diversion of assets or other abuse by certain members of Qadhafi's family and other former regime officials. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Libya.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 13, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Decatur Community Recreation Center in Decatur, Georgia
February 14, 2013

Hello, everybody! Well, it is great to be in Georgia! Great to be in Decatur!

You know, I can't imagine a more romantic way to spend Valentine's Day—[*laughter*]—than with all of you, with all the press here. Actually, Michelle says hello. She made me promise to get back in time for our date tonight. [*Laughter*] That's important. That's important. I've already got a gift, got the flowers. I was telling folks the flowers are a little easier, though, because I've got this Rose Garden. [*Laughter*] Lot of people keeping flowers around.

I want to acknowledge a few people who are here. First of all, Congressman Hank Johnson is here. Where's Hank? Your mayor, Jim Baskett, is here. Another mayor you may know, Kasim Reed, snuck in here. I want to acknowledge the Decatur School Board, who I had a chance to meet and has helped to do so much great work around here. Folks right here.

And of course, I want to thank Mary for the wonderful introduction and for teaching me how to count earlier today. [*Laughter*] I've got to tell you it was wonderful to be there. I want to thank all the teachers and the parents and the administrators of Decatur City Schools, because behind every child who is doing great there is a great teacher, and I'm proud of every single one of you for the work that you do here today.

Now, on Tuesday, I delivered my State of the Union Address. And I laid out a plan for reigniting what I believe is the true engine of America's economic growth, and that is a thriving, growing, rising middle class. And that also means ladders for people to get into the middle class. And the plan I put forward says we need to make smart choices as a country, both to grow our economy, shrink our deficits in a balanced way by cutting what we don't need, but then investing in the things that we do need to make sure that everybody has a chance to get ahead in life.

What we need is to make America a magnet for new jobs by investing in manufacturing and energy and better roads and bridges and schools. We've got to make sure hard work is rewarded with a wage that you can live on and raise a family on.

We need to make sure that we've got shared responsibility for giving every American the chance to earn the skills and education that they need for a really competitive, global job market.

As I said on Tuesday night, that education has to start at the earliest possible age. And that's what you have realized here in Decatur. Study after study shows that the earlier a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But here's the thing: We are not doing enough to give all of our kids that chance. The kids we saw today that I had a chance to spend time with in Mary's classroom, they're some of the lucky ones, because fewer than 3 in 10 4-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program.

Most middle class parents can't afford a few hundred bucks a week for private preschool. And for the poor children who need it the most, the lack of access to a great preschool education can have an impact on their entire lives. And we all pay a price for that. And as I said, this is not speculation. Study after study shows the achievement gap starts off very young. Kids who, when they go into kindergarten, their first day, if they already have a lot fewer vocabulary words, they don't know their numbers and their shapes and have the capacity for focus, they're going to be behind that first day. And it's very hard for them to catch up over time.

And then, at a certain point—I bet a lot of teachers have seen this—kids aren't stupid. They know they're behind at a certain point,

and then they start pulling back, and they act like they're disinterested in school because they're frustrated that they're not doing as well as they should, and then you may lose them.

And that's why, on Tuesday night, I proposed working with States like Georgia to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America. Every child.

Every dollar we invest in high-quality early education can save more than $7 later on: boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, reducing violent crime. In States like Georgia that have made it a priority to educate our youngest children, States like Oklahoma, students don't just show up in kindergarten and first grade more prepared to learn, they're also more likely to grow up reading and doing math at grade level, graduating from high school, holding a job, even forming more stable families.

Hope is found in what works. This works. We know it works. If you are looking for a good bang for your educational buck, this is it, right here.

That's why, even in times of tight budgets, States like Georgia and Oklahoma have worked to make a preschool slot available for nearly every parent who is looking for one for their child. And they're being staffed with folks like Mary: qualified, highly educated teachers. This is not babysitting, all right, this is teaching.

So at the age that our children are just sponges soaking stuff in, their minds are growing fastest, what we saw in the classroom here today was kids are taught numbers, they're taught shapes, but also how to answer questions, discover patterns, play well with others. And the teachers who were in the classroom, they've got a coach who's coming in and working with them on best practices and paying attention to how they can constantly improve what they're doing.

And that whole playing well with others, by the way, is a trait we could use more in Washington. So maybe we need to bring the teachers up. Every once in a while, have some quiet time. [*Laughter*] Time out. [*Laughter*]

So at the College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center that I visited earlier today, nearly 200 little kids are spending full days learning in classrooms with highly qualified teachers. And so I was working with them to build towers and replicate sculptures and sing songs. And look, I've got to admit, I was not always the fastest guy on some of this stuff. The kids were beating me to the punch. But through this interactive learning, they're learning math, writing, how to tell stories.

And one of the things that you've done here in Decatur that's wonderful also is, is that you've combined kids from different income levels: You've got disabled kids all in the same classroom so we're all learning together. And what that means is, is that all the kids are being leveled up, and you're not seeing some of that same stratification that you see that eventually leads to these massive achievement gaps.

So, before you know it, these kids are going to be moving on to bigger and better things in kindergarten, and they're going to be better prepared to succeed. And what's more, I don't think you'll find a working parent in America who wouldn't appreciate the peace of mind that their child is in a safe, high-quality learning environment every single day.

Michelle and I remember how tough it can be to find good childcare. I remember how expensive it can be too. The size of your paycheck, though, shouldn't determine your child's future. So let's fix this. Let's make sure none of our kids start out the race of life already a step behind. Let's make it a national priority to give every child access to a high-quality early education. Let's give our kids that chance.

Now, I do have to warn the parents who are here who still have young kids, they grow up to be, like, 5′10″—[*laughter*]—and even if they're still nice to you, they basically don't have a lot of time for you during the weekends. [*Laughter*] They have sleepovers and dates. [*Laughter*] So all that early investment—[*laughter*]—just leads them to go away. [*Laughter*]

Now, what I also said on Tuesday night is that our commitment to our kids' education has to continue throughout their academic lives. So from the time our kids start grade school, we need to equip them with the skills they need to

compete in a high-tech economy. That's why we're working to recruit and train 100,000 new teachers in the fields of the future: in science and technology and engineering and math, where we are most likely to fall behind.

We've got to redesign our high schools so that a diploma puts our kids on a path to a good job. We want to reward schools that develop new partnerships with colleges and employers and create classes that focus on science and technology and engineering and math, all the things that can help our kids fill those jobs that are there right now, but also in the future.

And obviously, once our kids graduate from high school, we've got to make sure that skyrocketing costs don't price middle class families out of a higher education or saddle them with unsustainable debt. I mean, some of the younger teachers who are here, they've chosen a career path that is terrific, but let's face it, you don't go into teaching to get rich. [*Laughter*] And it is very important that we make sure that they can afford to get a great education and can choose to be a teacher, can choose to be in a teaching profession.

So we've worked to make college more affordable for millions of students and families already through tax credits and grants and loans that go farther than before. But taxpayers can't keep subsidizing ever-escalating price tags for higher education. At some point you run out of money. So colleges have to do their part. And colleges that don't do enough to keep costs in check should get less Federal support, so that we're incentivizing colleges to think about how to keep their costs down.

And just yesterday we released what we're calling a new College Scorecard that gives parents and students all the information they need to compare schools by value and affordability so that they can make the best choice. And any interested parent, by the way, who's out there can check it out at whitehouse.gov.

Now, in the end, that's what this is all about: giving our kids the best possible shot at life; equipping them with the skills, education that a 21st-century economy demands; giving them every chance to go as far as their hard work and God-given potential will take them.

That's not just going to make sure that they do well, that will strengthen our economy and our country for all of us. Because if their generation prospers, if they've got the skills they need to get a good job, that means businesses want to locate here. And it also means, by the way, they're well-equipped as citizens with the critical thinking skills that they need in order to help guide our democracy. We'll all prosper that way. That's what we're fighting for. They're the ones who are going to write that next great chapter in the American story, and we've got to make sure that we're providing that investment.

I am so proud of every single teacher who is here who has dedicated their lives to making sure those kids get a good start in life. I want to make sure that I'm helping, and I want to make sure that the country is behind you every step of the way.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kasim Reed of Atlanta, GA; and Mary McMahon, teacher, College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center in Decatur, GA.

Statement on Senator Frank R. Lautenberg's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
February 14, 2013

Frank is a steadfast champion of the people of New Jersey. Throughout his time in the Senate, Frank has fought tirelessly for workers, veterans, members of our military and their families, and immigrants, and he continues to make extraordinary contributions to our Nation's safety and the health and welfare of our citizens. His service in World War II is a testament to his character and deep commitment to public service. I look forward to

working with Frank on critical issues before us these next 2 years, and Michelle and I wish him and Bonnie all the best.

NOTE: The statement referred to Bonnie Englebardt Lautenberg, wife of Sen. Lautenberg.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy
February 15, 2013

President Obama. Well, I want to extend the warmest greetings to my good friend, President Napolitano, on a return visit to the White House. I think it's entirely appropriate the day after Valentine's Day, since we know that St. Valentine was associated with Italy, that we had a chance to express our love for the Italian people and my high regard for President Napolitano.

He has been an extraordinary leader not just in Italy, but also in Europe. We've had occasion to meet many times in which we have expressed again and again the importance of the transatlantic relationship and the deep and abiding friendship and connection and bond between the Italian people and the American people.

And obviously, we constantly talk about the extraordinary connection that derives from the tradition of Italian Americans making enormous contributions to the United States. President Napolitano has been so gracious in talking about his memories of the role that America played in liberating Europe and instituting the kinds of democratic practices and traditions that have served both sides of the Atlantic so well for so many years.

I want to thank the people of Italy for their enormous contributions to the NATO alliance. Italy is one of our biggest contributors in Afghanistan and makes enormous sacrifices. They welcome and host our troops on Italian soil. The economic bonds between our two countries are very significant. And in all this, President Napolitano has shown himself to be a visionary leader who has helped to guide and steer Europe towards greater unification, but always with a strong transatlantic relationship in mind.

The last point I would make is that President Napolitano has also just been a good personal friend, a tremendous host to my family when they visited Italy. You should know, Mr. President, that one of the few things that my daughters asked me after I was reelected was, does this mean we can go back to Italy again? So I confirmed to them that any excuse we can find to visit Italy, we shall return, hopefully.

And this will give us an opportunity to not only visit, but also to talk about some important issues, including the world economy. I announced at the State of the Union this week my interest and intention in pursuing a U.S.-European Union free trade agreement, which I know is something of great interest to the President. I'll be interested in hearing from him how he anticipates the elections and government formation in Italy and what implications that has for the larger European project. And I'm sure we'll have a chance to talk about some national security issues as well.

But my main message is to say, thank you for your extraordinary service, and I'm so glad that we had an opportunity to visit once again before you move on to even better things—I assume they're at least having more fun than politics.

President Napolitano. Thank you very much. I don't need to say how deeply touched I am by the generous appreciation we just heard of my long public service in the interest of Italy, of our alliance, of our common cause. And I am grateful to President Obama for inviting me to pay a farewell visit at the White House and for giving me the opportunity of an exchange of ideas before I conclude my Presidential mandate.

I am sure that we will be able today to express a common sense of confidence in the future of Italy and of U.S.-Italy relations, more generally speaking, in the future of our joint commitment to advance global peace, democracy, and human rights.

Italy has made a remarkable progress in the past 14 months: the Italian Government with parliamentary support of different and even opposite political forces, and with the comprehension of different social groups and of all citizens. While this progress must and will continue and be developed because Italy needs it, Europe needs it, and I think the world as a whole needs it.

The announcement which has been made, just made in Brussels and in Washington—significantly because I was impressed by the words, "We, the leaders of the European Union and of the United States." It was a beautiful *incipit*. Yes, well, I think that the trade—the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which will be realized—now we are the opening talks, but I am sure about also the conclusion—can represent a relevant contribution for promoting a new wave of development, of technologic advancement, of social justice on both shores of the Atlantic. And I think it can represent even something more. It is to say a new historic stage in relations between Europe and the United States, not only economically, but also from a political and moral point of view.

My conviction is that the effect that a shift has been taking place in the center of gravity of the world development of international relations doesn't cancel at all the crucial importance of transatlantic alliance, of transatlantic relations. On the contrary, it represents a new stimulus for us to make such a framework of relation more active, more competitive. It is absolutely necessary for a better world to have our common heritage of values and experiences be a decisive factor also in the course of globalization in the next future.

It is the spirit in which I am here to testify once more my personal friendship and my admiration for President Obama, only deploring that the visit of President and his family in Rome was so short, and expecting a new visit also in my new capacity. I be in another palace, but I be there to welcome you.

President Obama. That's great. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Citizens Medal
February 15, 2013

The President. Thank you very much, everybody. Please, please have a seat. Well, it is a pleasure to welcome some of our Nation's finest citizens here to the people's house. And let me be the first to congratulate each of you and your family members for the receipt of the highest honor a civilian can receive: the Citizens Medal.

We host a lot of events at the White House, but I have to admit this is one of my favorites, because it's a moment when, as a people, we get to recognize some extraordinary men and women who have gone above and beyond for their country and for their fellow citizens, often without fanfare, often with not a lot of attention, very rarely for any profit. You do it because it's the right thing to do, because you want to give back. And today we honor you, we celebrate you, and most of all, we have a chance to say thank you. Because all of us—are what the rest of us aspire to be.

In America, we have the benefit of living in this big and diverse nation. We're home to 315 million people who come from every background, who worship every faith, who hold every single point of view. But what binds us together, what unites us, is a single sacred word: citizen.

It's a word that, as I said in my State of the Union Address, doesn't just describe our nationality or our legal status, the fact that we hold a passport. It defines our way of life. It captures our belief in something bigger than ourselves; our willingness to accept certain obligations to one another and to embrace the idea that we're all in this together, that out of many, we are one. It's the thing that de Tocqueville noticed about America when he first came to visit: These folks participate, they get

involved, they have a point of view; they don't just wait for somebody else to do something, they go out there and do it, and they join, and they become part of groups, and they mobilize, and they organize.

That's who we are; that's in our DNA. That's what it means to be a citizen of the United States of America. We've all got busy lives. We've got bills to pay. We've got kids to carpool, errands to get done. And in the midst of all the running around, it would be easy and even understandable for folks to just focus on themselves, to worry about our own lives, to look down the street and see a neighbor in need and say, "I'd like to help, but I've got problems of my own." To look across town at a community that's in despair and say, "That's just too big a challenge for us to be able to take on."

That's not who we are. That's not what we do. That's not what built this country. In this country, we look out for one another. We get each other's backs, especially in times of hardship or challenge. It's part of the reason why applications to AmeriCorps are at an alltime high. That's why volunteering in America is at the highest level it's been in years. And I know that makes Harris proud to hear.

Now, Harris Wofford has devoted his entire life to creating opportunities for Americans to serve. And the reason it's such a privilege for me to share the stage with him and all the others who are participating here today, is because you've taken commitment to a whole new level. Every day, you're out there righting wrongs, healing hurts, changing lives.

And when Janice Jackson was hit by a car at the age of 24, she was told by her doctors that the only thing she would ever move again were her shoulders. After suffering an injury like that, nobody would have faulted Janice for just focusing on herself. But as she recovered, and she regained her strength, she resolved to give some of that strength to others in need. Janice said that "from a wheelchair, I decided to devote my life to women with disabilities to tell them that even though you have limitations, you also have abilities." And every day, through her mentorship and through her advocacy, that's exactly what she's doing.

When Adam Burke returned from Iraq, he had more than earned the right to just focus on himself. He had served our Nation with honor: a recipient of the Purple Heart for wounds he received while rescuing a comrade from enemy fire. Because of that attack—because of the shrapnel that tore through his head and his legs—when Adam came home, he came home a wounded warrior, suffering from a traumatic brain injury, posttraumatic stress disorder. But a few years later, Adam found himself back on the family farm, and he noticed that working the land was therapeutic. His coordination improved. He was able to put aside his cane. So he decided to use farming to help other veterans with similar injuries see similar benefits. And by starting Veterans Farm, he's doing that every day.

When Jeanne Manford learned that her son Morty had been badly beaten up at a gay rights demonstration, nobody would have faulted her for bringing him home, holding him close, just focusing on her child. This was back in 1972. There was a lot of hate, a lot of vitriol towards gays and lesbians and anyone who supported them. But instead, she wrote to the local newspaper and took to the streets with a simple message: No matter who her son was—no matter who he loved—she loved him and wouldn't put up with this kind of nonsense. And in that simple act, she inspired a movement and gave rise to a national organization that has given so much support to parents and families and friends and helped to change this country. We lost Jeanne last month, but her legacy carries on, every day, in the countless lives that she touched.

And then when Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach, Vicki Soto, Lauren Rousseau, Rachel D'Avino, Anne Marie Murphy, when they showed up for work at Sandy Hook Elementary on December 14 of last year, they expected a day like any other, doing what was right for their kids, spent a chilly morning readying classrooms and welcoming young students. They had no idea that evil was about to strike. And when it did, they could have taken

shelter by themselves. They could have focused on their own safety, on their own well-being. But they didn't. They gave their lives to protect the precious children in their care. They gave all they had for the most innocent and helpless among us.

And that's what we honor today: the courageous heart, the selfless spirit, the inspiring actions of extraordinary Americans, extraordinary citizens.

We are a nation of 315 million people. Out of all these folks, around 6,000 were nominated for this medal. And today you're the ones receiving it not just for what you do, but for what you represent: for the shining example that you set every single day and the inspiration that you give each of us as fellow citizens, including your President.

So congratulations to the recipients. And now I would like our Military Aide to read the citations.

[*At this point, Lt. Col. Owen G. Ray, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations. The President then presented the medals, assisted by Maj. Gary Marlowe, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President.*]

The President. Let me close by just saying a few words of thanks. First of all, to Wendy and all the people at the Corporation for National and Community Service, thank you for all that you do to make our communities and our country stronger. We're very grateful.

To those who nominated these outstanding individuals, thank you for taking the time to share their stories. The competition was stiff. And your words gave life to their work.

To all the family and friends who are here celebrating with the winners, thank you for the love and support that you provide to them every single day, because they couldn't do what they do unless somebody had that love and support for them. I know the awardees would agree that this honor belongs not just to themselves, but to everybody who supports them.

And finally, to the winners of this year's Citizens Medal, we want to congratulate you once again. A special note just to the families who are here from Sandy Hook: We are so blessed to be with you. I've gotten to know many of you during the course of some very difficult weeks. And your courage and love for each other and your communities shines through every single day. And we could not be more blessed and grateful for your loved ones who gave everything they had on behalf of our kids.

On behalf of a grateful nation, thanks to all of you for showing us what it means to be a citizen of this country that we love. Hopefully, we will all draw inspiration from this and remember why it is that we're lucky to be living in the greatest nation on Earth. Thank you all for coming, and enjoy the reception.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Harris L. Wofford; Janice Y. Jackson, creator and program director, Women Embracing Abilities Now; and Wendy Spencer, chair, Corporation for National and Community Service.

Remarks at the Hyde Park Academy High School in Chicago, Illinois
February 15, 2013

The President. Hey, Chicago! Hello, Chicago! Hello, everybody. Hello, Hyde Park. It is good to be home. It is good to be home. Everybody, have a seat. You all relax. It's just me. You all know me. It is good to be back home.

A couple of people I want to acknowledge: First of all, I want to thank your mayor, my great friend, Rahm Emanuel, for his outstanding leadership of the city and his kind introduction. I want to thank everybody here at Hyde Park Academy for welcoming me here today.

I want to acknowledge your principal and your assistant principal—although, they really make me feel old, because when I saw them—[*laughter*]—where are they? Where are they? Stand up, stand up. They are doing outstanding work. We're very, very proud of them. But you do make me feel old. Sit down. [*Laughter*]

A couple other people I want to acknowledge: Governor Pat Quinn is here doing great work down in Springfield. My great friend and senior Senator, Dick Durbin is in the house. Congressman Bobby Rush is here; we're in his district. Attorney General—and former seatmate of mine when I was in the State senate—Lisa Madigan; County Board President—used to be my alderwoman—Tony Preckwinkle in the house.

And I've got—I see a lot of reverend clergy here, but I'm not going to mention them, because if I miss one, I'm in trouble. [*Laughter*] They're all friends of mine. They've been knowing me.

You know, some people may not know this, but obviously, this is my old neighborhood. I used to teach right around the corner. This is where Michelle and I met, where we fell in love.

Audience members. Aww!

The President. This is where we raised our daughters, in a house just about a mile away from here—less than a mile. And that's really what I've come here to talk about today: raising our kids.

Audience members. We love you!

The President. I love you too. I love you too.

I'm here to make sure that we talk about and then work towards giving every child every chance in life, building stronger communities and new ladders of opportunity that they can climb into the middle class and beyond, and most importantly, keeping them safe from harm.

Michelle was born and raised here: a proud daughter of the South Side. Last weekend, she came home, but it was to attend the funeral of Hadiya Pendleton. And Hadiya's parents, by the way, are here, and I want to just acknowledge them. They are just wonderful, wonderful people.

And as you know, this week, in my State of the Union, I talked about Hadiya on Tuesday night and the fact that unfortunately what happened to Hadiya is not unique. It's not unique to Chicago. It's not unique to this country. Too many of our children are being taken away from us.

Two months ago, America mourned 26 innocent first-graders and their educators in Newtown. And today I had the high honor of giving the highest civilian award I can give to the parent—or the families of the educators who had been killed in Newtown. And there was something profound and uniquely heartbreaking and tragic, obviously, about a group of 6-year-olds being killed. But last year, there were 443 murders with a firearm on the streets of this city, and 65 of those victims were 18 and under. So that's the equivalent of a Newtown every 4 months.

And that's precisely why the overwhelming majority of Americans are asking for some commonsense proposals to make it harder for criminals to get their hands on a gun. And as I said on Tuesday night, I recognize not everybody agrees with every issue. There are regional differences. The experience of gun ownership is different in urban areas than it is in rural areas, different from upstate and downstate Illinois. But these proposals deserve a vote in Congress. They deserve a vote. [*Applause*] They deserve a vote. And I want to thank those Members of Congress who are working together in a serious way to try to address this issue.

But I've also said no law or set of laws can prevent every senseless act of violence in this country. When a child opens fire on another child, there's a hole in that child's heart that government can't fill; only community and parents and teachers and clergy can fill that hole. In too many neighborhoods today—whether here in Chicago or the farthest reaches of rural America—it can feel like for a lot of young people the future only extends to the next street corner or the outskirts of town, that no matter how much you work or how hard you try, your destiny was determined the moment you were born. There are entire neighborhoods where young people, they don't see an example of somebody succeeding. And for a lot of young boys and young men, in particular, they don't see an example of fathers or grandfathers, uncles, who are in a position to support families and be held up and respected.

And so that means that this is not just a gun issue, it's also an issue of the kinds of commu-

nities that we're building. And for that, we all share a responsibility, as citizens, to fix it. We all share a responsibility to move this country closer to our founding vision that no matter who you are or where you come from, here in America, you can decide your own destiny. You can succeed if you work hard and fulfill your responsibilities.

Now, that means we've got to grow our economy and create more good jobs. It means we've got to equip every American with the skills and the training to fill those jobs. And it means we've got to rebuild ladders of opportunity for everybody willing to climb them.

Now, that starts at home. There's no more important ingredient for success, nothing that would be more important for us reducing violence than strong, stable families, which means we should do more to promote marriage and encourage fatherhood. Don't get me wrong: As the son of a single mom, who gave everything she had to raise me with the help of my grandparents, I turned out okay. [*Laughter*] But—no, no, but I think it's—so we've got single moms out here, they're heroic in what they're doing, and we are so proud of them. But at the same time, I wish I had had a father who was around and involved. Loving, supportive parents—and by the way, that's all kinds of parents. That includes foster parents, and that includes grandparents and extended families; it includes gay or straight parents.

Those parents—those parents supporting kids—that's the single most important thing. Unconditional love for your child, that makes a difference. If a child grows up with parents who have work and have some education and can be role models and can teach integrity and responsibility and discipline and delayed gratification—all those things give a child the kind of foundation that allows them to say, my future, I can make it what I want. And we've got to make sure that every child has that, and in some cases, we may have to fill the gap and the void if children don't have that.

So we should encourage marriage by removing the financial disincentives for couples who love one another, but may find it financially disadvantageous if they get married. We should reform our child support laws to get more men working and engaged with their children. And my administration will continue to work with the faith community and the private sector this year on a campaign to encourage strong parenting and fatherhood. Because what makes you a man is not the ability to make a child, it's the courage to raise one.

We also know, though, that there is no surer path to success in the middle class than a good education. And what we now know is that that has to begin in the earliest years. Study after study shows that the earlier a child starts learning, the more likely they are to succeed: the more likely they are to do well at Hyde Park Academy; the more likely they are to graduate; the more likely they are to get a good job; the more likely they are to form stable families and then be able to raise children themselves who get off to a good start.

Chicago already has a competition, thanks to what the mayor is doing, that rewards the best preschools in the city; so Rahm has already prioritized this. But what I've also done is say, let's give every child across America access to high-quality, public preschool. Every child, not just some. Every dollar we put into early childhood education can save $7 down the road by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, reducing violent crime, reducing the welfare rolls, making sure that folks who have work, now they're paying taxes. All this stuff pays back huge dividends if we make the investment. So let's make this happen. Let's make sure every child has the chance they deserve.

As kids go through school, we'll recruit new math and science teachers to make sure that they've got the skills that the future demands. We'll help more young people in low-income neighborhoods get summer jobs. We'll redesign our high schools and encourage our kids to stay in high school, so that the diploma they get leads directly to a good job once they graduate.

Right here in Chicago, five new high schools have partnered with companies and community colleges to prepare our kids with the skills that businesses are looking for right now. And your College to Careers program helps community college students get access to the same

kinds of real-world experiences. So we know what works. Let's just do it in more places. Let's reach more young people. Let's give more kids a chance.

So we know how important families are. We know how important education is. We recognize that government alone can't solve these problems of violence and poverty, that everybody has to be involved. But we also have to remember that the broader economic environment of communities is critical as well. For example, we need to make sure that folks who are working now, often in the hardest jobs, see their work rewarded with wages that allow them to raise a family without falling into poverty.

Today, a family with two kids that works hard and relies on a minimum wage salary still lives below the poverty line. That's wrong, and we should fix it. We should reward an honest day's work with honest wages. And that's why we should raise the minimum wage to $9 an hour and make it a wage you can live on.

And even though some cities have bounced back pretty quickly from the recession, we know that there are communities and neighborhoods within cities or in small towns that haven't bounced back. Cities like Chicago are ringed with former factory towns that never came back all the way from plants packing up; there are pockets of poverty where young adults are still looking for their first job.

And that's why on Tuesday, I announced—and that's part of what I want to focus on here in Chicago and across the country—is my intention to partner with 20 of the hardest hit communities in America to get them back in the game—get them back in the game.

First of all, we'll work with local leaders to cut through redtape and improve things like public safety and education and housing. And we'll bring all the resources to bear in a coordinated fashion so that we can get that tipping point where suddenly a community starts feeling like things are changing and we can come back.

Second of all, if you're willing to play a role in a child's education, then we'll help you reform your schools. We want to seed more and more partnerships of the kind that Rahm is trying to set up.

Third, we're going to help bring jobs and growth to hard-hit neighborhoods by giving tax breaks to business owners who invest and hire in those neighborhoods.

Fourth, and specific to the issue of violence, because it's very hard to develop economically if people don't feel safe. If they don't feel like they can walk down the street and shop at a store without getting hit over the head or worse, then commerce dries up, businesses don't want to locate, families move out, you get into the wrong cycle. So we're going to target neighborhoods struggling to deal with violent crime and help them reduce that violence in ways that have been proven to work. And I know this is a priority of your mayor's; it's going to be a priority of mine.

And finally, we're going to keep working in communities all across the country, including here in Chicago, to replace rundown public housing that doesn't offer much hope or safety with new, healthy homes for low- and moderate-income families.

And here in Woodlawn, you've seen some of the progress that we can make when we come together to rebuild our neighborhoods, and attract new businesses and improve our schools. Woodlawn is not all the way where it needs to be, but thanks to wonderful institutions like Apostolic Church, we've made great progress.

So we want to help more communities follow your example. And let's go even farther by offering incentives to companies that hire unemployed Americans who have got what it takes to fill a job opening, but they may have been out of work so long that nobody is willing to give them a chance right now. Let's put our people back to work rebuilding vacant homes in need of repair. Young people can get experience, apprenticeships, learn a trade. And we're removing blight from our community.

If we gather together what works, we can extend more ladders of opportunity for anybody who's working to build a strong, middle class life for themselves. Because in America, your destiny shouldn't be determined by where you live, where you were born. It should be deter-

mined by how big you're willing to dream, how much effort and sweat and tears you're willing to put in to realizing that dream.

When I first moved to Chicago, before any of the students in this room were born—[*laughter*]—and a whole lot of people who are in the audience remember me from those days—I lived in a community on the South Side right up the block, but I also worked further south where communities had been devastated by some of the steel plants closing. And my job was to work with churches and laypeople and local leaders to rebuild neighborhoods and improve schools and help young people who felt like they had nowhere to turn.

And those of you who worked with me, Reverend Love, you remember, it wasn't easy. Progress didn't come quickly. Sometimes, I got so discouraged I thought about just giving up. But what kept me going was the belief that with enough determination and effort and persistence and perseverance, change is always possible; that we may not be able to help everybody, but if we help a few, then that propels progress forward. We may not be able to save every child from gun violence, but if we save a few, that starts changing the atmosphere in our communities. We may not be able to get everybody a job right away, but if we get a few folks a job, then everybody starts feeling a little more hopeful and a little more encouraged. Neighborhood by neighborhood, one block by one block, one family at a time.

Now, this is what I had a chance to talk about when I met with some young men from Hyde Park Academy who were participating in this BAM program. Where are the guys I talked to? Stand up you all, so we can all see you guys. So these are some—these are all some exceptional young men, and I couldn't be prouder of them. And the reason I'm proud of them is because a lot of them have had some issues. That's part of the reason why you guys are in the program. [*Laughter*]

But what I explained to them was, I had issues too when I was their age. I just had an environment that was a little more forgiving. So when I screwed up, the consequences weren't as high as when kids on the South Side screw up. So I had more of a safety net. But these guys are no different than me, and we had that conversation about what does it take to change. And the same thing that it takes for us individually to change, I said to them, well, that's what it takes for communities to change. That's what it takes for countries to change. It's not easy.

But it does require us, first of all, having a vision about where we want to be. It requires us recognizing that it will be hard work getting there. It requires us being able to overcome and persevere in the face of roadblocks and disappointments and failures. It requires us reflecting internally about who we are and what we believe in and facing up to our own fears and insecurities and admitting when we're wrong. And that same thing that we have to do in our individual lives that these guys talked about, that's what we have to do for our communities. And it will not be easy, but it can be done.

When Hadiya Pendleton and her classmates visited Washington 3 weeks ago, they spent time visiting the monuments, including the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial just off the National Mall. And that memorial stands as a tribute to everything Dr. King achieved in his lifetime. But it also reminds us of how hard that work was and how many disappointments he experienced. He was here in Chicago fighting poverty, and just like a lot of us, there were times where he felt like he was losing hope. So, in some ways, that memorial is a testament not to work that's completed, but it's a testament to the work that remains unfinished.

His goal was to free us not only from the shackles of discrimination, but from the shadow of poverty that haunts too many of our communities, the self-destructive impulses and the mindless violence that claims so many lives of so many innocent young people.

These are difficult challenges. No solution we offer will be perfect. But perfection has never been our goal. Our goal has been to try and make whatever difference we can. Our goal has been to engage in the hard, but necessary work of bringing America one step closer to the Nation we know we can be.

If we do that, if we're striving with every fiber of our being to strengthen our middle class,

to extend ladders of opportunity for everybody who is trying to—as hard as they can—to create a better life for themselves; if we do everything in our power to keep our children safe from harm; if we're fulfilling our obligations to one another and to future generations; if we make that effort, then I'm confident, I'm confident that we will write the next great chapter in our American story. I'm not going to be able to do it by myself, though. Nobody can. We're going to have to do it together.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Antonio Ross, principal, and Terea Brown, assistant principal, Hyde Park Academy High School; Nathaniel Pendleton and Cleopatra Crowley-Pendleton, parents of Hadiya Z. Pendleton, who was killed in Chicago, IL, on January 29; and Alvin Love, pastor, Lilydale First Baptist Church in Chicago, IL.

The President's Weekly Address
February 16, 2013

This week, I've been traveling across the country, from North Carolina to Georgia to here at Hyde Park Academy in my hometown of Chicago, talking with folks about the important task that I laid out in my State of the Union Address: reigniting the true engine of America's economic growth, a rising, thriving, middle class.

Every day, we should ask ourselves three questions: How do we bring good jobs to America? How do we equip people with the skills those jobs require? And how do we make sure your hard work leads to a decent living?

I believe all that starts by making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing. After shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have added about 500,000 jobs over the past 3. What we need to do now is simple: We need to accelerate that trend. We need to launch manufacturing hubs across the country that will transform hard hit regions into global centers of high-tech jobs and manufacturing. We need to make our Tax Code more competitive, ending tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas and rewarding companies that create jobs here at home. And we need to invest in the research and technology that will allow us to harness more of our energy and put more people back to work repairing our crumbling roads and bridges.

These steps will help our businesses expand and create new jobs. But we also need to provide every American with the skills and training that they need to fill those jobs. Let's start in the earliest years by offering high-quality preschool to every child in America, because we know kids in these programs do better throughout their lives. Let's redesign our high schools so that our students graduate with the skills that employers are looking for right now. And because taxpayers can't continue to subsidize the soaring cost of higher education, I've called on Congress to take affordability and value into account when determining which colleges receive certain types of Federal aid.

So those are steps we can take to help bring good jobs to America and equip our people with the skills those jobs require. And that brings us to the third question: How do we make sure hard work leads to a decent living?

No one in America should work full time and raise their children in poverty. So let's raise the minimum wage so that it's a wage you can live on. And it's time to harness the talents and ingenuity of hard-working immigrants by finally passing comprehensive immigration reform: securing our borders, establishing a responsible path to earned citizenship, and attracting the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers that will help create jobs.

These steps will help grow our economy and rebuild a rising, thriving middle class. And we can do it while shrinking our deficits. We don't have to choose between the two, we just have to make smarter choices.

Over the last few years, both parties have worked together to reduce the deficit by more than $2.5 trillion, which puts us more than

halfway towards the goal of $4 trillion in deficit reduction that economists say we need to stabilize our finances. Now we need to finish the job.

But I disagree with Republicans who think we should do that by making even bigger cuts to things like education and job training or Medicare and Social Security benefits. That would force our senior citizens and working families to bear the burden of deficit reduction while the wealthiest are asked to do nothing more. That won't work. We can't just cut our way to prosperity.

Instead, I've proposed a balanced approach, one that makes responsible reforms to bring down the cost of health care and saves hundreds of billions of dollars by getting rid of tax loopholes and deductions for the well off and well connected. And we should finally pursue bipartisan, comprehensive tax reform that encourages job creation and helps bring down the deficit. So we know what we need to do. All the steps I've mentioned are common sense. And, together, they will help us grow our economy and strengthen our middle class.

In the coming weeks and months, our work won't be easy and we won't agree on everything. But America only moves forward when we do so together, when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future generations. That's the American story. And that is how we will write the next great chapter—together.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:30 p.m. on February 15 in classroom 202 at the Hyde Park Academy High School in Chicago, IL, for broadcast on February 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 16.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
February 19, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House.

As I said in my State of the Union Address last week, our top priority must be to do everything we can to grow the economy and create good, middle class jobs. That's our top priority. That's our north star. That drives every decision we make. And it has to drive every decision that Congress and everybody in Washington makes over the next several years.

And that's why it's so troubling that just 10 days from now, Congress might allow a series of automatic, severe budget cuts to take place that will do the exact opposite: won't help the economy, won't create jobs, will visit hardship on a whole lot of people.

Here's what's at stake. Over the last few years, both parties have worked together to reduce our deficits by more than $2.5 trillion. More than two-thirds of that was through some pretty tough spending cuts. The rest of it was through raising taxes—tax rates on the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. And together, when you take the spending cuts and the increased tax rates on the top 1 percent, it puts us more than halfway towards the goal of $4 trillion in deficit reduction that economists say we need to stabilize our finances.

Now, Congress, back in 2011, also passed a law saying that if both parties couldn't agree on a plan to reach that $4 trillion goal, about a trillion dollars of additional, arbitrary budget cuts would start to take effect this year. And by the way, the whole design of these arbitrary cuts was to make them so unattractive and unappealing that Democrats and Republicans would actually get together and find a good compromise of sensible cuts as well as closing tax loopholes and so forth. And so this was all designed to say we can't do these bad cuts; let's do something smarter. That was the whole point of this so-called sequestration.

Unfortunately, Congress didn't compromise. They haven't come together and done their jobs, and so as a consequence, we've got

these automatic, brutal spending cuts that are poised to happen next Friday.

Now, if Congress allows this meat cleaver approach to take place, it will jeopardize our military readiness; it will eviscerate job-creating investments in education and energy and medical research. It won't consider whether we're cutting some bloated program that has outlived its usefulness or a vital service that Americans depend on every single day. It doesn't make those distinctions.

Emergency responders like the ones who are here today, their ability to help communities respond to and recover from disasters will be degraded. Border Patrol agents will see their hours reduced. FBI agents will be furloughed. Federal prosecutors will have to close cases and let criminals go. Air traffic controllers and airport security will see cutbacks, which means more delays at airports across the country. Thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off. Tens of thousands of parents will have to scramble to find childcare for their kids. Hundreds of thousands of Americans will lose access to primary care and preventive care like flu vaccinations and cancer screenings.

And already, the threat of these cuts has forced the Navy to delay an aircraft carrier that was supposed to deploy to the Persian Gulf. And as our military leaders have made clear, changes like this—not well thought through, not phased in properly—changes like this affect our ability to respond to threats in unstable parts of the world.

So these cuts are not smart. They are not fair. They will hurt our economy. They will add hundreds of thousands of Americans to the unemployment rolls. This is not an abstraction: people will lose their jobs; the unemployment rate might tick up again.

And that's why Democrats, Republicans, business leaders, and economists, they've already said that these cuts, known here in Washington as sequestration, are a bad idea. They're not good for our economy. They're not how we should run our Government.

And here's the thing: They don't have to happen. There is a smarter way to do this: to reduce our deficits without harming our economy. But Congress has to act in order for that to happen.

Now, for 2 years, I've offered a balanced approach to deficit reduction that would prevent these harmful cuts. I outlined it again last week at the State of the Union. I am willing to cut more spending that we don't need, get rid of programs that aren't working. I've laid out specific reforms to our entitlement programs that can achieve the same amount of health care savings by the beginning of the next decade as the reforms that were proposed by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles commission. I'm willing to save hundreds of billions of dollars by enacting comprehensive tax reform that gets rid of tax loopholes and deductions for the well off and well connected, without raising tax rates.

I believe such a balanced approach that combines tax reform with some additional spending reforms, done in a smart, thoughtful way, is the best way to finish the job of deficit reduction and avoid these cuts once and for all that could hurt our economy, slow our recovery, put people out of work. And most Americans agree with me.

Now, the House and the Senate are working on budgets that I hope reflect on—reflect this approach. But if they can't get such a budget agreement done by next Friday, the day these harmful cuts begin to take effect, then at minimum, Congress should pass a smaller package of spending cuts and tax reforms that would prevent these harmful cuts, not to kick the can down the road, but to give them time to work together on a plan that finishes the job of deficit reduction in a sensible way.

I know Democrats in the House and in the Senate have proposed such a plan, a balanced plan, one that pairs more spending cuts with tax reform that closes special interest loopholes and makes sure that billionaires can't pay a lower tax rate than their salary—their secretaries.

And I know that Republicans have proposed some ideas too. I have to say, though, that so far, at least, the ideas that the Republicans have proposed ask nothing of the wealthiest

Americans or biggest corporations, so the burden is all on first responders or seniors or middle class families. They double down, in fact, on the harsh, harmful cuts that I've outlined. They slash Medicare and investments that create good, middle class jobs. And so far, at least, what they've expressed is a preference where they'd rather have these cuts go into effect than close a single tax loophole for the wealthiest Americans. Not one.

Well, that's not balanced. That would be like Democrats saying we have to close our deficits without any spending cuts whatsoever. It's all taxes. That's not the position Democrats have taken. That's certainly not the position I've taken. It's wrong to ask the middle class to bear the full burden of deficit reduction. And that's why I will not sign a plan that harms the middle class.

So now Republicans in Congress face a simple choice: Are they willing to compromise to protect vital investments in education and health care and national security and all the jobs that depend on them? Or would they rather put hundreds of thousands of jobs and our entire economy at risk just to protect a few special interest tax loopholes that benefit only the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations? That's the choice.

Are you willing to see a bunch of first responders lose their job because you want to protect some special interest tax loophole? Are you willing to have teachers laid off or kids not have access to Head Start or deeper cuts in student loan programs just because you want to protect a special tax interest loophole that the vast majority of Americans don't benefit from? That's the choice. That's the question.

And this is not an abstraction. There are people whose livelihoods are at stake. There are communities that are going to be impacted in a negative way. And I know that sometimes all this squabbling in Washington seems very abstract, and in the abstract, people like the idea, you know, there must be some spending we can cut, there must be some waste out there. There absolutely is. But this isn't the right way to do it.

So my door is open. I've put tough cuts and reforms on the table. I am willing to work with anybody to get this job done. None of us will get a hundred percent of what we want. But nobody should want these cuts to go through, because the last thing our families can afford right now is pain imposed unnecessarily by partisan recklessness and ideological rigidity here in Washington.

As I said at the State of the Union, the American people have worked too hard, too long rebuilding from one crisis to see their elected officials cause yet another one. And it seems like every 3 months around here there's some manufactured crisis. We've got more work to do than to just try to dig ourselves out of these self-inflicted wounds.

And while a plan to reduce our deficit has to be part of our agenda, we also have to remember deficit reduction alone is not an economic plan. We learned in the 1990s, when Bill Clinton was President, nothing shrinks the deficit faster than a growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs. That should be our driving focus: making America a magnet for good jobs, equipping our people with the skills required to fill those jobs, making sure their hard work leads to a decent living. Those are the things we should be pushing ourselves to think about and work on every single day. That's what the American people expect. That's what I'm going to work on every single day to help deliver.

So I need everybody who's watching today to understand, we've got a few days. Congress can do the right thing. We can avert just one more Washington-manufactured problem that slows our recovery and bring down our deficits in a balanced, responsible way. That's my goal. That's what would do right by these first responders. That's what would do right by America's middle class. That's what I'm going to be working on and fighting for not just over the next few weeks, but over the next few years.

Thanks very much, everybody. Thank you, guys, for your service.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson, Cochairs, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

Statement on the Retirement of General John R. Allen
February 19, 2013

Today I met with General John Allen and accepted his request to retire from the military so that he can address health issues within his family. I told General Allen that he has my deep, personal appreciation for his extraordinary service over the last 19 months in Afghanistan, as well as his decades of service in the United States Marine Corps. General Allen presided over the significant growth in the size and capability of Afghan National Security Forces, the further degradation of Al Qaida and their extremist allies, and the ongoing transition to Afghan security responsibility across the country. He worked tirelessly to strengthen our coalition through his leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and to improve our relations with the Afghan Government. Above all, he cares deeply for the men and women in uniform who serve our Nation, as well as their families, and I am grateful for the sacrifices made by his family in supporting him during his service. John Allen is one of America's finest military leaders, a true patriot, and a man I have come to respect greatly. I wish him and his family the very best as they begin this new chapter, and we will carry forward the extraordinary work that General Allen led in Afghanistan.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan and an Exchange With Reporters
February 22, 2013

President Obama. Well, I want to extend a warm welcome to Prime Minister Abe and congratulate him on his victory and his leadership of Japan.

Obviously, Japan is one of our closest allies, and the U.S.-Japan alliance is the central foundation for our regional security and so much of what we do in the Pacific region. And that friendship extends not just between our governments, but also between our peoples.

Prime Minister Abe himself is no stranger to the United States. I think he and I studied in California around the same time, and this is not his first visit to the Oval Office. So we're looking forward to building a very strong working relationship on a whole range of issues.

We had close consultations on a wide range of security issues, in particular our concerns about the provocative actions that have been taken in North Korea and our determination to take strong actions in response.

We also discussed a wide range of multilateral issues, and I expressed my appreciation for the support Japan has provided to our efforts in Afghanistan, our efforts to resolve the nuclear issue in Iran, and we expressed mutual condolences around the loss of life at the BP plant in Algeria and pledged that this would spur greater counterterrorism cooperation.

After this brief session with the press, we'll have an opportunity to extend these discussions over lunch, and we'll have a chance to talk about the close economic cooperation between our two countries.

And I know that Prime Minister Abe and I both agree that our number-one priority has to be making sure that we are increasing growth and making sure that people have the opportunity to prosper if they're willing to work hard in both our countries. And so we'll be talking about a host of issues that—and steps that we can take in our respective countries to encourage the kind of trade, expanded commerce,

and robust growth that will lead to greater opportunity for both the United States and Japan.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. And please extend our warmest wishes to the people of Japan, and you can rest assured that you will have a strong partner in the United States throughout your tenure as Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Abe. Yes, Mr. President, you already gave a very detailed briefing of the content of our briefing, so there's nothing for me to add, but I would like to make some additional remarks.

First of all, I would like to thank President Obama for creating this opportunity to have a summit meeting between Japan and the United States at a very busy time, when his second term is beginning.

I think today's one big theme in our meeting today was for us to discuss in which direction we would be strengthening the alliance between Japan and the United States. And we touched upon many issues that we have to deal with in that regard.

And as a result of our discussion, we were able to share our understanding on not just concrete policy, but on the direction to which our alliance is headed. I think I can declare with confidence that the trust and the bond in our alliance is back.

And when we look at the security environment in the Asia-Pacific, it's becoming more and more difficult. And we need to create an order in this region based on cooperation between our two countries to secure the freedom of the seas and to secure a region which is governed based on laws, not on force.

And we just cannot tolerate the actions of North Korea, such as launching missiles and conducting nuclear tests. So we agreed that we would cooperate with each other in dealing resolutely with North Korea. And I also explained to Mr. President the abduction issue by North Korea, and the President understood my explanation and expressed his support.

So we intend to continue to strengthen our alliance and, by doing so, secure our national interest and make this world a better place.

President Obama. Go ahead.

U.S. Federal Budget Negotiations/Government Spending Reductions

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. We're one week from the sequester deadline. I'm wondering, at this point, if you think those cuts going into effect are inevitable, and what you're telling the Prime Minister and other world leaders about the impact that that would have on the global economy.

President Obama. Well, I never think that anything is inevitable. We always have the opportunity to make the right decisions. And I've been very clear that these kinds of arbitrary, automatic cuts would have an adverse impact on families, on teachers, on parents who are reliant on Head Start programs, on our military readiness, on mental health services, on medical research. This is not a smart way for us to reduce the deficit.

I've also been very clear that there's an alternative, which is for us to take the kind of balanced approach that I've presented, where we have more strategic cuts on programs we don't need and we close some tax loopholes that are taken advantage of only by the well connected and the well off. By the way, that's what the majority of the American people prefer.

So I will continue to have conversations with Members of Congress, both while they're gone and when they get back next week. My hope is, is that we can see a different course taken by Congress. This should be a no-brainer. And let me just point out that the overall impact of the economy will be to slow down the recovery. And not only may there end up being direct job loss, but because the economy is softer, it also means that we're not going to be driving down unemployment as quickly as we should.

So, with respect to world leaders, I think that unlike issues like the debt ceiling, the sequester going into effect will not threaten the world financial system. It's not like the equivalent of the U.S. defaulting on its obligations. What it does mean, though, is that if the U.S. is growing slower, then other countries grow slower, because we continue to be a central engine in world economic growth. So I don't think anybody would like to see this outcome.

And particularly, when we're poised to grow rapidly as housing comes back and we're starting to see real signs of the recovery taking root, it's the wrong prescription. But ultimately, I don't need to persuade world leaders of that. They know that. I've got to persuade Members of Congress, and that can be harder sometimes.

Q. Even if you think a deal—or even if you think averting the cuts is not inevitable, do you see any realistic sign of being able to reach a deal over the next week?

President Obama. Hope springs eternal. And I will just keep on making my case not only to Congress, but more importantly, the American people to take a smart approach to deficit reduction and do it in a way that doesn't endanger our economy and endanger jobs.

I just realized I didn't have a translation of that. It was sort of a domestic question. My suggestion would be, why don't we just go ahead and direct the next question to Prime Minister Abe. That one will be translated.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to ask what you discussed with President Obama about actions by North Korea, such as the launching of missiles and a nuclear test. And also, the provocative actions that China is taking vis-a-vis the Senkaku Islands. And also, on what actions and measures you have discussed to strengthen the alliance between Japan and the United States at a time when the security environment in the region is deteriorating. What kind of concrete measures did you discuss with the President to strengthen our alliance?

Prime Minister Abe. On North Korea, the important thing we discussed, we agreed that it was important for Japan and the United States to not provide rewards to North Korea for their actions such as launching missiles and conducting nuclear tests. That's number one.

And number two, we agreed that we would cooperate so that a resolution, including sanctions, would be adopted in the U.N. We also discussed additional sanctions, for example, financial sanctions, and we agreed to continue cooperating in that regard as well.

And then, we also talked about the importance of cooperating with other countries, especially Japan, the U.S., and Korea, in dealing with the issue of North Korea.

Concerning the South China Sea and the Senkaku Islands, we agree that the very existence of the Japan-U.S. alliance is a stabilizing factor, which contributes to the peace and stability of the region. We agreed that we would stay in close coordination with each other in dealing with such issues and other issues and a wide range of issues that we are faced with in this region. So we will continue to coordinate in dealing with such issues based on the Japan-U.S. alliance.

And I also explained that we have always been dealing with this issue, the Senkaku issue, in a calm manner. We will continue to do so and we have always done so.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Abe and a reporter spoke in Japanese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan
February 22, 2013

The two Governments confirm that should Japan participate in the TPP negotiations, all goods would be subject to negotiation, and Japan would join others in achieving a comprehensive, high-standard agreement, as described in the Outlines of the TPP Agreement announced by TPP Leaders on November 12, 2011.

Recognizing that both countries have bilateral trade sensitivities, such as certain agricultural products for Japan and certain manufactured products for the United States, the two Governments confirm that, as the final outcome will be determined during the negotiations, it is not required to make a prior com-

mitment to unilaterally eliminate all tariffs upon joining the TPP negotiations.

The two Governments will continue their bilateral consultations with respect to Japan's possible interest in joining the TPP. While progress has been made in these consultations, more work remains to be done, including addressing outstanding concerns with respect to the automotive and insurance sectors, addressing other non-tariff measures, and completing work regarding meeting the high TPP standards.

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

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Deployment of United States Armed Forces Personnel to Niger
February 22, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On February 20, 2013, the last elements of a deployment of approximately 40 additional U.S. military personnel entered Niger with the consent of the Government of Niger. This deployment will provide support for intelligence collection and will also facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in Mali, and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 100. The recently deployed forces have deployed with weapons for the purpose of providing their own force protection and security.

I directed this deployment of U.S. forces in furtherance of U.S. national security interests, and pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148). I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels
February 22, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency declared on March 1, 1996, with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2013.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
February 23, 2013

Hi, everybody. Our top priority as a country right now should be doing everything we can to grow our economy and create good, middle class jobs.

And yet, less than 1 week from now, Congress is poised to allow a series of arbitrary, automatic budget cuts that will do the exact opposite. They'll slow our economy. They'll eliminate good jobs. They'll leave many families who are already stretched to the limit scrambling to figure out what to do.

But here's the thing: These cuts don't have to happen. Congress can turn them off anytime with just a little compromise. They can pass a balanced plan for deficit reduction. They can cut spending in a smart way and close wasteful tax loopholes for the well off and well connected.

Unfortunately, it appears that Republicans in Congress have decided that instead of compromising—instead of asking anything of the wealthiest Americans—they'd rather let these cuts fall squarely on the middle class.

And here's what that choice means. Once these cuts take effect, thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off, and tens of thousands of parents will have to scramble to find childcare for their kids. Air traffic controllers and airport security will see cutbacks, causing delays across the country. Even President Bush's Director of the National Institutes of Health says these cuts will set back medical science for a generation.

Already, the threat of these cuts has forced the Navy to delay the deployment of an aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf, affecting our ability to respond to threats in an unstable part of the world. And just this week, the Pentagon announced that if these cuts go through, almost 800,000 defense employees—the equivalent of every person in Miami and Cleveland combined—will be forced to take an unpaid leave.

That's what this choice means. Are Republicans in Congress really willing to let these cuts fall on our kids' schools and mental health care just to protect tax loopholes for corporate jet owners? Are they really willing to slash military health care and the border patrol just because they refuse to eliminate tax breaks for big oil companies? Are they seriously prepared to inflict more pain on the middle class because they refuse to ask anything more of those at the very top?

These are the questions Republicans in Congress need to ask themselves. And I'm hopeful they'll change their minds. Because the American people have worked too hard for too long to see everything they've built undone by partisan recklessness in Washington.

Instead of these reckless, unbalanced cuts, I believe we should work together to build on the more than $2.5 trillion in deficit reduction we've already achieved. We should do it in a balanced way: with smart spending cuts, entitlement reform, and tax reform. That's my plan. It's got tough cuts, tough reforms, and asks more of the wealthiest Americans. It's on the White House website for everybody to see. And it requires Democrats and Republicans to meet halfway to resolve the problem. That's what the American people expect. And that's what you deserve.

We just need Republicans in Washington to come around. Because we need their help to finish the job of reducing our deficit in a smart way that doesn't hurt our economy or our people. After all, as we learned in the 1990s, nothing shrinks the deficit faster than a growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs. That has to be our driving focus. That has to be our north star: making America a magnet for good jobs, equipping our people with the skills required to fill those jobs, making sure your hard work leads to a decent living. That's what this city should be focused on like a laser. And I'm going to keep pushing folks here to remember that.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on February 22 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on February 23. In the address, the President referred to former President George W. Bush; and Elias A. Zeroing, former Director, National Institutes of Health. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 23.

Remarks at the National Governors Association Dinner
February 24, 2013

Welcome, everybody. It is wonderful for us to have you here at the White House. Michelle and I are so happy to host you, and I want to start by acknowledging your outstanding chair, Jack Markell, and your vice chair, Mary Fallin. But more importantly, I want to recognize the First Lady of Delaware and the First Gentleman of Oklahoma because we know that the spouses put up with an awful lot. That's who this dinner's really for. [*Laughter*] And we hope that you all get a chance to celebrate a little bit tonight.

Last year, I got to see firsthand some of the great work that our Governors are helping to accomplish all across the country. Now, it's true that I had the chance to see some accomplishments in some States more than others. Ohio. [*Laughter*] Iowa. [*Laughter*] Colorado. [*Laughter*] Virginia. [*Laughter*] But I hope to see more of you this year, the rest of you.

But all of you have helped to steer your States through some of the Nation's toughest times. You've had to make hard choices. You've had to make wise investments and mobilize the constituencies to do what needs to be done to grow your State. And that work is paying off. Companies are bringing jobs back to our shores. New homes are popping up in our neighborhoods. Small businesses are revitalizing our communities.

And many of you also had to deal with some incredible natural disasters. And, obviously, it's always painful to see the loss and the hardship that our families have suffered, but it's always wonderful to see the way in which Governors in particular are able to lead and mobilize their States and their communities, rallying around neighbors, friends, and communities.

So we know we've got more work to do: more jobs to create and more children to educate and more roads to repair. The task before us is to find smart, commonsense solutions to each of these challenges that we can move forward on. And I'm looking for good partners. Because while nobody in this room sees eye to eye on everything, we know that when we work together, Democrats and Republicans—North, South, East, and West—we can accomplish so much more than we can on our own. Whether it's helping our citizens rebuild from a horrific hurricane or a turbulent economic storm, we're stronger when we work together as a team.

One of my predecessors, a former Governor himself, put it well. "America is nothing if it consists merely of each other"—"if it consists merely of each of us," Woodrow Wilson said. "It's something only if it consists of all of us." And nearly 100 years later, I expect that those words continue to be true, and they should be guiding all of our efforts.

So I want to wish everybody a toast. For the good that we've accomplished together, for the good that's yet to be done. I look forward to a year of progress working with all of you. I am grateful for your service. To those who are recently elected, congratulations. We look forward to seeing you again over the next several years. Cheers.

[*At this point, the President offered a toast.*]

And with that, I would like to present your chairman, Jack Markell.

[*Gov. Jack A. Markell of Delaware made brief remarks.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:20 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Carla Markell, wife of Gov. Markell; and D.

Wade Christensen, husband of Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. Markell.

Remarks to the National Governors Association
February 25, 2013

Thank you, guys. Please have a seat. Well, welcome, everybody. Thanks for being here.

We all have a lot on our plate, everything from our immigration system to our education system. As Joe talked about, our goal is to make sure that we can be an effective partner with you.

I want to thank the members of my Cabinet who are here, and members of the administration. I want to thank Jack and Mary for their leadership of the NGA. And, everybody else, I just want to say thanks to you for being on your best behavior last night. [*Laughter*] I'm told nothing was broken. No silverware is missing. [*Laughter*] I didn't get any calls from the neighbors about the noise, although I can't speak for Joe's after-party at the Observatory. I hear that was wild. [*Laughter*]

Now, I always enjoy this weekend when I have a chance to see the Governors. As leaders, we share responsibility to do whatever we can to help grow our economy and create good middle class jobs and open up new doors of opportunity for all of our people. That's our true north, our highest priority. And it's got to guide every decision that we make at every level.

As I've said, we should be asking ourselves three questions every single day: How do we make America a magnet for good jobs? How do we equip our people with the skills and the training to get those jobs? And how do we make sure if they get those jobs that their hard work actually pays off?

As Governors, you're the ones who are on the ground, seeing firsthand every single day what works, what doesn't work, and that's what makes you so indispensable. Whatever your party, you ran for office to do everything that you could to make our folks' lives better. And one thing I know unites all of us and all of you—Democrats and Republicans—and that is the last thing you want to see is Washington get in the way of progress.

Unfortunately, in just 4 days, Congress is poised to allow a series of arbitrary, automatic budget cuts to kick in that will slow our economy, eliminate good jobs, and leave a lot of folks who are already pretty thinly stretched scrambling to figure out what to do.

This morning you received a report outlining exactly how these cuts will harm middle class families in your States. Thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off. Tens of thousands of parents will have to deal with finding childcare for their children. Hundreds of thousands of Americans will lose access to primary care and preventive care like flu vaccinations and cancer screenings. Tomorrow, for example, I'll be in the Tidewater region of Virginia, where workers will sit idle when they should be repairing ships, and a carrier sits idle when it should be deploying to the Persian Gulf.

Now, these impacts will not all be felt on day one. But rest assured, the uncertainty is already having an effect. Companies are preparing layoff notices. Families are preparing to cut back on expenses. And the longer these cuts are in place, the bigger the impact will become.

So, while you are in town, I hope that you speak with your congressional delegation and remind them in no uncertain terms exactly what is at stake and exactly who is at risk. Because here's the thing: These cuts do not have to happen. Congress can turn them off any time with just a little bit of compromise. To do so, Democrats like me need to acknowledge that we're going to have to make modest reforms in Medicare if we want the program there for future generations and if we hope to maintain our ability to invest in critical things like education, research, and infrastructure.

I've made that commitment. It's reflected in proposals I made last year and the year before that and will be reflected in my budget, and I

stand by those commitments to make the reforms for smart spending cuts.

But we also need Republicans to adopt the same approach to tax reform that Speaker Boehner championed just 2 months ago. Under our concept of tax reform, nobody's rates would go up, but we'd be able to reduce the deficit by making some tough, smart spending cuts and getting rid of wasteful tax loopholes that benefit the well off and the well connected.

I know that sometimes folks in Congress think that compromise is a bad word. They figure they'll pay a higher price at the polls for working with the other side than they will for standing pat or engaging in obstructionism. But as Governors, some of you with legislatures controlled by the other party, you know that compromise is essential to getting things done. And so is prioritizing, making smart choices.

That's how Governor O'Malley in Maryland put his State on track to all but eliminate his deficit while keeping tuition down and making Maryland's public schools among the best in America 5 years running. That's how Governor Haslam balanced his budget last year in Tennessee while still investing in key areas like education for Tennessee's kids. Like the rest of us, they know we can't just cut our way to prosperity. Cutting alone is not an economic policy. We've got to make the tough, smart choices to cut what we don't need so that we can invest in the things that we do need.

Let me highlight two examples of what we do need. The first is infrastructure. This didn't used to be a partisan issue. I don't know when exactly that happened. It should be a no-brainer. Businesses are not going to set up shop in places where roads and bridges and ports and schools are falling apart. They're going to open their doors wherever they can connect the best transportation and communications networks to their businesses and to their customers.

And that's why I proposed what we're calling Fix-It-First—I talked about this in my State of the Union Address—to put people to work right now on urgent repairs, like the nearly 70,000 structurally deficient bridges across the country. And to make sure taxpayers don't shoulder the entire burden, I also proposed a partnership to rebuild America that attracts private capital to upgrade what our businesses need most: modern ports to move our goods, modern pipelines to withstand a storm, modern schools that are worthy of our children.

I know that some people in Congress reflexively oppose any idea that I put forward, even if it's an idea that they once supported, but rebuilding infrastructure is not my idea. It's everybody's idea. It's what built this country. Governor Kitzhaber, a Democrat in Oregon, has made clean energy infrastructure a top priority. Governor Brownback of Kansas, a Republican, has been fighting to upgrade water infrastructure there.

And folks who think spending really is our biggest problem should be more concerned than anybody about improving our infrastructure right now. We're talking about deferred maintenance here. We know we're going to have to spend the money. And the longer we wait, the more it's going to cost. That is a fact. I think Matt Mead, a Republican, put it pretty well in Wyoming's State of—State address. He said failing to maintain our roads "is not a plan for being fiscally conservative." Well, what's true in Wyoming is true all across the United States.

And we could be putting folks back to work right now. We know contractors are begging for work. They'll come in on time, under budget, which never happens. And we could make a whole lot of progress right now on things that we know we're going to have to do at some point. This is like fixing the roof or repairing a boiler that's broken. It will save us money in the long term.

I know that one of the biggest hurdles that you face when it comes to fixing infrastructure is redtape. And oftentimes, that comes out of Washington with regulations. In my first term, we started to take some steps to address that. And we've shaved months—in some cases, even years—off the timeline of infrastructure projects across America.

So today I'm accelerating that effort. We're setting up regional teams that will focus on some of the unique needs each of you have in various parts of the country. We're going to help the Pacific Northwest move faster on renewable energy projects. We're going to help the Northeast Corridor move faster on high-speed rail service. We're going to help the Midwest and other States like Colorado move faster on projects that help farmers deal with worsening drought. We're going to help States like North Dakota and South Dakota and Montana move faster on oil and gas production. All of these projects will get more Americans back to work faster. And we can do even more if we can get Congress to act.

The second priority that I want to talk about is education, and in particular, education that starts at the earliest age. I want to partner with each of you to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America.

Now, this is an area where we've already seen great bipartisan work at the State level. I was just in Governor Deal's State to highlight this issue because Georgia has made it a priority to educate our youngest kids. And in the school district where I visited in Decatur, Georgia, you're already seeing closing of the achievement gap. Kids who are poor are leveling up. And everybody is seeing real improvement, because it's high-quality early childhood education.

Study after study shows that the sooner children begin to learn in these high-quality settings, the better he or she does down the road, and we all end up saving money. Unfortunately, today, fewer than 3 in 10 4-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program. Most middle class parents can't afford a few hundred bucks a week in additional income for these kinds of preschool programs. And poor kids, who need it most, lack access. And that lack of access can shadow them for the rest of their lives. We all pay a price for that.

Every dollar we invest in early childhood education can save more than $7 later on: boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing incidents of violent crime.

And again, I'm not the first person to focus on this. Governor Bentley has made this a priority in Alabama. Governor Snyder is making it a priority in Michigan. Governor Tomblin has made this a priority in West Virginia. Even in a time of tight budgets, Republicans and Democrats are focused on high-quality early childhood education. We want to make sure that we can be an effective partner in that process.

We should be able to do that for every child, everywhere—Democrat, Republican, blue State, red State—it shouldn't matter. All of us want our kids to grow up more likely to read and write and do math at grade level, to graduate high school, hold a job, and form more stable families of their own. That will be better for every State. That will be better for this country. That's what high-quality early childhood education can deliver. And I hope that you're willing to partner with us to make that happen.

Let me just close with this. There are always going to be areas where we have some genuine disagreement, here in Washington and in your respective States. But there are more areas where we can do a lot more cooperating than I think we've seen over the last several years. To do that, though, this town has to get past its obsession with focusing on the next election instead of the next generation.

All of us are elected officials. All of us are concerned about our politics, both in our own party's as well as the other party's. But at some point, we've got to do some governing. And certainly, what we can't do is keep careening from manufactured crisis to manufactured crisis. As I said in the State of the Union, the American people have worked hard and long to dig themselves out of one crisis; they don't need us creating another one. And unfortunately, that's what we've been seeing too much out there.

The American people are out there every single day, meeting their responsibilities, giving it their all to provide for their families and their communities. A lot of you are doing the same things in your respective States. Well, we need that same kind of attitude here in Washington.

At the very least, the American people have a right to expect that from their representatives.

And so I look forward to working with all of you not just to strengthen our economy for the short term, but also to reignite what has always been the central premise of America's economic engine, and that is that we build a strong, growing, thriving middle class, where if you work hard in this country, no matter who you are, what you look like, you can make it; you can succeed. That's our goal, and I know that's the goal of all of you as well.

So I look forward to our partnering. And with that, what I want to do is clear out the press so we can take some questions. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden; and Gov. Jack A. Markell of Delaware, in his capacity as chair, and Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma, in her capacity as vice chair, National Governors Association. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden.

Remarks at Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia
February 26, 2013

Hello, Newport News! Well, it is good to see all of you here today.

I want to thank your CEO, Mike Petters, for showing me around. I usually don't get a chance to hang out with nuclear submarines, especially submarines that my wife has sponsored. So right there, that was worth the trip. But most importantly, it's a great chance to see the incredible men and women who, every single day, are helping to keep America safe and are just the bedrock of this country's manufacturing base. Thank you to all of you.

I want to thank our outstanding Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, who's here. There he is right there: the good-looking guy there, over at the end. [*Laughter*] I want to thank your mayor, McKinley Price, who served this Nation bravely in the U.S. Army. I want to thank two outstanding Congressmen who care about this facility, care about Virginia, and care about the country: Congressman Bobby Scott is here, and Congressman Scott Rigell is here as well.

Now, the reason I came here today, in addition to seeing just some incredible stuff—it's true, every time I come to these places, I don't know how you all do it; it is just amazing work. But the main reason I'm here is to call attention to the important work that you're doing on behalf of the Nation's defense and to let the American people know that this work, along with hundreds of thousands of jobs, are currently in jeopardy because of politics in Washington.

In a few days, Congress might allow a series of immediate, painful, arbitrary budget cuts to take place, known in Washington as the sequester. Now, that's a pretty bad name: sequester. But the effects are even worse than the name. Instead of cutting out the Government spending we don't need—wasteful programs that don't work, special interest tax loopholes, and tax breaks—what the sequester does is it uses a meat cleaver approach to gut critical investments in things like education and national security and lifesaving medical research. And the impact of this policy won't be felt overnight, but it will be real. The sequester will weaken America's economic recovery, it will weaken our military readiness, and it will weaken the basic services that the American people depend on every single day.

Already, the uncertainty around these cuts is having an effect. Companies are starting to prepare for layoff notices. Families are preparing to cut back on expenses. And the longer these cuts are in place, the greater the damage.

So, here at Newport News Shipbuilding, you guys have made an enormous investment, because we've said in order to maintain the finest Navy that the world has ever known, we've got to make sure that there is an orderly process whereby we are continually upgrading our ships, building new ships, maintaining our

ships properly. And these are some big ships, so it's expensive, and it's complicated. And you've got 5,000 suppliers all across the country, and you've got to have some certainty and some knowledge about how things are going to proceed over the long term for Mike and others to plan properly. So you're rightly concerned, Mike is properly concerned, about the impact that these cuts will have on not just this company, but companies and small businesses from all 50 States that supply you with parts and equipment.

Mike was telling me that you guys have already made a billion dollars' worth of capital investment. You've got half a billion dollars in training costs as you recruit and hire new people. Well, those aren't commitments that you make lightly. You've got to have the capacity to plan and have some certainty in terms of what it is that we're going to be doing. And you know that if Congress can't get together and plan our Nation's finances for the long term, that over time, some of your jobs and businesses could be at risk.

Over at the Norfolk Naval Station, the threat of these cuts has already forced the Navy to cancel the deployment or delay the repair of certain aircraft carriers. One that's currently being built might not get finished. Another carrier might not get started at all. And that hurts your bottom line. That hurts this community.

Because of these automatic cuts, about 90,000 Virginians who work for the Department of Defense would be forced to take unpaid leave from their jobs. So that's money out of their pockets, money out of their paychecks. And then that means there's going to be a ripple effect on thousands of other jobs and businesses and services throughout the Commonwealth, because if they don't have money in their pockets—or less money in their pockets—that means they're less able to afford to buy goods and services from other businesses. So it's not just restricted to the defense industry.

All told, the sequester could cost tens of thousands of jobs right here in Virginia. But it doesn't just stop there. If the sequester goes into effect, more than 2,000 college students would lose their financial aid. Early education like Head Start and Early Start would be eliminated for nearly 1,000 children, and around 18,000 fewer Virginians would get the skills and training they need to find a job.

Across the country, these cuts will force Federal prosecutors to close cases and potentially let criminals go. Air traffic controllers and airport security will see cutbacks, and that could cause delays at airports across the country. Tens of thousands of parents will have to scramble to find childcare for their kids. Hundreds of thousands of Americans will lose access to primary care and preventive care like flu vaccinations and cancer screenings, including more than 3,500 children right here in Virginia.

So these cuts are wrong. They're not smart. They're not fair. They're a self-inflicted wound that doesn't have to happen.

Now, the reason that we're even thinking about the sequester is because people are rightly concerned about the deficit and the debt. But there is a sensible way of doing things, and there is a dumb way of doing things. I mean, think about your own family, right? Let's say that suddenly you've got a little less money coming in. Are you going to say, well, we'll cut out college tuition for the kid, we'll stop feeding the little guy over here, we won't pay our car note even though that means we can't get to work? That's not what you do, right?

You step back, and you say, what is it that's important: our child's education, making sure they're healthy, making sure we can get to the job, keeping our house repaired? And then you say, here are the things that aren't so important, and you cut those out. You prioritize, and you make smart decisions. Well, we should be doing the same thing.

Now, I've laid out a plan that details how we can pay down our deficit in a way that's balanced and responsible. We have the plan right on a website, the White House website. Everybody can go see it. It details exactly how we can cut programs that don't work, how we can raise money by closing loopholes that are only serv-

ing a few, as opposed to the average American. We detailed $930 billion in sensible spending cuts that we're willing to make and $580 billion in wasteful tax loopholes and deductions that we're willing to eliminate through tax reform.

And what I've said is if the Republicans in Congress don't like every detail of my proposal, which I don't expect them to, I've told them my door is open. I am more than willing to negotiate. I want to compromise. There's no reason why we can't come together and find a sensible way to reduce the deficit over the long term without affecting vital services, without hurting families, without impacting outstanding facilities like this one and our national defense. There's a way of doing this.

And the fact is, there are leaders in both parties throughout this country who want to do the same. I've got to give Scott Rigell credit. He is one of your Republican Congressmen who's with us here today, and that's not always healthy for a Republican, being with me. But the reason he's doing it is because he knows it's important to you. And he's asked his colleagues in the House to consider closing tax loopholes instead of letting these automatic cuts go through. He's concerned about the deficit, and he's more than prepared to make some really tough cuts, but he wants to do it in a smart way.

Bobby Scott, same thing. Some of the cuts we've proposed, Bobby might not think are perfect, but he knows that we've got to make some tough decisions. He just wants to make sure that you aren't the ones who are adversely impacted and that we're sharing the sacrifice in bringing down our deficit, we're not just dumping it on a few people, and we're not doing it in a dumb way. Senators like John McCain have made similar statements to what Scott said. Your Republican Governor, along with other Governors around the country, have said they want Congress to stop the sequester, to stop these cuts.

But I just have to be honest with you. There are too many Republicans in Congress right now who refuse to compromise even an inch when it comes to closing tax loopholes and special interest tax breaks. And that's what's holding things up right now.

Keep in mind, nobody is asking them to raise income tax rates. All we're asking is to consider closing tax loopholes and deductions that the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, said he was willing to do just a few months ago. He said there were a bunch of loopholes and deductions you could close. He said you could raise 800 billion, a trillion dollars, by closing loopholes.

Well, we're not even asking for that much. All we're asking is that they close loopholes for the well off and the well connected—for hedge fund managers or oil companies or corporate jet owners, who are all doing very well and don't need these tax loopholes—so we can avoid laying off workers or kicking kids off Head Start or reducing financial aid for college students. I don't think that's too much to ask. I do not think that is partisan. The majority of the American people agree with me. The majority of Newport News agrees with me. We need to get this done.

But the choice is up to Congress. Only Congress has the power to pass a law that stops these damaging cuts and replaces them with smart savings and tax reform. And the second I get that bill on my desk, I will sign it into law. But I've got to get Congress to pass it.

None of us will get 100 percent of what we want. Democrats, they've got to make some tough choices too. Democrats like me, we've said we're prepared to make some tough cuts and reforms, including to programs like Medicare. But if we're willing to compromise, then Republicans in the House have to compromise as well. That's what democracy is about. That's what this country needs right now.

So let me just make one last point, by the way, for those of you who are following this. Now, lately, some people have been saying, well, maybe we'll just give the President some flexibility. He could make the cuts the way he wants, and that way it won't be as damaging. The problem is, when you're cutting $85 billion in 7 months, which represents over a 10-percent cut in the defense budget in 7 months, there's no smart way to do that. There's no

smart way to do that. You don't want to have to choose between, let's see, do I close funding for the disabled kid or the poor kid? Do I close this Navy shipyard or some other one? When you're doing things in a way that's not smart, you can't gloss over the pain and the impact it's going to have on the economy.

And the broader point is, Virginia, we can't just cut our way to prosperity. We can't just cut our way to prosperity. We can't ask seniors and working families like yours to shoulder the entire burden of deficit reduction while asking nothing more from the wealthiest and the most powerful. We're not going to grow the middle class just by shifting the cost of health care or college onto families that are already struggling, or forcing communities to lay off more teachers or cops or firefighters or shipbuilders, and then folks who are doing really well don't have to do anything more. That's not fair, and it's not good for the economy.

And the other thing we've got to do is to stop having these crises manufactured every month. It seems like—I know you guys must get tired of it—didn't we just solve this thing? Now we've got another thing coming up? I mean, think about if Mike Petters ran his business this way: Once every month or two, there would be some crisis, and you wouldn't be sure whether or not you're working or not. Even if it got solved eventually or ultimately, it would be pretty discouraging on people. You would be less productive. Ships wouldn't get built as fast. You would waste money because you don't know exactly what to expect. Folks aren't sure: Am I showing up to work today, or not? If it's not a good way to run a business, it's sure not a good way to run a country.

Now, all of you, the American people, you've worked too hard for too long rebuilding and digging our way out of the financial crisis back in 2007 and 2008 just to have—to see Congress cause another one. The greatest nation on Earth can't keep on conducting its business drifting from one crisis to the next.

We've got to have a plan. We've got to invest in our common future. Our true north is a growing economy that creates good middle class jobs, a country that provides its people with the skills they need to get those jobs and makes sure that you're getting paid a decent wage for working hard so you can support your families. That's what we should be focused on right now, not weakening the economy, not laying people off.

That's what we should be talking about in Washington. And if you agree with me, I need you to make sure your voices are heard. Let your leaders know what you expect of them. Let them know what you believe. Let them know that what this country was built on was a sense of obligation to not just each other, but to future generations; that we've got to shoulder those obligations as one Nation and as one people.

I was in a conversation with some of the Governors from across the country yesterday, and I told them, I said, I've run my last election. Michelle is very happy about that. [*Laughter*] I'm not interested in spin; I'm not interested in playing a blame game. At this point, all I'm interested in is just solving problems. All I'm interested in is making sure that when you get up early in the morning and get to this shift at 5:30 in the morning, that you know if you do a good job and if you work hard and if you're making sure that all the parts to this incredible ship that you're building is where they need to be—if you're doing what you do, then you can go home feeling satisfied. I did my job; I did my part. I can support my family. I can take pride in what I've done for this country.

That's all I want. I want us to be able to look back 5 years from now, 10 years from now, and say we took care of our business and we put an end to some of these games that maybe, I guess, are entertaining for some, but are hurting too many people.

But in order for us to make that happen, I'm going to need you. The one thing about being President is, after 4 years, you get pretty humble. [*Laughter*] You'd think maybe you wouldn't, but actually, you become more humble. You realize what you don't know. You realize all the mistakes you've made. But you also realize you can't do things by yourself. That's not how our system works. You've got to have

the help and the good will of Congress, and what that means is you've got to make sure that constituents of Members of Congress are putting some pressure on them, making sure they're doing the right thing, putting an end to some of these political games.

So I need you, Virginia, to keep up the pressure. I need you to keep up the effort. I need you to keep up the fight. If you do, Congress will listen. If you stand up and speak out, Congress will listen. And together, we will unleash our true potential. And we'll remind the world just why it is the United States builds the greatest ships on Earth and is the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to C. Michael Petters, president and chief executive officer, Huntington Ingalls Industries, which owns Newport News Shipbuilding; and Gov. Robert F. McDonnell of Virginia.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Charles T. Hagel as Secretary of Defense
February 26, 2013

With the bipartisan confirmation of Chuck Hagel as our next Secretary of Defense, we will have the Defense Secretary our Nation needs and the leader our troops deserve. From the moment he volunteered for military service in Vietnam, Chuck has devoted his life to keeping America secure and our Armed Forces strong. An American patriot who fought and bled for our country, he understands our sacred obligations to our servicemembers, military families, and veterans.

I will be counting on Chuck's judgment and counsel as we end the war in Afghanistan, bring our troops home, stay ready to meet the threats of our time, and keep our military the finest fighting force in the world. Most of all, I am grateful to Chuck for reminding us that when it comes to our national defense, we are not Democrats or Republicans, we are Americans, and our greatest responsibility is the security of the American people.

Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for a Statue Honoring Rosa Parks at the United States Capitol
February 27, 2013

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, Leader Reid, Leader McConnell, Leader Pelosi, Assistant Leader Clyburn; to the friends and family of Rosa Parks; to the distinguished guests who are gathered here today.

This morning we celebrate a seamstress, slight in stature, but mighty in courage. She defied the odds, and she defied injustice. She lived a life of activism, but also a life of dignity and grace. And in a single moment, with the simplest of gestures, she helped change America—and change the world.

Rosa Parks held no elected office. She possessed no fortune, lived her life far from the formal seats of power. And yet today she takes her rightful place among those who've shaped this Nation's course. I thank all those persons, in particular the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, both past and present, for making this moment possible.

A childhood friend once said about Mrs. Parks, "Nobody ever bossed Rosa around and got away with it." [*Laughter*] That's what an Alabama driver learned on December 1, 1955. Twelve years earlier, he had kicked Mrs. Parks off his bus simply because she entered through the front door when the back door was too crowded. He grabbed her sleeve, and he pushed her off the bus. It made her mad

enough, she would recall, that she avoided riding his bus for a while.

And when they met again that winter evening in 1955, Rosa Parks would not be pushed. When the driver got up from his seat to insist that she give up hers, she would not be pushed. When he threatened to have her arrested, she simply replied, "You may do that." And he did.

A few days later, Rosa Parks challenged her arrest. A little-known pastor, new to town and only 26 years old, stood with her, a man named Martin Luther King, Jr. So did thousands of Montgomery, Alabama, commuters. They began a boycott: teachers and laborers, clergy and domestics, through rain and cold and sweltering heat, day after day, week after week, month after month, walking miles if they had to, arranging carpools where they could, not thinking about the blisters on their feet, the weariness after a full day of work. Walking for respect, walking for freedom, driven by a solemn determination to affirm their God-given dignity.

Three hundred and eighty-five days after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, the boycott ended. Black men and women and children reboarded the buses of Montgomery, newly desegregated, and sat in whatever seat happen to be open. And with that victory, the entire edifice of segregation, like the ancient walls of Jericho, began to slowly come tumbling down.

It's been often remarked that Rosa Parks's activism didn't begin on that bus. Long before she made headlines, she had stood up for freedom, stood up for equality: fighting for voting rights, rallying against discrimination in the criminal justice system, serving in the local chapter of the NAACP. Her quiet leadership would continue long after she became an icon of the civil rights movement, working with Congressman Conyers to find homes for the homeless, preparing disadvantaged youth for a path to success, striving each day to right some wrong somewhere in this world.

And yet our minds fasten on that single moment on the bus: Ms. Parks alone in that seat, clutching her purse, staring out a window, waiting to be arrested. That moment tells us something about how change happens or doesn't happen, the choices we make or don't make. "For now we see through a glass, darkly," Scripture says, and it's true. Whether out of inertia or selfishness, whether out of fear or a simple lack of moral imagination, we so often spend our lives as if in a fog, accepting injustice, rationalizing inequity, tolerating the intolerable.

Like the busdriver, but also like the passengers on the bus, we see the way things are: children hungry in a land of plenty, entire neighborhoods ravaged by violence, families hobbled by job loss or illness. And we make excuses for inaction, and we say to ourselves: That's not my responsibility; there's nothing I can do.

Rosa Parks tells us there's always something we can do. She tells us that we all have responsibilities, to ourselves and to one another. She reminds us that this is how change happens, not mainly through the exploits of the famous and the powerful, but through the countless acts of often anonymous courage and kindness and fellow feeling and responsibility that continually, stubbornly expand our conception of justice, our conception of what is possible.

Rosa Parks's singular act of disobedience launched a movement. The tired feet of those who walked the dusty roads of Montgomery helped a nation see that to which it had once been blind. It is because of these men and women that I stand here today. It is because of them that our children grow up in a land more free and more fair, a land truer to its founding creed.

And that is why this statue belongs in this hall: to remind us, no matter how humble or lofty our positions, just what it is that leadership requires, just what it is that citizenship requires. Rosa Parks would have turned 100 years old this month. We do well by placing a statue of her here. But we can do no greater honor to her memory than to carry forward the power of her principle and a courage born of conviction.

May God bless the memory of Rosa Parks, and may God bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in National Statuary Hall.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Jacob J. Lew as Secretary of the Treasury
February 27, 2013

I am pleased that the Senate took bipartisan action today to confirm Jack Lew as our Nation's next Treasury Secretary. At this critical time for our economy and our country, there is no one more qualified for this position than Jack. As my Chief of Staff, Jack was by my side as we confronted our Nation's toughest challenges. His reputation as a master of fiscal issues who can work with leaders on both sides of the aisle has already helped him succeed in some of the toughest jobs in Washington. And I will continue to rely on his advice and sound judgment as we work to create good, middle class jobs, provide more people with the skills those jobs require, and ensure every hard-working American can earn a decent living.

Remarks at the Business Council Dinner
February 27, 2013

Thank you. Please—I didn't think they were going to do the music. [*Laughter*]

Andrew, thank you very much for your introduction and your leadership. I want to say hello to everybody. Many of you I've known for a very long time, and some of you I've met more recently. But let me say at the top what I always like to emphasize when I get a chance to speak to our business leaders, and that is, I am very much rooting for your success, because what is absolutely true is that when your companies are thriving, when your bottom line is where it needs to be, then the possibilities of jobs and growth and people being able to achieve their dreams are greatly enhanced.

Now, the good news is, is that after 4 years of difficult times, we have seen a steady recovery, if not as robust as we would like. And we've seen over 6 million jobs created over the last 35 months. Housing is finally beginning to recover. There is reason for optimism as we move forward.

I think what everybody here is aware of, though, is that we've got a long way to go. Unemployment is still too high. Middle class families are still feeling enormous stresses and strains. And what I think everybody is concerned about is the enormous uncertainty in terms of the political framework, the tax framework, the debt framework within which all of you are going to be operating over the next several years.

And right now the biggest manifestation of that is the potential for a sequester that kicks in, starting at the end of this week. Now, I should point out and I'm sure you've heard from a number of experts and economists that this is not a cliff, but it is a tumble downward. It's conceivable that in the first week, the first 2 weeks, the first 3 weeks, the first month, that unless your business is directly related to the Defense Department, unless you live in a town that is directly impacted by a military installation, unless you're a family that now is trying to figure out where to keep your kids during the day because you just lost a Head Start slot, a lot of people may not notice the full impact of the sequester.

But this is going to be a big hit on the economy. And both private sector as well as public sector economists are estimating that we could lose as much as six-tenths of a point, maybe a little bit more, of economic growth. And that means, inevitably, hundreds of thousands of people who are not going to get jobs that otherwise would get them. It means that you have fewer customers with money in their pockets ready to buy your goods and services. It means that the global economy will be weaker, because although we obviously still have a long way to go in recovery, we're actually doing significantly better than some of the other developed nations. And the worst part of it is, it's

entirely unnecessary. It's not what we should be doing.

I've said this before, I will say it again, and I suspect I will be repeating it during the question-and-answer session, but if you look right now at what our economy needs, taking $85 billion out of it over the next 6 months—indiscriminately, arbitrarily, without a strategy behind it—that's not a smart thing to do if we're serious about making sure that America grows and that our middle class is thriving and there are ladders of opportunity into the middle class.

What we should be doing—and what I've been calling for repeatedly over the last not just several months, but several years—is a balanced approach to deficit reduction that combines some tough spending cuts, particularly focused on how do we deal with long-term trends on some of our entitlement programs, and a tax reform agenda that without raising tax rates further could in fact raise sufficient revenues that combined would yield about $1.5 trillion in deficit reduction over the next decade, would replace the sequester, would bring our deficit-to-GDP ratios below the 3-percent threshold that we need for stabilization, that would stabilize our debt-to-GDP ratios for the next decade, and would lay the groundwork for more expansive growth because we would have simplified our tax system, closed some loopholes, broadened our base, seen an opportunity for corporate tax reform that could also make the whole system more sensible and give you guys a more competitive posture internationally. That's what we should be doing.

Now, you'll be happy to know that that's what I offered to my Republican friends back in December after my election, before the fiscal cliff. Many of you were involved in voicing support for such a balanced approach, even if you didn't sign on to every detail and every line item in our recommended budget. And what I've said is that that continues to be the offer on the table. I am prepared to make some tough decisions, some of which will garner some significant frustration on the part of members of my party, but I think it's the right thing to do.

What I can't do is to abide by a set of decisions here in Washington that would put the entire burden of deficit reduction on our seniors, making their health care more expensive; students, that would make their student loans and going to college more expensive; that would gut our investments in education and research and infrastructure—all the foundations for long-term growth. That's not what we're going to do, because it wouldn't be good for the country, and frankly, it would not be good for your businesses.

Now, the question then becomes, how do we get from here to there? And I was telling Andrew before we came out, the issue is not technical, the issue is political. And the question is whether or not we are going to see a willingness on the part of all parties to compromise in a meaningful way. And what that means is Democrats have to accept the need for entitlement reform. But it also means that Republicans have to accept the need for additional revenues if we're going to be able to actually close this deficit and provide the kind of certainty that you need to make your long-term investments.

Whether that can be done in the next 2 days—I haven't seen things done in 2 days here in Washington in quite some time. On the other hand, the good news is that I think the public is beginning to pay attention to this, and one thing I'm certain about is that the country as a whole is weary of Washington for presiding over a manufactured crisis every 3 months. It's not good for business confidence. It's certainly not good for consumer confidence. It's unnecessary.

And my strong hope, and the case that I'm taking to the American people, is that we can once and for all resolve this in a way that is equitable, in a way that is focused on growth, in a way that provides opportunity for everybody in this country who's willing to work hard, regardless of what they look like or where they come from or what region of the country they live in. And it's right there. It's there for the taking.

And what I strongly believe is that if the business community speaks out for such a sensible, balanced, responsible approach, then eventually it will get done. I think it was Winston Churchill who once said that Americans always do the right thing after they've exhausted every other possibility. And we're getting to the point where we've now exhausted every other possibility. And I have confidence that what's been true for our country in the past will be true for this country in the future.

So with that, let me just open it up and take some questions. I think we're going to move the press out of the way. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:39 p.m. at the Park Hyatt Washington hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew N. Liveris, chairman and chief executive officer, Dow Chemical Co., in his capacity as chairman of the Business Council.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation To Prevent Violence Against Women
February 28, 2013

I was pleased to see the House of Representatives come together and vote to reauthorize and strengthen the Violence Against Women Act. Over more than two decades, this law has saved countless lives and transformed the way we treat victims of abuse. Today's vote will go even further by continuing to reduce domestic violence, improving how we treat victims of rape, and extending protections to Native American women and members of the LGBT community. The bill also reauthorizes the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, providing critical support for both international and domestic victims of trafficking and helping ensure traffickers are brought to justice. I want to thank leaders from both parties, especially Leader Pelosi, Congresswoman Gwen Moore, and Senator Leahy, for everything they've done to make this happen. Renewing this bill is an important step towards making sure no one in America is forced to live in fear, and I look forward to signing it into law as soon as it hits my desk.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 47.

Statement on Senate Action on Federal Budget Legislation
February 28, 2013

Today Republicans in the Senate faced a choice about how to grow our economy and reduce our deficit. And instead of closing a single tax loophole that benefits the well off and well connected, they chose to cut vital services for children, seniors, our men and women in uniform, and their families. They voted to let the entire burden of deficit reduction fall squarely on the middle class.

I believe we should do better. We should work together to reduce our deficit in a balanced way: by making smart spending cuts and closing special interest tax loopholes. That's exactly the kind of plan Democrats in the Senate have proposed. But even though a majority of Senators support this approach, Republicans have refused to allow it an up-or-down vote, threatening our economy with a series of arbitrary, automatic budget cuts that will cost us jobs and slow our recovery.

Tomorrow I will bring together leaders from both parties to discuss a path forward. As a nation, we can't keep lurching from one manufactured crisis to another. Middle class families can't keep paying the price for dysfunction in Washington. We can build on the over $2.5 trillion in deficit reduction we've already achieved, but doing so will require Republicans to compromise. That's how our democracy works, and that's what the American people deserve.

The President's News Conference
March 1, 2013

The President. Good morning, everybody. As you know, I just met with leaders of both parties to discuss a way forward in light of the severe budget cuts that start to take effect today. I told them these cuts will hurt our economy. They'll cost us jobs. And to set it right, both sides need to be willing to compromise.

The good news is, the American people are strong, and they're resilient. They fought hard to recover from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and we will get through this as well. Even with these cuts in place, folks all across this country will work hard to make sure that we keep the recovery going. But Washington sure isn't making it easy. At a time when our businesses have finally begun to get some traction—hiring new workers, bringing jobs back to America—we shouldn't be making a series of dumb, arbitrary cuts to things that businesses depend on and workers depend on, like education and research and infrastructure and defense. It's unnecessary. And at a time when too many Americans are still looking for work, it's inexcusable.

Now, what's important to understand is that not everyone will feel the pain of these cuts right away. The pain, though, will be real. Beginning this week, many middle class families will have their lives disrupted in significant ways. Businesses that work with the military, like the Virginia shipbuilder that I visited on Tuesday, may have to lay folks off. Communities near military bases will take a serious blow. Hundreds of thousands of Americans who serve their country—Border Patrol agents, FBI agents, civilians who work at the Pentagon—all will suffer significant pay cuts and furloughs.

All of this will cause a ripple effect throughout our economy. Layoffs and pay cuts means that people have less money in their pockets, and that means that they have less money to spend at local businesses. That means lower profits. That means fewer hires. The longer these cuts remain in place, the greater the damage to our economy: a slow grind that will intensify with each passing day.

So economists are estimating that as a consequence of this sequester, that we could see growth cut by over one-half of 1 percent. It will cost about 750,000 jobs at a time when we should be growing jobs more quickly. So every time that we get a piece of economic news, over the next month, next 2 months, next 6 months, as long as the sequester is in place, we'll know that that economic news could have been better if Congress had not failed to act.

And let's be clear: None of this is necessary. It's happening because a choice that Republicans in Congress have made. They've allowed these cuts to happen because they refuse to budge on closing a single wasteful loophole to help reduce the deficit. As recently as yesterday, they decided to protect special interest tax breaks for the well off and well connected, and they think that that's apparently more important than protecting our military or middle class families from the pain of these cuts.

I do believe that we can and must replace these cuts with a more balanced approach that asks something from everybody: smart spending cuts, entitlement reform, tax reform that makes the Tax Code more fair for families and businesses without raising tax rates, all so that we can responsibly lower the deficit without laying off workers or forcing parents to scramble for childcare or slashing financial aid for college students.

I don't think that's too much to ask. I don't think that is partisan. It's the kind of approach that I've proposed for 2 years. It's what I ran on last year. The majority of the American people agree with me in this approach, including, by the way, a majority of Republicans. We just need Republicans in Congress to catch up with their own party and their country on this. And if they did so, we could make a lot of progress.

I do know that there are Republicans in Congress who privately, at least, say that they would rather close tax loopholes than let these cuts go through. I know that there are Demo-

crats who'd rather do smart entitlement reform than let these cuts go through. So there is a caucus of common sense up on Capitol Hill. It's just, it's a silent group right now, and we want to make sure that their voices start getting heard.

In the coming days and in the coming weeks I'm going to keep on reaching out to them, both individually and as groups of Senators or Members of the House and say to them, let's fix this, not just for a month or two, but for years to come. Because the greatest nation on Earth does not conduct its business in month-to-month increments or by careening from crisis to crisis. And America has got a lot more work to do.

In the meantime, we can't let political gridlock around the budget stand in the way of other areas where we can make progress. I was pleased to see that the House passed the Violence Against Women Act yesterday. That is a big win for not just women, but for families and for the American people. It's a law that's going to save lives and help more Americans live free from fear. It's something that we've been pushing on for a long time. I was glad to see that done. And it's an example of how we can still get some important bipartisan legislation through this Congress even though there is still these fiscal arguments taking place.

And I think there are other areas where we can make progress even with the sequester unresolved. I will continue to push for those initiatives. I'm going to keep pushing for high-quality preschool for every family that wants it. I'm going to keep pushing to make sure that we raise the minimum wage so that it's one that families can live on. I'm going to keep on pushing for immigration reform and reform of our voting system and improvements on our transportation sector. And I'm going to keep pushing for sensible gun reforms because I still think they deserve a vote.

This is the agenda that the American people voted for. These are America's priorities. They are too important to go unaddressed. And I'm going to keep pushing to make sure that we see them through.

So with that, I'm going to take some questions. I'm going to start with Julie [Julie Pace, Associated Press].

Federal Budget Negotiations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. How much responsibility do you feel like you bear for these cuts taking effect? And is the only way to offset them at this point for Republicans to bend on revenue, or do you see any alternatives?

The President. Look, we've already cut $2.5 trillion in our deficit. Everybody says we need to cut $4 trillion, which means we have to come up with another trillion and a half. The vast majority of economists agree that the problem when it comes to deficits is not discretionary spending. It's not that we're spending too much money on education. It's not that we're spending too much money on job training or that we're spending too much money rebuilding our roads and our bridges. We're not.

The problem that we have is a long-term problem in terms of our health care costs and programs like Medicare. And what I've said very specifically, very detailed, is that I'm prepared to take on the problem where it exists—on entitlements—and do some things that my own party really doesn't like, if it's part of a broader package of sensible deficit reduction. So the deal that I've put forward over the last 2 years, the deal that I put forward as recently as December is still on the table. I am prepared to do hard things and to push my Democratic friends to do hard things.

But what I can't do is ask middle class families, ask seniors, ask students to bear the entire burden of deficit reduction when we know we've got a bunch of tax loopholes that are benefiting the well off and the well connected, aren't contributing to growth, aren't contributing to our economy. It's not fair. It's not right. The American people don't think it's fair or—and don't think it's right.

So I recognize that Speaker Boehner has got challenges in his caucus. I recognize that it's very hard for Republican leaders to be perceived as making concessions to me. Sometimes, I reflect, is there something else I could do to make these guys—I'm not talking about

the leaders now, but maybe some of the House Republican Caucus members—not paint horns on my head? And I genuinely believe that there's an opportunity for us to cooperate.

But what doesn't make sense—and the only thing that we've seen from Republicans so far in terms of proposals—is to replace this set of arbitrary cuts with even worse arbitrary cuts. That's not going to help the economy. That's not going to help growth. That's not going to create jobs. And as a number of economists have noted, ironically, it doesn't even reduce our deficit in the smartest way possible or the fastest way possible.

So in terms of going forward, my hope is that after some reflection, as Members of Congress start hearing from constituents who are being negatively impacted, as we start seeing the impact that the sequester is having, that they step back and say, all right, is there a way for us to move forward on a package of entitlement reforms, tax reform, not raising tax rates, identifying programs that don't work, coming up with a plan that's comprehensive and that makes sense? And it may take a couple of weeks. It may take a couple of months, but I'm just going to keep on pushing on it. And my view is, is that, ultimately, common sense prevails.

But what is true right now is that the Republicans have made a choice that maintaining an ironclad rule that we will not accept an extra dime's worth of revenue makes it very difficult for us to get any larger comprehensive deal. And that's a choice they're making. They're saying that it's more important to preserve these tax loopholes than it is to prevent these arbitrary cuts.

And what's interesting is, Speaker Boehner, just a couple months ago, identified these tax loopholes and tax breaks and said we should close them and raise revenue. So it's not as if it's not possible to do. They themselves have suggested that it's possible to do. And if they believe that in fact these tax loopholes and these tax breaks for the well off and the well connected aren't contributing to growth, aren't good for our economy, aren't particularly fair and can raise revenue, well, why don't we get started? Why don't we do that?

It may be that because of the politics within the Republican Party, they can't do it right now. I understand that. My hope is, is that they can do it later.

And I just want to repeat, Julie, because I think it's very important to understand, it's not as if Democrats aren't being asked to do anything, either, to compromise. I mean, there are members of my party who violently disagree with the notion that we should do anything on Medicare. And I'm willing to say to them, I disagree with you, because I want to preserve Medicare for the long haul. And we're going to have some tough politics within my party to get this done.

This is not a situation where I'm only asking for concessions from Republicans and asking nothing from Democrats. I'm saying that everybody is going to have to do something. And the one key to this whole thing is trying to make sure we keep in mind who we're here for. We are not here for ourselves, we're not here for our parties, we're not here to advance our electoral prospects. We're here for American families who have been getting battered pretty good over the last 4 years, are just starting to see the economy improve; businesses are just starting to see some confidence coming back. And this is not a win for anybody, this is a loss for the American people.

And again, if we step back and just remind ourselves what it is we're supposed to be doing here, then hopefully, common sense will out in the end.

Q. It sounds like you're saying that this is a Republican problem and not one that you bear any responsibility for.

The President. Well, Julie, give me an example of what I might do.

Q. I'm just trying to clarify your statement.

The President. Well, no, but I'm trying to clarify the question. What I'm suggesting is, I've put forward a plan that calls for serious spending cuts, serious entitlement reforms, goes right at the problem that is at the heart of our long-term deficit problem. I've offered negotiations around that kind of balanced ap-

proach. And so far, we've gotten rebuffed because what Speaker Boehner and the Republicans have said is, we cannot do any revenue, we can't do a dime's worth of revenue.

So what more do you think I should do? Okay, I just wanted to clarify. [*Laughter*] Because if people have a suggestion, I'm happy to—this is a room full of smart folks. So—[*laughter*].

All right. Zach Goldfarb [Washington Post].

Federal Budget Negotiations/Continuing Budget Resolution

Q. Mr. President, the next focal point seems to be the continuing resolution that's funding the Government at the end of the month, that expires at the end of the month. Would you sign a CR that continues the sequester, but continues to fund the Government? And in a related point, how do you truly reach the limits of your persuasive power? Is there any other leverage you have to convince the Republicans, to convince folks that this isn't the way to go?

The President. Well, I'd like to think I've still got some persuasive power left. Let me check. [*Laughter*] Look, the issue is not my persuasive power. The American people agree with my approach. They agree that we should have a balanced approach to deficit reduction.

The question is, can the American people help persuade their Members of Congress to do the right thing? And I have a lot of confidence that over time, if the American people express their displeasure about how something is working, that eventually, Congress responds. Sometimes, there is a little gap between what the American people think and what Congress thinks. But eventually, Congress catches up.

With respect to the budget and keeping the Government open, I'll try for our viewing audience to make sure that we're not talking in Washington gobbledygook. What's called the continuing resolution, which is essentially just an extension of last year's budget into this year's budget to make sure that basic Government functions continue, I think it's the right thing to do to make sure that we don't have a Government shutdown. And that's preventable.

We have a Budget Control Act, right? We agreed to a certain amount of money that was going to be spent each year and certain funding levels for our military, our education system, and so forth. If we stick to that deal, then I will be supportive of us sticking to that deal. It's a deal that I made.

The sequester are additional cuts on top of that. And by law, until Congress takes the sequester away, we'd have to abide by those additional cuts. But there's no reason why we should have another crisis by shutting the Government down in addition to these arbitrary spending cuts.

Q. Just to make it 100 percent clear, you'd sign a budget that continues to fund the Government even at the lower levels of the sequester, even if you don't prefer to do that?

The President. Zach, I'm not going to—I never want to make myself 100 percent clear with you guys. [*Laughter*] But I think it's fair to say that I made a deal for a certain budget, certain numbers. There's no reason why that deal needs to be reopened. It was a deal that Speaker Boehner made as well and all the leadership made. And if the bill that arrives on my desk is reflective of the commitments that we've previously made, then obviously, I would sign it because I want to make sure that we keep on doing what we need to do for the American people. All right?

Jessica [Jessica Yellin, CNN].

Federal Budget Negotiations/Presidential Leadership

Q. Mr. President, to your question, what could you do: First of all, couldn't you just have them down here and refuse to let them leave the room until you have a deal? [*Laughter*]

The President. I mean, Jessica, I am not a dictator, I'm the President. So, ultimately, if Mitch McConnell or John Boehner say, we need to go to catch a plane, I can't have Secret Service block the doorway, right? [*Laughter*] So——

Q. But isn't that part of leadership? I'm sorry to interrupt, but isn't——

The President. I understand. And I know that this has been some of the conventional

wisdom that's been floating around Washington: that somehow, even though most people agree that I'm being reasonable, that most people agree I'm presenting a fair deal, the fact that they don't take it means that I should somehow do a Jedi mind meld with these folks and convince them to do what's right. Well, they're elected. We have a constitutional system of government. The Speaker of the House and the leader of the Senate and all those folks have responsibilities.

What I can do is I can make the best possible case for why we need to do the right thing. I can speak to the American people about the consequences of the decisions that Congress is making or the lack of decisionmaking by Congress. But ultimately, it's a choice they make.

And the—this idea that somehow there's a secret formula or secret sauce to get Speaker Boehner or Mitch McConnell to say, you know what, Mr. President, you're right, we should close some tax loopholes for the well off and well connected in exchange for some serious entitlement reform and spending cuts of programs we don't need. I think if there was a secret way to do that, I would have tried it. I would have done it.

What I can do is I can make the best possible argument. And I can offer concessions, and I can offer compromise. I can negotiate. I can make sure that my party is willing to compromise and is not being ideological or thinking about these just in terms of political terms. And I think I've done that, and I will continue to do that.

But what I can't do is force Congress to do the right thing. The American people may have the capacity to do that. And in the absence of a decision on the part of the Speaker of the House and others to put middle class families ahead of whatever political imperatives he might have right now, we're going to have these cuts in place. But again, I'm hopeful about human nature. I think that over time, people do the right thing. And I will keep on reaching out and seeing if there are other formulas or other ways to jigger this thing into place so that we get a better result.

Q. What do you say to the people like Mayor Bloomberg—who is no critic of yours in general; he endorsed you—who argues that there is some what he calls "posturing" in these claims that there are going to be big layoffs and a lot of people out of work and think that the effects of the spending cuts are being overstated by the administration?

The President. Well, Jessica, look, I'll just give you an example. The Department of Defense right now has to figure out how the children of military families are going to continue with their schooling over the next several months, because teachers at these Army bases are typically civilians. They are therefore subject to furlough, which means that they may not be able to teach 1 day a week.

Now, I expect that we'll be able to manage around it. But if I'm a man or woman in uniform in Afghanistan right now, the notion that my spouse back home is having to worry about whether or not our kids are getting the best education possible, the notion that my school for my children on an Army base might be disrupted because Congress didn't act, that's an impact. Now, Mayor Bloomberg and others may not feel that impact. I suspect they won't. But that family will.

The Border Patrol agents who are out there in the hot sun, doing what Congress said they're supposed to be doing, finding out suddenly that they're getting a 10-percent pay cut and having to go home and explain that to their families, I don't think they feel like this is an exaggerated impact. So I guess it depends on where you sit.

Now, what is absolutely true is, is that not everybody is going to feel it. Not everybody is going to feel it all at once. What is true is that the accumulation of those stories all across this country, folks who suddenly—might have been working all their lives to get an education, just so that they can get that job and get out of welfare, and they've got their kid in Head Start, and now, suddenly, that Head Start slot is gone, and they're trying to figure out: How am I going to keep my job, because I can't afford childcare for my kid. Some of the suppliers for those shipbuilders down in Virginia, where

you've got some suppliers who are small businesses, this is all they do, and they may shut down those companies, and their employees are going to be laid off. The accumulation of all of those stories of impact is going to make our economy weaker. It's going to mean less growth. It's going to mean hundreds of thousands of jobs lost.

That is real. That's not—we're not making that up. That's not a scare tactic, that's a fact.

Starting tomorrow, everybody here, all the folks who are cleaning the floors at the Capitol—now that Congress has left, somebody is going to be vacuuming and cleaning those floors and throwing out the garbage—they're going to have less pay. The janitors, the security guards, they just got a pay cut, and they've got to figure out how to manage that. That's real.

So I want to be very clear here. It is absolutely true that this is not going to precipitate the kind of crisis we talked about with America defaulting and some of the problems around the debt ceiling. I don't anticipate a huge financial crisis, but people are going to be hurt. The economy will not grow as quickly as it would have. Unemployment will not go down as quickly as it would have. And there are lives behind that. And that's real. And it's not necessary; that's the problem.

Christi Parsons [Chicago Tribune].

Q. Thank you.

U.S. Supreme Court Case on California's Proposition 8/Marriage Equality

The President. Hey, Christi.

Q. Mr. President, your administration weighed in yesterday on the Proposition 8 case. A few months ago, it looked like you might be averse to doing that, and I just wondered if you could talk a little bit about your deliberations and how your thinking evolved on that. Were there conversations that were important to you? Were there things that you read that influenced your thinking?

The President. As everybody here knows, last year, upon a long period of reflection, I concluded that we cannot discriminate against same-sex couples when it comes to marriage; that the basic principle that America is founded on—the idea that we're all created equal—applies to everybody, regardless of sexual orientation, as well as race or gender or religion or ethnicity.

And I think that the same evolution that I've gone through is an evolution that the country as a whole has gone through. And I think it is a profoundly positive thing. So that when the Supreme Court essentially called the question by taking this case about California's law, I didn't feel like that was something that this administration could avoid. I felt it was important for us to articulate what I believe and what this administration stands for.

And although I do think that we're seeing, on a State-by-State basis, progress being made—more and more States recognizing same-sex couples and giving them the opportunity to marry and maintain all the benefits of marriage that heterosexual couples do—when the Supreme Court asks, do you think that the California law, which doesn't provide any rationale for discriminating against same-sex couples other than just the notion that, well, they're same-sex couples, if the Supreme Court asks me or my Attorney General or Solicitor General, do we think that meets constitutional muster, I felt it was important for us to answer that question honestly, and the answer is no.

Q. Well, and given the fact that you do hold that position about gay marriage, I wonder if you thought about just—once you'd made the decision to weigh in, why not just argue that marriage is a right that should be available to all people of this country?

The President. Well, that's an argument that I've made personally. The Solicitor General in his institutional role going before the Supreme Court is obliged to answer the specific question before them. And the specific question presented before the Court right now is whether Prop. 8 and the California law is unconstitutional.

And what we've done is we've put forward a basic principle, which is—which applies to all equal protection cases. Whenever a particular group is being discriminated against, the Court

asks the question, what's the rationale for this—and it better be a good reason. And if you don't have a good reason, we're going to strike it down.

And what we've said is, is that same-sex couples are a group, a class, that deserves heightened scrutiny, that the Supreme Court needs to ask the State why it's doing it. And if the State doesn't have a good reason, it should be struck down. That's the core principle, as applied to this case.

Now, what the Court—the Court may decide that if it doesn't apply in this case, it probably can't apply in any case. There's no good reason for it. If I were on the Court, that would probably be the view that I'd put forward. But I'm not a judge, I'm the President. So the basic principle, though, is let's treat everybody fairly; let's treat everybody equally. And I think that the brief that's been presented accurately reflects our views.

Ari Shapiro [NPR].

President's Policy Agenda/Presidential Leadership

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said a few minutes ago and you've said repeatedly that the country has to stop careening from crisis to crisis.

The President. Right.

Q. So with a few crises behind us and a few more crises ahead of us, taking a step back from this specific debate over the sequester, how, as the leader of this country, do you plan to stop the country from careening to—from crisis to crisis?

The President. Well, a couple of things. Number one is to make sure that we keep making progress wherever we can on things that are important to middle class Americans and those who are fighting to get into the middle class. So if you set aside budget fights for a second, we've been able to get now the Violence Against Women Act done. The conversations that are taking place on a bipartisan basis around immigration reform are moving forward. We've seen great interest in a bipartisan fashion around how we can continue to improve our education system, including around early childhood education. There have been constructive discussions around how do we reduce gun violence.

And what I'm going to keep on trying to do is to make sure that we push on those things that are important to families. And we won't get everything done all at once, but we can get a lot done. So that's point number one.

With respect to the budget, what I've done is to make a case to the American people that we have to make sure that we have a balanced approach to deficit reduction, but that deficit reduction alone is not an economic policy. And part of the challenge that we've had here is that not only Congress, but, I think, Washington generally spends all its time talking about deficits and doesn't spend a lot of time talking about how do we create jobs. So I want to make sure that we're talking about both.

I think that, for example, we could put a lot of people back to work right now rebuilding our roads and bridges. And this is deferred maintenance. We know we're going to have to do it. And I went to a bridge that connects Mitch McConnell's State to John Boehner's State, and it was a rotten bridge, and everybody knows it. And I'll bet they really want to see that improved. Well, how do we do it? Let's have a conversation about it. That will create jobs. It will be good for businesses, reduce commuter times, improve commuter safety. That has to be part of this conversation, not just this constant argument about cutting and spending.

So I guess my point is, Ari, that what I want to try to do is to make sure that we're constantly focused, that our true north is on how are we helping American families succeed. Deficit reduction is part of that agenda and an important part. But it's not the only part. And I don't want us to be paralyzed on everything just because we disagree on this one thing.

And as I already said to Jessica, what I'm also hoping is, is that, over time—perhaps after Republicans step back and maybe they can say, you know what, we stuck tough on the sequester, and this makes us feel good, and the Republican caucus is in a better mood when they come back—maybe then we can have a more

serious discussion about what the real problems on deficit and deficit reduction are.

And the good thing about America is that sometimes we get to these bottlenecks and we get stuck, and you have these sharp, partisan fights, but the American people pretty steadily are commonsense and practical, and eventually, that commonsense, practical approach wins out. And I think that's what will happen here as well.

And in the meantime, just to make the final point about the sequester, we will get through this. This is not going to be a apocalypse, I think, as some people have said. It's just dumb. And it's going to hurt. It's going to hurt individual people, and it's going to hurt the economy overall.

But if Congress comes to its senses a week from now, a month from now, 3 months from now, then there's a lot of open running room there for us to grow our economy much more quickly and to advance the agenda of the American people dramatically. And so I—this is a temporary stop on what I believe is the long-term, outstanding prospect for American growth and greatness.

Thank you very much. All right?

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:39 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City. He also referred to S. 47.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in Zimbabwe
March 1, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13288 of March 6, 2003, with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2013.

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 1, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
March 2, 2013

Hi, everybody. On Friday, I met with leaders of both parties in Congress to try and find a way forward in light of the severe budget cuts, known in Washington as the sequester, that

have already started to inflict pain on communities across the country. These cuts are not smart. They'll hurt our economy and cost us jobs. And Congress can turn them off at any time, as soon as both sides are willing to compromise.

As a nation, we've already fought back from the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes, and we'll get through this too. But at a time when our businesses are finally gaining some traction, hiring new workers, bringing jobs back to America, the last thing Washington should do is to get in their way. That's what these cuts to education and research and defense will do. It's unnecessary. And at a time when too many of our friends and neighbors are still looking for work, it's inexcusable.

Now, it's important to understand that, while not everyone will feel the pain of these cuts right away, the pain will be real. Many middle class families will have their lives disrupted in a significant way. Beginning this week, businesses that work with the military will have to lay folks off. Communities near military bases will take a serious blow. Hundreds of thousands of Americans who serve their country—Border Patrol agents, FBI agents, civilians who work for the Defense Department—will see their wages cut and their hours reduced.

This will cause a ripple effect across the economy. Businesses will suffer because customers will have less money to spend. The longer these cuts remain in place, the greater the damage. Economists estimate they could eventually cost us more than 750,000 jobs and slow our economy by over one-half of 1 percent.

Here's the thing: None of this is necessary. It's happening because Republicans in Congress chose this outcome over closing a single wasteful tax loophole that helps reduce the deficit. Just this week, they decided that protecting special interest tax breaks for the well off and well connected is more important than protecting our military and middle class families from these cuts.

I still believe we can and must replace these cuts with a balanced approach, one that combines smart spending cuts with entitlement reform and changes to our Tax Code that make it more fair for families and businesses without raising anyone's tax rates. That's how we can reduce our deficit without laying off workers or forcing parents and students to pay the price. I don't think that's too much to ask. It's the kind of approach I've proposed for 2 years now. A majority of the American people agree with me on this approach, including a majority of Republicans. We just need Republicans in Congress to catch up with their own party and the rest of the country.

Now, I know there are Republicans in Congress who would actually rather see tax loopholes closed than let these cuts go through. And I know there are Democrats who'd rather do smart entitlement reform than let these cuts go through. There's a caucus of common sense out there, and I'm going to keep reaching out to them to fix this for good.

Because the American people are weary of perpetual partisanship and brinksmanship. This is America, and in America, we don't just bounce from one manufactured crisis to another. We make smart choices. We plan. We prioritize. So I'm going to push through this paralysis and keep fighting for the real challenges facing middle class families. I'm going to keep pushing for high-quality preschool for every family that wants it and make sure the minimum wage becomes a wage you can live on. I'm going to keep pushing to fix our immigration system, repair our transportation system, and keep our children safe from gun violence.

That's the work you elected me to do. That's what I'm focused on every single day. Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:30 p.m. on March 1 in the Grand Foyer at the White House for broadcast on March 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 1, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 2.

Statement on the Death of Harvey L. "Van" Cliburn, Jr.
March 3, 2013

This week, we mark the passing of Van Cliburn, one of the most talented pianists of the last century and a musical artist of rare distinction. At the young age of 23, Mr. Cliburn swept the world off its feet with his winning performance at the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, and he quickly became a beloved ambassador of American culture around the world, especially in the former Soviet Union. His music transcended the challenges of international politics and contributed to an unlikely thaw in cold war relations. He was truly a man of his moment. Like every President since Harry Truman, I enjoyed the privilege of hearing Mr. Cliburn play, and I am confident that the enduring beauty of his art will sustain his legendary status for years to come. Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to Mr. Cliburn's loved ones.

Remarks on the Nomination of Ernest J. Moniz To Be Secretary of Energy, Regina McCarthy To Be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and Sylvia Mathews Burwell To Be Director of the Office of Management and Budget
March 4, 2013

All right. This is a serious group. [*Laughter*] Everybody, have a seat, have a seat.

Well, good morning, everybody. This afternoon I'll hold my first Cabinet meeting of my second term. And there will be some new faces, and there will be some familiar faces in new jobs. But there will also be some seats waiting to be filled on a permanent basis. And today I'm announcing my plan to nominate three outstanding individuals to help us tackle some of our most important challenges.

One of those challenges is building on the work that we've done to control our own energy future while reducing pollution that contributes to climate change. And few people have played more of a role in addressing these issues than current Secretary of Energy Steven Chu. Steven has helped us to speed the transition to more sustainable sources of energy. He's given more of our brightest young scientists the opportunity to pursue the ideas that will shape our future. So I could not be more grateful to Steve for the incredible contribution that he's made to this country.

And now that he's decided to leave Washington for sunny California, I'm proud to nominate another brilliant scientist to take his place, Mr. Ernie Moniz. So there's Ernie right there.

Now, the good news is that Ernie already knows his way around the Department of Energy. He is a physicist by training, but he also served as Under Secretary of Energy under President Clinton. Since then, he's directed MIT's Energy Initiative, which brings together prominent thinkers and energy companies to develop the technologies that can lead us to more energy independence and also to new jobs.

Most importantly, Ernie knows that we can produce more energy and grow our economy while still taking care of our air, our water, and our climate. And so I could not be more pleased to have Ernie join us. And he will be joined in that effort by my nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

Over the last 4 years, Lisa Jackson and her team at the EPA have helped us to reduce emissions of the dangerous carbon pollution that causes climate change, put in place the toughest new pollution standards in two decades. Lisa is now ready for a well-deserved break. And I want to very much thank Bob Perciasepe, who's not only been a great Deputy Administrator, but has also been acting as

the Acting Administrator. So please, Bob—everybody give Bob a big round of applause.

As we move forward, I think there is nobody who can do a better job in filling Lisa's shoes permanently than my nominee who's standing beside me here, Gina McCarthy.

Now, you wouldn't know from talking to her, but Gina is from Boston. [*Laughter*] And one of her proudest moments was yelling "Play ball!" at Fenway Park before a Red Sox game. But Gina has got plenty more to be proud of. As a top environmental official in Massachusetts and Connecticut, she helped design programs to expand energy efficiency and promote renewable energy. As Assistant EPA Administrator, Gina has focused on practical, cost-effective ways to keep our air clean and our economy growing. She's earned a reputation as a straight shooter. She welcomes different points of views. I'm confident that she's going to do an outstanding job leading the EPA.

So these two over here, they're going to be making sure that we're investing in American energy, that we're doing everything that we can to combat the threat of climate change, that we're going to be creating jobs and economic opportunity in the first place. They are going to be a great team. And these are some of my top priorities going forward.

But as President, one of the things you learn very quickly is that it's not enough just to talk a big game; the real test is whether your priorities are reflected in a budget. And that's where the rubber hits the road. That's where my third nominee comes in.

Since I took office, Jeff Zients has served as America's first Chief Performance Officer and the Deputy Director of the management—Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget. He's made our Government more efficient. He's saved taxpayers a lot of money. He's stepped in as Acting Director of OMB not once, but twice, including leading up to the fiscal cliff. So there's no question that Jeff's skill and versatility have served the American people very well. I expect it will continue to serve us well in the future.

In the meantime, I am confident that my nominee for OMB Director, Sylvia Mathews Burwell, is the right person to continue Jeff's great work.

In the 1990s, when she was, what, 19—[*laughter*]—Sylvia served under Jack Lew as Deputy Director of OMB, part of a team that presided over three budget surpluses in a row. Later, she helped the Gates Foundation grow into a global force for good, and then she helped the Walmart Foundation expand its charitable work. So Sylvia knows her way around a budget.

But as the granddaughter of Greek immigrants, she also understands that our goal when we put together a budget is not just to make the numbers add up. Our goal is also to reignite the true engine of economic growth in this country, and that is a strong and growing middle class; to offer ladders of opportunity for anybody willing to climb them.

Sylvia's mom is here. And I—Sylvia loves to talk about her parents growing up in West Virginia and the values that they instilled in her as educators. And I think that reflects everything that Sylvia now does. And so I'm absolutely confident that she's going to do a great job at OMB. And those values are especially important to remember now, as we continue to try and find a way forward in light of the budget cuts that are already starting to cost us jobs and hurt our economy.

As I said before, the American people are resilient. And I know that Jeff and Sylvia will do everything in their power to blunt the impact of these cuts on businesses and middle class families. But eventually, a lot of people are going to feel some pain. That's why we've got to keep on working to reduce our deficit in a balanced way, an approach that's supported by the majority of the American people, including a majority of Republicans. And I'm confident that we can get there if people of good will come together.

So I want to thank Steve and Lisa and Jeff once more for their outstanding service, for all the great work that they've done in this administration over the last several years. I want to thank Ernie, Gina, and Sylvia, and their families, for agreeing to take on these big roles.

I hope the Senate will confirm them as soon as possible, because we've got a lot of work to do and we cannot afford delay. But I can promise you that as soon as the Senate gives them the go ahead, they're going to hit the ground running and they're going to help make America a stronger and more prosperous country.

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Cleo Mathews, mother of Director-designate Burwell.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting
March 4, 2013

Well, this is my 17th meeting with my Cabinet; the first one in a second term. And obviously, we've got some familiar faces, we have some new faces, we have some familiar faces in new positions. I want to make sure that I say thank you to all of you for the work that you've already done and the work that you're going to be doing.

I want to welcome Jack Lew, former Chief of Staff and OMB Director and now Secretary of the Treasury. We're thrilled to have him in that position. I want to welcome Mr. Chuck Hagel, who's in the position of Secretary of Defense. And to all of you, I appreciate everything that you've done.

Obviously, we're going to be spending some time talking about the potential impact of the sequester on all the agencies and missions across the board. It is an area of deep concern, and I think everybody knows where I stand on this issue. We are going to manage it as best we can, to try to minimize the impacts on American families, but it's not the right way for us to go about deficit reduction.

It makes sense for us to take a balanced approach that takes a long view and doesn't reduce our commitment to things like education and basic research that will help us grow over the long term. And so I will continue to seek out partners on the other side of the aisle so that we can create the kind of balanced approach of spending cuts, revenues, entitlement reform that everybody knows is the right way to do things.

In the meantime, we're going to do our best to make sure that our agencies have the support they need to try to make some very difficult decisions, understanding that there are going to be families and communities that are hurt and that this will slow our growth. It will mean lower employment in the United States than otherwise would have been.

But we can manage through it, and we're going to rely on the outstanding leadership of all these agencies to make sure that we do whatever it is that we need to get done to help America's families.

Now, my agenda obviously is broader than just the sequester, because I laid out both in the Inauguration and during the State of the Union a very robust agenda to make sure that we're doing everything we can to grow this economy and to help families thrive and expand their opportunities. We want to make sure we've got a growing middle class and more ladders of opportunity into the middle class.

So, in addition to talking about budget issues, we're also going to spend some time talking about making sure that we have comprehensive immigration reform done. And I want to again thank Members of Congress who on a bipartisan basis are moving forward on that agenda. We're going to have the opportunity to talk about initiatives like early childhood education that can have an enormous impact on our kids and, ultimately, our growth and productivity. We'll have a chance to hear from Joe and other members of the Cabinet about progress in reducing gun violence in this country.

So one of the things that I've instructed not just my White House, but every agency is to make sure that, regardless of some of the challenges that they may face because of sequestration, we're not going to stop working on behalf of the American people to make sure that

we're doing everything we can to continue to grow this economy and improve people's prospects. All right.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:08 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on the Death of President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela
March 5, 2013

At this challenging time of President Hugo Chavez's passing, the United States reaffirms its support for the Venezuelan people and its interest in developing a constructive relationship with the Venezuelan Government. As Venezuela begins a new chapter in its history, the United States remains committed to policies that promote democratic principles, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Statement on Senate Action To Block the Nomination of Caitlin J. Halligan To Be a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit
March 6, 2013

I am deeply disappointed that despite support from a majority of the United States Senate, a minority of Senators continues to block the nomination of Caitlin Halligan to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Nearly 2½ years after being nominated, Ms. Halligan continues to wait for a simple up-or-down vote. In the past, filibusters of judicial nominations required "extraordinary circumstances," and a Republican Senator who was part of this agreement articulated that only an ethics or qualification issue—not ideology—would qualify. Ms. Halligan has always practiced law with the highest ethical ideals, and her qualifications are beyond question. Furthermore, her career in public service and as a law enforcement lawyer serving the citizens of New York is well within the mainstream.

Today's vote continues the Republican pattern of obstruction. My judicial nominees wait more than three times as long on the Senate floor to receive a vote than my predecessor's nominees. The effects of this obstruction take the heaviest toll on the DC Circuit, considered the Nation's second highest court, which now has only seven active judges and four vacancies. Until last month, for more than 4 years, the court has always had at least 8 active judges and as many as 12. A majority of the Senate agrees that Ms. Halligan is exactly the kind of person who should serve on this court, and I urge Senate Republicans to allow the Senate to express its will and to confirm Ms. Halligan without further delay.

Remarks on Signing the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013
March 7, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody! Thank you. Well, please, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat.

I want to thank all of you for being here. I want to thank Secretary Salazar, my great friend, for letting us into the building. [*Laughter*] Make sure everybody picks up their stray soda cans and stuff afterwards. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Attorney General Holder for joining us. He's doing a great job.

We usually host these bill signings over at the White House, but there were just too many of you who helped to make this happen. [*Laughter*] And you all deserve to be a part of this moment. I want to thank everybody on this stage. Joe just mentioned the extraordinary work that each and every one of these leaders, both advocates as well as legislators——

Vice President Joe Biden. And I left out Congressman Tom Cole.

The President. Well, there you go. Give Tom a big round of applause.

But everybody on this stage worked extraordinarily hard. Most of all, though, this is your day. This is the day of the advocates, the day of the survivors. This is your victory.

Audience member. We love you, Mr. President!

The President. I love you back.

And this victory shows that when the American people make their voices heard, Washington listens. So I want to join Joe in thanking all the Members of Congress from both parties who came together, got this bill across the finish line.

I want to say a special thanks to Pat Leahy and Mike Crapo as well. Thank you, guys, for your leadership. And I want to give much love to Gwen Moore, who worked so hard on this.

And I also want to take a minute before I begin to thank the Senators who, just a few hours ago, took another big step towards sensible gun safety reforms by advancing a Federal gun trafficking bill. That's real progress. Now, the Senate Judiciary Committee sent legislation to the Senate floor that would crack down on folks who buy guns only to turn around and funnel them to dangerous criminals.

It's a bill named, in part, for Hadiya Pendleton, who was murdered in Chicago earlier this year. You'll remember I told this story about how she had marched in the Inauguration parade and just a few weeks later had been gunned down about a mile away from my house.

So I urge the Senate to give that bill a vote; I urge the House to follow suit. And I urge Congress to move on other areas that have support of the American people, from requiring universal background checks to getting assault weapons off our streets, because we need to stop the flow of illegal guns to criminals and because Hadiya's family and too many other families really do deserve a vote.

Finally, I want to thank Joe Biden for being such an outstanding Vice President. That's right, you can stand for Joe. Stand for Joe. Give it up for Joe Biden. Joe is a hard-working Vice President.

Audience members. Yes, he is!

The President. And he told me when he agreed—when I asked him to be Vice President, he said, "Well, I don't want to just be sitting around." I said, "I promise you, I won't let you just sit around." [*Laughter*] And he has not. He has played a key role in forging the gun safety reforms that I talked about, largely by working closely with survivors of gun violence and their families. He forged the Violence Against Women Act 20 years ago, never forgetting who it was all about.

So, on behalf of everybody here and all the lives that you've had a positive impact and touched through the Violence Against Women Act—the survivors who are alive today because of this law, the women who are no longer hiding in fear because of this law, the girls who are growing up aware of their right to be free from abuse because of this law—on behalf of them and all their families, I want to thank Joe Biden for making this one of the causes of his career.

Now, as Joe said earlier, we've come a long way. Back when Joe wrote this law, domestic abuse was too often seen as a private matter, best hidden behind closed doors. Victims too often stayed silent or felt that they had to live in shame, that somehow they had done something wrong. Even when they went to the hospital or the police station, too often they were sent back home without any real intervention or support. They felt trapped, isolated. And as a result, domestic violence too often ended in greater tragedy.

So one of the great legacies of this law is that it didn't just change the rules, it changed our culture. It empowered people to start speaking out. It made it okay for us, as a society, to talk about domestic abuse. It made it possible for

us, as a country, to address the problem in a real and meaningful way. And it made clear to victims that they were not alone, that they always had a place to go and they always had people on their side.

And today, because members of both parties worked together, we're able to renew that commitment. Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act is something I called for in my State of the Union Address. And when I see how quick it got done, I'm feeling—makes me feel optimistic.

Because of this bill, we'll keep in place all the protections and services that Joe described, and, as he said, we'll expand them to cover even more women. Because this is a country where everybody should be able to pursue their own measure of happiness and live their lives free from fear, no matter who you are, no matter who you love. That's got to be our priority. That's what today is about.

Today is about the millions of women, the victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault, who are out there right now looking for a lifeline, looking for support. Because of this bill, they'll continue to have access to all the services that Joe first helped establish 19 years ago: the national hotline, network of shelters, protection orders that carry across State lines. And because of this bill, we're also expanding housing assistance so that no woman has to choose between a violent home and no home at all. That's what today is all about.

Today is about all the law enforcement officials like Police Chief Jim Johnson. They're the first to respond when a victim calls for help. And because of this bill, we're continuing all the training and support that's proven so effective in bridging some gaps that were in actual enforcement of the law so that we can actually bring more offenders to justice. And we're giving our law enforcement better tools to investigate cases of rape, which remains a consistently underreported crime in our country. Helping police officers deliver on the most important part of their job—preventing harm and saving lives—that's what today is all about.

Today is about women like Diane. I'm so grateful Diane shared her story. That takes great courage. And tragically, it is a common story. I know we've got tribal leaders here today, and I want to thank all of you for fighting so hard on behalf of your people to make this bill a reality.

Indian Country has some of the highest rates of domestic abuse in America. And one of the reasons is that when Native American women are abused on tribal lands by an attacker who is not Native American, the attacker is immune from prosecution by tribal courts. Well, as soon as I sign this bill, that ends. [*Applause*] That ends. That ends. Tribal governments have an inherent right to protect their people, and all women deserve the right to live free from fear. And that is what today is all about.

Today is about all the Americans who face discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity when they seek help. So I want to thank Sharon Stapel, who's here. Where did she go? There she is, right there—for the work she's doing, the great work she's doing with the Anti-Violence Project. But Sharon and all the other advocates who are focused on this community, they can't do it alone. And then now they won't have to. That's what today is all about. That's what today is all about.

Today is about the women who come to Rosie Hidalgo looking for support, immigrants who are victims of domestic abuse. I mean, imagine the dilemma for so many: If your immigration status is tied to a husband who beats you or abuses you, if you're an undocumented immigrant, you may feel there's too much to lose by coming forward. The Violence Against Women Act already had protections so that victims could call the police without fear of deportation, and those protections saved lives. And because we fought hard to keep them in place, they remain a lifeline for so many women. That's part of what today is all about.

Today is about young women like Tye, who brought—who was brought into the sex trade by a neighbor when she was 12 years old. Tye was rescued with the help of an organization led by trafficking survivors. Today, she's enrolled in college. She's working full-time to help at-risk girls stay out of the sex trade.

Couldn't be prouder of her—so proud. So with this bill, we reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act to help more girls turn out like Tye. That's what today is all about.

So today is about all the survivors, all the advocates who are standing on this stage. But it's also about the millions more they represent, that you represent. It's about our commitment as a country to address this problem in every corner of America, every community, every town, every big city, as long as it takes.

And we've made incredible progress since 1994. But we cannot let up, not when domestic violence still kills three women a day, not when one in five women will be a victim of rape in their lifetime, not when one in three women is abused by a partner.

So I promise you, not just as your President, but as a son and a husband and a father, I'm going to keep at this. I know Vice President Biden is going to keep at it. My administration is going to keep at it for as long as it takes.

And I know that all the advocates up here, all the legislators, Republican and Democrat, who supported this, I know they could not be prouder of the work that they've done together. And I think I speak for all of them when we say we could not have done it without you.

So with that, let me sign this bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:16 p.m. at the Department of the Interior. In his remarks, he referred to James W. Johnson, chief, Baltimore County Police Department; Diane E. Millich, executive director, Our Sister's Keeper Coalition, Inc.; Sharon Stapel, executive director, New York City Anti-Violence Project; and Rosemary Hidalgo-McCabe, director of public policy, Casa de Esperanza. S. 47, approved March 7, was assigned Public Law No. 113–4. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John O. Brennan as Director of Central Intelligence
March 7, 2013

With the bipartisan confirmation of John Brennan as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Senate has recognized in John the qualities I value so much: his determination to keep America safe, his commitment to working with Congress, his ability to build relationships with foreign partners, and his fidelity to the values that define us as a nation.

With John's 25 years of experience at the Agency, our extraordinary men and women of the CIA will be led by one of their own. I am especially appreciative to Michael Morell for being such an outstanding Acting Director and for agreeing to continue his service as Deputy Director.

Timely, accurate intelligence is absolutely critical to disrupting terrorist attacks, dismantling Al Qaida and its affiliates, and meeting the broad array of security challenges that we face as a nation. John's leadership and our dedicated intelligence professionals will be essential in these efforts. I am deeply grateful to John and his family for their continued service to our Nation.

Statement on Senator Carl M. Levin's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
March 7, 2013

If you've ever worn the uniform, worked a shift on an assembly line, or sacrificed to make ends meet, then you've had a voice and a vote in Senator Carl Levin. No one has worked harder to bring manufacturing jobs back to our shores, close unfair tax loopholes, and ensure that everyone plays by the same set of rules. As chairman of the Armed Services Committee,

Senator Levin is a true champion for all those who serve, and his tireless work will be missed not just in his home State of Michigan, but by military families across our country. Michelle and I wish Carl, Barbara, and their family all the best, and I look forward to working with Carl over the next 2 years as we continue tackling some of our Nation's toughest challenges.

Statement on International Women's Day
March 8, 2013

On International Women's Day, we celebrate the many milestones on the road to gender equality and recommit ourselves to fight for the rights and opportunities of women and girls around the world.

Empowering women isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. When women succeed, nations are more safe, more secure, and more prosperous. Over the last year, we've seen women and girls inspiring communities and entire countries to stand up for freedom and justice, and I'm proud of my administration's efforts to promote gender equality worldwide.

As a nation, we've launched new efforts to promote women's economic empowerment and political participation, to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and to strengthen our commitment to helping more women participate in peace-building and conflict resolution. We are promoting food security initiatives that recognize the rights and needs of women farmers and ensuring that women and girls are at the center of global health programs. And we will continue to focus on empowering women and girls at home and abroad.

We've also worked with a wide range of partners, from the United Nations and civil society groups to the private sector, to advance this important agenda. Because when it comes to creating a world in which our sons and daughters can reach their potential, we each have a role to play. And we can make even more progress together.

The President's Weekly Address
March 9, 2013

Hi, everybody. As I've said before, my top priority as President is making sure we do everything we can to reignite the true engine of America's economic growth: a rising, thriving middle class.

Yesterday we received some welcome news on that front. We learned that our businesses added nearly 250,000 new jobs last month. The unemployment rate fell to 7.7 percent: still too high, but now lower than it was when I took office.

Our businesses have created jobs every month for 3 years straight, nearly 6.4 million new jobs in all. Our manufacturers are bringing jobs back to America. Our stock market has rebounded. New homes are being built and sold at a faster pace. And we need to do everything we can to keep that momentum going.

That means asking ourselves three questions every day: How do we make America a magnet for new jobs? How do we equip more of our people with the skills those jobs require? And how do we make sure that your hard work leads to a decent living?

And that has to be our driving focus, our north star. And at a time when our businesses are gaining a little more traction, the last thing we should do is allow Washington politics to get in the way. You deserve better than the same political gridlock and refusal to compromise that has too often passed for serious debate over the last few years.

And that's why I've been reaching out to Republicans and Democrats to see if we can untangle some of the gridlock. Earlier this week, for example, I met with some Republican Sen-

ators to see if there were smarter ways to grow our economy and reduce our deficits than the arbitrary cuts and the so-called sequester that recently went into place. We had an open and honest conversation about critical issues like immigration reform and gun violence, and other areas where we can work together to move this country forward. And next week, I'll attend both the Democratic and Republican Party meetings in the Capitol to continue those discussions.

The fact is, America is a nation of different beliefs and different points of view. That's part of what makes us strong and, frankly, makes our democratic debates messy and, a lot of times, pretty frustrating. But ultimately, what makes us special is when we summon the ability to see past those differences and come together around the belief that what binds us together will always be more powerful than what drives us apart.

As Democrats and Republicans, we may disagree on the best way to achieve our goals, but I'm confident we can agree on what those goals should be: a strong and vibrant middle class; an economy that allows businesses to grow and thrive; an education system that gives more Americans the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future; an immigration system that actually works for families and businesses; stronger communities and safer streets for our children.

Making progress on these issues won't be easy. In the months ahead, there will be more contentious debate and honest disagreement between principled people who want what's best for this country. But I still believe that compromise is possible. I still believe we can come together to do big things. And I know there are leaders on the other side of the aisle who share that belief.

So I'll keep fighting to solve the real challenges facing middle class families. And I'll enlist anyone who is willing to help. That's what this country needs right now, and that's what you deserve.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:35 p.m. on March 8 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on March 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 8, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 9.

Remarks at the Gridiron Club Dinner
March 9, 2013

Before I begin, I know some of you have noticed that I'm dressed a little differently from the other gentlemen. Because of sequester, they cut my tails. My joke writers have been placed on furlough. [*Laughter*] I know a lot of you reported that no one will feel any immediate impact because of the sequester. Well, you're about to find out how wrong you are. [*Laughter*]

Of course, there's one thing in Washington that didn't get cut: the length of this dinner. Yet more proof that the sequester makes no sense. [*Laughter*]

As you know, I last attended the Gridiron dinner 2 years ago. Back then, I addressed a number of topics: a dysfunctional Congress, a looming budget crisis, complaints that I don't spend enough time with the press. It's funny, it seems like it was just yesterday. [*Laughter*]

We noticed that some folks couldn't make it this evening. It's been noted that Bob Woodward sends his regrets, which Gene Sperling predicted. [*Laughter*] I have to admit this whole brouhaha had me a little surprised. Who knew Gene could be so intimidating? Or let me phrase it differently: Who knew anybody named Gene could be this intimidating? [*Laughter*]

Now, I know that some folks think we responded to Woodward too aggressively. But hey, when has—can anybody tell me when an administration has ever regretted picking a fight with Bob Woodward? What's the worst that could happen? [*Laughter*]

But don't worry. We're all friends again in the spirit of that wonderful song. As you may have heard, Bob invited Gene over to his place. And Bob says he actually thinks that I should make it too. And I might take him up on the offer. I mean, nothing says "not a threat" like showing up at somebody's house with guys with machine guns. [*Laughter*]

Now, since I don't often speak to a room full of journalists, I thought I should address a few concerns tonight. [*Laughter*] Some of you have said that I'm ignoring the Washington press corps, that we're too controlling. You know what, you were right. I was wrong, and I want to apologize in a video you can watch exclusively at whitehouse.gov. [*Laughter*]

While we're on this subject, I want to acknowledge Ed Henry, who is here—who is the fearless leader of the Washington press corps now. And at Ed's request, tonight I will take one question from the press. Jay, do we have a question? [*Laughter*] Surprisingly, it's a question from Ed Henry. [*Laughter*] "Mr. President, will you be taking any questions tonight?" [*Laughter*] I'm happy to answer that. No, Ed, I will not. [*Laughter*]

I also want to recognize David Corn. He's here from Mother Jones magazine. He brought his iPhone. So, Bobby Jindal, if you thought your remarks were off the record, ask Mitt Romney about that.

I have to say, I thought Bobby was incredibly funny this evening. I thought he was terrific. Amy Klobuchar was sparkling and fantastic and fabulous. I am worried about Al Franken though. [*Laughter*] How do you start off being one of the original writers for "Saturday Night Live" and end up being the second funniest Senator in Minnesota? [*Laughter*] How the mighty have fallen. [*Laughter*]

Now, I'm sure that you've noticed that there's somebody very special in my life who is missing tonight, somebody who has always got my back, stands with me no matter what, and gives me hope no matter how dark things seem. So tonight I want to publicly thank my rock, my foundation. Thank you, Nate Silver. [*Laughter*]

Of course, as I begin my second term, our country is still facing enormous challenges. We have a lot of work to do.

[*At this point, the President took a sip of water.*]

That, Marco Rubio, is how you take a sip of water. [*Laughter*]

As I was saying, we face major challenges. March, in particular, is going to be full of tough decisions. But I want to assure you, I have my top advisers working around the clock. After all, my March Madness bracket isn't going to fill itself out. [*Laughter*] And don't worry, there is an entire team in the Situation Room as we speak, planning my next golf outing, right now at this moment. [*Laughter*]

But those aren't the only issues on my mind. As you are aware—as has been noted this evening—we've had to make some very tough, huge budget cuts, apparently with no regard to long-term consequences, which means I know how you feel in journalism. [*Laughter*] I've been trying to explain this situation to the American people, but clearly I am not perfect. After a very public mixup last week, my communications team has provided me with an easy way to distinguish between "Star Trek" and "Star Wars." Spock is what Maureen Dowd calls me. Darth Vader is what John Boehner calls me. [*Laughter*]

Of course, maintaining credibility in this cynical atmosphere is harder than ever, incredibly challenging. My administration recently put out a photo of me skeet shooting, and even that wasn't enough for some people. Next week, we're releasing a photo of me clinging to religion. [*Laughter*]

I'm also doing what I can to smooth things over with Republicans in Congress. In fact, these days, John McCain and I are spending so much time together that he told me we were becoming friends. I said: "John, stop. Chuck Hagel warned me how this ends up." [*Laughter*]

It took a while, but I'm glad that the Senate finally confirmed my Secretary of Defense. And I have to say, I don't know what happened to Chuck in those hearings. I know he worked

hard; he studied his brief. And I even lent him my Presidential debate team to work with him. [*Laughter*] It's confusing what happened.

But all these changes to my team are tough to handle, I've got to admit. After 9 years, I finally said goodbye to my chief speechwriter, Jon Favreau. I watched him grow up. He's almost like a son to me, he's been with me so long. And I said to him when he first informed me of his decision, I said, "Favs, you can't leave." And he answered with three simple words: "Yes, I can." [*Laughter*] Fortunately, he did not take the prompter on his way out. That would have been a problem. [*Laughter*]

With all these new faces, it's hard to keep track of who is in, who is out. And I know it's difficult for you guys as reporters. But I can offer you an easy way of remembering the new team. If Ted Cruz calls somebody a Communist, then you know they're in my Cabinet. [*Laughter*]

Jack Lew is getting started on his new role as Treasury Secretary. Jack is so low key, he makes Tim Geithner look like Tom Cruise. [*Laughter*] Don't worry, everybody, Jack signed off on that joke, or a 5-year-old drew a Slinky. [*Laughter*] I don't know which.

Another big change has been at the State Department. Everybody has noticed that obviously. And let's face it: Hillary is a tough act to follow. But John Kerry is doing great so far. He is doing everything he can to ensure continuity. Frankly, though, I think it's time for him to stop showing up at work in pantsuits. It's a disturbing image. [*Laughter*] It really is. I don't know where he buys them. He is a tall guy. [*Laughter*]

And even though I'm just beginning my second term, I know that some folks are looking ahead to bigger things. Look, it's no secret that my Vice President is still ambitious. But let's face it, his age is an issue. Just the other day, I had to take Joe aside and say, "Joe, you are way too young to be the Pope." [*Laughter*] "You can't do it. You got to mature a little bit." [*Laughter*]

Now, I do want to end on a serious note. I know that there are people who get frustrated with the way journalism is practiced these days. And sometimes, those people are me. [*Laughter*] But the truth is, our country needs you and our democracy needs you.

In an age when all it takes to attract attention is a Twitter handle and some followers, it's easier than ever to get it wrong. But it's more important than ever to get it right. And I am grateful for all the journalists who do one of the toughest jobs there is with integrity and insight and dedication—and a sense of purpose—that goes beyond a business model or a news cycle.

This year alone, reporters have exposed corruption here at home and around the world. They've risked everything to bring us stories from places like Syria and Kenya, stories that need to be told. And they've helped people understand the ways in which we're all connected: how something that happens or doesn't happen halfway around the world or here in Washington can have consequences for American families.

These are extraordinary times. The stakes are high and the tensions can sometimes be high as well. But while we'll always have disagreements, I believe that we share the belief that a free press—a press that questions us, that holds us accountable, that sometimes gets under our skin—is absolutely an essential part of our democracy.

So I want to thank everybody for not just a wonderful evening—and, Chuck, I want to thank you for your outstanding presidency—but I also just want to thank you for the work that you do each and every day. And in the words of one of my favorite "Star Trek" characters, Captain James T. Kirk of the USS *Enterprise*, "May the force be with you." [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 p.m. in the grand ballroom at the Renaissance Washington, DC Downtown Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Bob Woodward, associate editor, Washington Post; Edward M. Henry, chief White House correspondent, Fox News, in his capacity as president of the White House Correspondents' Association; White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney; Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; 2012 Republican

Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; Nathaniel R. Silver, statistician and polling analyst, and Maureen B. Dowd, columnist, New York Times; Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz; former Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; actor Tom Cruise; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent, NBC News, in his capacity as president of the Gridiron Club and Foundation Washington, DC. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Meeting of the President's Export Council
March 12, 2013

The President. I want to get back to the official business at hand. But I did want to stop by. First of all, I just want to say thanks to the PEC for the unbelievable work that you guys have done and the extraordinary leadership that you've provided to our team and the administration as we've tried to promote exports all around the world. And I'm glad to see that we've got a couple of our outstanding Senators here as well who, I know, care deeply about exports because their States benefit from exports. We all do.

And I assume that part of these charts was Becky going over, the progress that we've made over the last several years, so I won't reiterate it. The good news is we are well on our way to meeting a very ambitious goal that we set several years ago to double U.S. exports. And what we know is, is that a lot of the growth, a lot of the new jobs that we've seen during the course of this recovery, have been export driven.

What's also encouraging is it's been coming from a whole variety of sectors. Obviously, our agricultural sector has always been strong, and it's gotten even stronger. But what we've also seen is, is that our manufacturing base, our high-tech, our services across the board, we're seeing significant increases. And the question now becomes, how do we sustain this momentum?

Part of it is making sure that we get in place strong trade deals. And having ratified, with the help of a number of our legislators, the Panama, Colombia, and most significantly, South Korean trade deals, we've now been moving aggressively on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a high-standards trade regime that we think can advantage U.S. companies and U.S. workers because it sets a bar that ensures that trade is fair and free. And for those of us who abide by high labor standards and high environmental standards, obviously being able to lock in those kinds of high standards in the fastest growing region of the world and the most populous region of the world can yield enormous benefits and help to generate billions of dollars in trade and millions of jobs.

As I announced at the State of the Union Address, we're also going to be launching an effort to lock in a EU-U.S. trade deal as well. And already, Europe is our largest trading partner—the EU as a whole—and we think that we can expand that even further. And some of this has to do with us being able to break down some existing barriers across the Atlantic to U.S. products and services, but some of it also has to do with smoothing out differences in regulatory approaches, just trade frictions that arise that are unnecessary that are—carries over from earlier periods. And we think just as the TPP can be an enormous boost to U.S. trade and growth, that our trade with Europe can expand substantially and that will advantage U.S. companies and U.S. businesses.

But in order for us to do this, we're going to need the help of industry and labor and all the parties that are represented here. One of the things that we've also been trying to do during the course of this process is to make sure that it's not just the Xeroxes and the Dow Chemicals that are benefiting from this, although we want our Fortune 100 companies to be selling as much as possible. They also have a whole lot of suppliers, so small businesses stand to benefit immensely from this process. We actually think that there's room for small and medium-

size businesses to export directly, not just supplying large businesses, but also to break open and enter into these markets. And that can make a huge difference in terms of our long-term prospects.

So overall, this is a good story, this is an optimistic story, but it's one that we're going to have to continue to sustain.

One last point, just because I had a chance to see Bob. I think many of you are aware of the fact that when tourists come here and spend money, that's an export. That goes on the export side of the ledger. And thanks to some of the great work that we've done in a public-private partnership, we've been able to accelerate visas. We've been able to make sure that we are out there actively seeking visitors to come here and promoting the U.S. as a tourist destination.

Just to give you a small example—something that I didn't realize until I went to Disneyworld—it turns out that in Florida, for example, Brazilians are the fastest growing—one of the largest sources of tourism in Florida. And by the way, when they come, they stay a lot longer, and they spend a lot more money.

The problem we had was we had, I think, three places—three places—to get visas in all of Brazil, which is a pretty big country. And so we've been able to cut down visa times drastically. We've seen as a consequence some significant expansion in tourism out of South America because of some of the steps that we've taken. That's the kind of smart, very cost-effective set of steps that we can take that can make a big difference.

And a lot of those ideas have been generated from this group. So I just want to say thank you to all of the terrific people who have been involved, and I'm looking forward to us just staying on this thing until we get it right. Okay?

President's Export Council Chairman W. James McNerney, Jr. Great to have you here.

The President. Good to be here.

Chairman McNerney. We discussed a lot of the FTA momentum that was started during your first term and now you're doubling down in the second term, and many of us around the room are very supportive and delighted to be part of the effort.

I think maybe just another word or two on the European effort from your point of view. TPP, I think we all get, we're working on, we're in the flow. The European thing, because it is a stalled, back-and-forth situation right now because of their economy, just wondered what the theory of the case was from your——

The President. Here's why we're modestly optimistic that we can get this done. I think in the past, the EU, because they've got to coordinate among so many countries, consistently had to pursue the lowest common denominator. And there are certain countries who—whose agricultural sector is very strong, who tended to block at critical junctures the kinds of broad-based trade agreements that would make it a good deal for us. If one of the areas where we've got the greatest comparative advantage is cordoned off from an overall trade deal, it's very hard to get something going.

What I think has changed is the recognition throughout Europe that it is hard for them to figure out a recipe for growth at this point, in part because of the austerity measures that have been put in place throughout the euro zone, in the absence of a more aggressive trade component. So I think they are hungrier for a deal than they have been in the past.

I think, thanks to the work of good people like Mike Froman, we've been able to narrow some of the differences. We've identified on the regulatory side, customs side, areas where we can synchronize without hurting either side, but simply lubricating more effective trade between the two countries.

So we've narrowed down the issues. I think it will still be a heavy slog. There's no guarantee that in the end, some of the countries that have been hard cases in the past won't block it again, but I think that you're going to see more pressure from more countries on the other side of the Atlantic to get this done than we've seen in the past.

Lael, Mike, is that a fair assessment? These guys spend more time in Europe than I do.

Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael B. Froman. Yes.

Chairman McNerney. Do you have time to take a couple questions——

The President. Sure.

Chairman McNerney. ——from the group? Anybody care to weigh in?

The President. Or comments.

Chairman McNerney. Or comments? Sure.

The President. Everybody is just dying to get back to Becky's charts. [*Laughter*] They're nice-looking charts.

Sen. Amy J. Klobuchar. They're very good. Mr. President, thank you for your leadership on this issue. And I just think setting that goal of doubling the exports was one that many of us have used over and over again. And many of us were talking about the need for more kids to go into science, engineering, technology. We are—literally have so many jobs that are unfilled right now, particularly in western Minnesota, and I think finding some simple goal like that of getting the increase in the number of kids going into these areas and selling it as something that they want to do would be a good idea.

And I wanted to commend the State Department—I did earlier—for the work on the visas. I still think there's so much more that can be done. We've doubled—doubled—the tourism. It's up 50 percent from China. And I think that there's even obviously more that we can do with videoconferencing on visa interviews, other things that we should try to use the technology that we have.

As you've noted, people are spending tons of money going to Disneyland; I would also add going to the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota—[*laughter*]—a hot spot for Asia tourists, especially. Not as much Brazilians; it's too cold in our State for them. [*Laughter*] But I see so much promise here with the tourism.

And the last is what you mentioned, this growing political support for fair trade agreements is huge. And it's about the big companies, but when people see in their own towns these small and medium-sized companies where their brothers and sisters work, it creates a kind of support for trade that is much more organic and really goes in a grassroots way across the country. And I think we have to remember that as a piece of what's good for the economy, but also it will grow support for this new global economy.

So I just want to thank you for your efforts and hope that we can look at this—the workforce training issue—in a different way in terms of setting some goals for these kids so they see it as a career opportunity.

The President. Well, look, what's absolutely true is that exports, trade are one brick in this broader economic foundation that we're trying to build. But we're not going to succeed in meeting our export goals if we're not making great products and delivering great services. And we're not going to be able to do that unless we've got a great workforce.

You may want to come with me, because I'm—after this I'm about to go these Intel National Science Award winners, where you meet 15- and 16-year-olds who invents plasmas—[*laughter*]—and cure cancer, and most of the time, I have no idea what they're talking about. [*Laughter*] But they're very impressive and inspiring.

We are setting a set of goals for STEM education, number of engineers that we need to produce. All that stuff is going to be important. But what we also—one of the things that I've also been pointing out, when you look at a lot of those jobs that go unfilled, they're not necessarily Ph.D. jobs. The issue here is can we reintroduce an effective model for vocational training where—and part of the goal that we've set for ourselves with respect to high schools is duplicating some of the things that are being done, for example, by IBM, where they go into a high school in New York, and they say, we'll train you, and during high school, you will get the equivalent of an associate's degree so that by the time you graduate, maybe you take 2 years of community college, you are now fully trained for jobs that we know are out there and that people are hiring for, which makes the kids more engaged in high school, saves them money, reduces the number of Pell grants they're taking out. It's a win-win situation for

everybody. And the employers then have great quality control in terms of knowing who it is that they're getting.

We want to see if we can duplicate that across the board.

Yes, Kirsten.

Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand. Well, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for your vision because I am telling you it's making an absolute difference in my own State in high-tech manufacturing and increasing our exports.

We also had an easy win—I appreciate the leadership you took with regard to Canada, something so parochial, so easy—but increasing our exports to Canada. For New York State to have Montreal and Toronto a stone's throw away is such a huge market for our entrepreneurs.

And some work still can be done. There's no streamlining of what governmental requirements are required on both sides of the border, and that's something that we can actually fix: making a one-stop shop for a young entrepreneur who's starting a business who wants to know what forms do I have to fill out to export my product abroad. That's a place where we have enormous export potential.

And even just in agricultural products, for apples that are going from New York to Canada, they have to be inspected on both sides of the border. Unnecessary. So there's some real streamlining I think we could do, to increase exports just between those two areas of the country.

But I just want to thank you, because, as Amy said, in terms of filling these jobs, what's really worked is part of your initiatives of allowing the community colleges to work directly with the manufacturers to build the course work for the job the manufacturer needs.

And we had a fantastic example where Bombardier, who builds a lot of things, including subways, needed advanced welders. Well, they want to Adirondack Community College, built the course work, and those employees got their training, got a higher wage, and filled the spots. And so it's really exciting what you're doing in education innovation, which is training the people for the jobs that are available with the collaboration of the employers building the course work. It's a win-win for everybody. And I just want to congratulate you for your vision on that issue.

The President. Great.

A couple more?

Mayor Alvin Brown of Jacksonville, FL. Mr. President, I want to thank you for supporting the U.S. Conference of Mayors for the ports. Ports are a big economic engine in our cities, and they really focus on small business and entrepreneurs, helping them to export. So I want to thank you for that.

I know the policy you pushed to allow the study to be released early from the Army Corps of Engineers, which helped Jacksonville, Florida, by the way. Really appreciate that. Florida is very important. And like you said with Brazil, which is Florida's number-one trading partner, so we really appreciate your support on the ports and modernizing the port so that we can compete and position cities to really be competitive in the marketplace.

The President. Well, one of the things that we talked about is if we're going to export effectively, we've got to have effective infrastructure. The ports issue all around the Gulf is going to be critical. The Panama Canal is being modified. You're going to have bigger ships coming in. And if you want to unload those ships, you got to have high-quality ports. That obviously is a gateway for everything that's happening in Central and South America.

Recently, we had the challenge of—I know I talked to Pat about this—getting goods from the Midwest down the Mississippi when the water started going down. And if, in fact, temperatures are warming—I know this is not our climate change meeting—[*laughter*]—but I think we can anticipate that we may end up having some challenges in terms of managing our waterways. Well, whether or not we can continue to use barges to move a lot of product out of the American heartland to ports around the world, that's going to depend on our infrastructure.

So we are going to, in our budget, continue to push Congress to see if we can essentially deal with deferred maintenance. Sometimes,

when it comes to Government spending, everybody thinks it's all the same. I think everybody around this table knows in your businesses, you think very differently about capital investments, long-term investments that are going to make your company more competitive, versus wasting money. And here's an example of where we should be doing less of some things that are not helping us grow. Building infrastructure is something that does help us grow. Okay?

All right, guys, I think you've got smarter people around the table than me to deal with some of these issues. Again, I just want to thank all of you who've been involved. We are going to continue to push this agenda.

One of the things I hope that you've seen during the course of these last 4 years is that if we hear good ideas, we'll implement them, we'll move them. So the great thing about a council like this is that it gives us insight into how things are actually operating or not operating, and we can start cutting through some of the redtape and get things done.

So continue to provide us with recommendations. We'll work them through. There's an interagency process; it's a good way for us to break down some of the silos that develop between various agencies. And I think we can make significant improvement and continue to build on the goals that we've set.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca M. Blank; Robert A. Iger, president and chief executive officer, the Walt Disney Company; Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs Lael Brainard; and Patricia A. Woertz, chairman, chief executive officer, and president, Archer Daniels Midland Co.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei
March 12, 2013

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome my good friend, His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei. The Sultan and I have had the opportunity to get to know each other from a series of multilateral meetings, particularly the ASEAN East Asia Summit meetings. He is a key leader in the Southeast Asia region, but also widely respected around the world.

And part of the reason that we thought now was a good time for a meeting here in the Oval Office is because His Majesty will be hosting the next ASEAN East Asia Summit meeting in Brunei this October. There are a range of issues that we've worked on together, and that should be no surprise because the friendship between the United States and Brunei actually dates back 160 years.

His Majesty himself has led his country for 40 years now, and he's gone through nine U.S. Presidents. I won't ask him which one was his favorite—[*laughter*]—but our interests in having a strong, peaceful, prosperous Asia-Pacific region is something that we share.

And so, at the ASEAN East Asia Summit, we will be discussing a wide range of issues: everything from how we deal with issues of energy and climate change to how we expand commerce, potentially through the Trans-Pacific Partnership that has the opportunity of creating jobs and prosperity here in the United States, but also throughout the region.

We'll be discussing maritime issues. Obviously, there have been a lot of tensions in the region around maritime issues. And His Majesty has shown great leadership in trying to bring the countries together to make sure that everybody is abiding by the basic precepts of rule of law and international standards so that conflicts can be resolved peacefully and effectively and that everybody is brought into that kind of structure.

We've also had a chance to work together on educational issues. His Majesty himself and Brunei have helped to finance a number of English-language instructors so that more youth in the Southeast Asia region are learning

English, which obviously can help to expand commerce, but also strengthen the ties between the United States and the region.

And we're also going to be doing, for the first time, a joint—ASEAN-U.S.-Chinese joint exercises around disaster and humanitarian relief, which points to the fact that our militaries, that are extraordinarily capable, and the bilateral military relationship between the United States and Brunei has the capacity to help people in times of need and to try to help avoid conflict rather than start conflict.

So, overall, I'm very grateful for His Majesty's outstanding leadership and his friendship. I'm glad that he's had a chance to visit. He got here yesterday and flew in his own 747, meaning he actually piloted it himself. I think he's probably the only head of state in the world who flies a 747 himself. And so, in case Air Force One, the pilots have problems, we know who to consult. [*Laughter*] And my understanding is tomorrow he's going to have an opportunity to take his family up to New York, where we're going to encourage him to do some shopping because we want to continue to strengthen the U.S. economy. [*Laughter*]

So, Your Majesty, it's wonderful to see you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Sultan Hassanal. Ladies and gentlemen of the press. Mr. President, firstly, thank you for inviting me to visit the United States. I know you have a very busy schedule. It's very kind of you to receive me.

This visit gives me a good opportunity to renew the longstanding and warm friendship between Brunei Darussalam and the United States—the relations, which dated back to 1850, with the signing of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation, soon after the USS *Constitution* called at our port.

President Barack Obama and I have had an excellent meeting this morning. I am indeed very happy with the progress of our bilateral cooperation, especially in energy, education, defense interests. The Brunei-U.S. joint 5-year English-language program, which was launched last year, is progressing well. It is meant for the people in ASEAN in order to improve and strengthen the English-language skills.

On energy cooperation, there are already a number of American companies providing a range of upstream and downstream services in our oil and gas sector. In the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, we are negotiating with further buildup of this economic condition.

I also had the pleasure to share with President Obama some of our plans as ASEAN chair this year. As ASEAN chair, we have extended an invitation to President Obama to the East Asia Summit and the first ASEAN-U.S. leaders' summit in October this year.

The United States has been a good friend to ASEAN and is actively involved in many of our projects, such as the Comprehensive Energy Partnership and the Expanded Economic Engagement of E–3 initiative. And we are confident that these initiatives will strengthen the economic linkages between ASEAN and the United States.

In closing, I thank President Obama again for today's meeting. We look forward to welcoming you to Brunei Darussalam later this year, Mr. President, and to working together to strengthen the important relationship between ASEAN and the United States.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:54 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran
March 12, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared on March 15, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2013.

The crisis between the United States and Iran resulting from the actions and policies of the Government of Iran has not been resolved. The actions and policies of the Government of Iran are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and to maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to deal with this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 12, 2012.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Election of Pope Francis
March 13, 2013

On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I offer our warm wishes to His Holiness Pope Francis as he ascends to the Chair of Saint Peter and begins his papacy. As a champion of the poor and the most vulnerable among us, he carries forth the message of love and compassion that has inspired the world for more than 2,000 years: that in each other we see the face of God. As the first Pope from the Americas, his selection also speaks to the strength and vitality of a region that is increasingly shaping our world, and alongside millions of Hispanic Americans, those of us in the United States share the joy of this historic day. Just as I appreciated our work with Pope Benedict XVI, I look forward to working with His Holiness to advance peace, security, and dignity for our fellow human beings, regardless of their faith. We join with people around the world in offering our prayers for the Holy Father as he begins the sacred work of leading the Catholic Church in our modern world.

Remarks at an Organizing for Action Dinner
March 13, 2013

Hello, everybody. Hello, hello. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, it's good to see all of you. I missed you. [*Laughter*] The—let me first of all thank Jim and Jon for organizing this. I want to thank all of you. I've got a bunch of friends in this room: people who have supported me even before I ran for President, new friends, old friends, everybody here in it for the right reasons, folks who care deeply about this country and want to see us to continue to move forward.

I said in 2008—and I'm pretty sure I repeated in 2012—that you run elections not simply to get elected. You run elections to have an opportunity to deliver on behalf of the American people. And the central premise of our campaign was always that this great country of ours is built on some foundational ideas, the most important of which is that anybody, anywhere, if they're willing to work hard and take responsibility, can succeed, and that if we've got a growing, thriving middle class and ladders of opportunity into the middle class, then nobody can beat us. That's the reason why we attracted immigrants from every corner of the world. That's the reason why our culture has always been viewed as dynamic and forward looking: not looking backwards, but consistently looking at that next horizon.

And the good news is that America in 2013 is poised, as it always has been, to succeed in ways that will make us the envy of the world if we make good policy decisions.

Since the election, since I saw many of you, we've made some progress on some fronts. We have seen that there's actually a bipartisan commitment—at least in the Senate—to potentially overhaul our immigration system so that we can continue to attract the best and brightest from around the world.

We are having terrific conversations around issues like cybersecurity and how we make sure that people's privacy and civil liberties are protected, but how we also protect our critical infrastructure and we make sure that the power of the Internet isn't used for ill as well as good.

We've seen some progress after the heartbreaking tragedy of Newtown, where people finally say we can do something about gun violence in a way that's respectful of the Second Amendment, but insists that no society should tolerate our children being gunned down, whether it's on the streets or in their classrooms.

And when it comes to issues of the budget, we've made progress in making sure that those at the very top are paying a greater share of what is required to run a Government and fund basic research, move education forward.

And so we've seen some progress. And I laid out in both the Inauguration and in the State of the Union a vision that doesn't require massive expansion of Government, but does require us to do certain things that we can't do as well by ourselves: whether it's providing early childhood education; whether it's investing in infrastructure so that our businesses can move goods and services more rapidly around the world; whether it's continuing to expand our manufacturing base and encouraging insourcing and not just outsourcing; whether it's making sure that we continue to be at the cutting edge of science and technology and research; or whether we are going to choose an energy future that doesn't just look at the energy source of the past, but also looks at the energy sources of tomorrow and addresses climate change in a serious way.

And some people remarked that I looked—I had a little more pep in my step in the Inauguration and in the State of the Union. And I have to tell you, it wasn't because I was off the campaign trail, because actually nothing energizes me like interacting with the American people day in and day out. The reason was I felt like this is a vision that, if we can get it implemented, really would allow America to take off.

Our economy is recovering. It is resilient. But it is not yet where it needs to be. We've got millions of people who are still out of work or underemployed. We've still got businesses that could be thriving if we were able to make sure that Washington doesn't engage in self-induced crises.

And so we're going to have a lot of work to do. And let's face it, there are still a lot of divisions and arguments here in Washington. And although we are doing our very best to reach out to the other side, and I think there's a genuine desire on the part of Republicans and Democrats to try to get something done, I think there is a weariness among membership in the Senate and in the House about this constant grind, day in, day out, of argument and crises instead of productivity and movement forward.

The politics of a lot of these issues are tough, and Members sometimes are scared about making the right decisions. And they're particularly scared because they're subject to pressure from special interest groups and well-financed organizations that may be pushing in a different direction.

And so I think the idea here, the concept is, we've got 20 million people who got involved in the campaign or close to it. We have 4 million people who actively contributed to the campaign in $5 and $10 and $25 increments. Now, a sizable portion of those just wanted dinner with George Clooney—[*laughter*]—but I think there was a large number of them that believed in our vision for the future as well.

And part of what Jim and Jon and I have spoken about is just how do we make sure that people stay involved? How do we make sure all those neighborhood groups are engaged, feel a sense of connection? We did not do as good of a job in 2008 as I would have hoped in making sure they still felt a part of the process.

And it's not just a matter of lobbying Congress. It's a matter of them taking ownership so that if we're setting up health care exchanges in their States, maybe they want to contact some friends in their—or neighbors who don't have health care and say, you know what, here's something that might help you. If we've got a disaster like we had during Sandy, is that community built in that allows us to go out and immediately help relief efforts. Can we sustain and maintain the sense of citizenship that arose during the course of the campaign outside of a campaign structure, outside of the immediate, okay, we're trying to win this many votes in this many States, but can, instead, we activate people around an agenda?

I think here in Washington, this idea has been viewed with puzzle—some both suspicion and people have been puzzled about what it is that we're trying to do. Because the usual idea is, well, this must just be a mechanism to try to win the next election in 2014. And what we've tried to explain to people is, is that, no, I actually just want to govern—at least for a couple of years—[*laughter*]—but I also want to make sure that the voices of ordinary people are heard in the debates that are going to be taking place.

If you have a Senator or a Congressman in a swing district who is prepared to take a tough vote—or what they consider to be a tough vote—on immigration reform or legislation around background checks for guns, I want to make sure that they feel supported and that they know that there are constituencies of theirs who agree with them, even if they may be getting a lot of pushback in that district. If we move aggressively on an issue like climate change, that's not an easy issue for a lot of folks, because the benefits may be out in the future. And I want to make sure that a Congressman, Senator feels as if they've got the information and the grassroots network that's going to support them in that effort.

And so that more than anything is what inspired this idea. What we want is to make sure that the voices of the people who put me here continue to be heard: that they're not just heard during election time; that they're not just heard in terms of dollar solicitations; that we are helping to build or sustain a network of citizens who have a voice in the most critical debates that are going to be taking place over the next year and year and a half, and if it works, potentially beyond.

So that's part of the reason why I'm excited about this and why I'm so grateful that all of you are participating. One of the things I'm proudest of during the course of two campaigns, where we raised an awful lot of money, is that the people who got involved didn't ask me for stuff, except to be true to my vision and true to our agenda.

And all of you represent, like it or not, a bunch of true believers who got involved and are still here after all the ups and downs of the campaign. Well, there are going to be ups and downs in terms of governing as well. But if we do it well, then I'm confident that we can move strong immigration legislation through Congress. I'm confident that we can get commonsense gun safety legislation through Congress. I am confident that we can craft a budget that is responsible and reduces our deficit, but also makes sure that we're investing in those things

we need to grow and that our basic safety—social safety net is preserved. But I can't do that by myself.

So I'll just close with this comment. You remember during the campaign, at one point I was asked about gridlock in Washington, and I said one of the lessons I've learned in my first 4 years is that you can't change Washington from the inside. And some people took that as saying, oh, Obama has given up and you know—no. That's what I've always claimed.

I've always said that I am representing people, and that change comes about because people are activated, people are involved. People shape the agenda. People determine the framework for debate. People let their Members of Congress know what is that they believe. And when those voices are heard, you can't stop it. That's when change happens.

Well, what was true back in 2008 is just as true today. And what we don't want to do is repeat the mistake, I think, that I believe in 2008 we made, where some of that energy just kind of dissipated and where we're only playing an inside game, and I'm sitting in a room with a bunch of folks negotiating all the time, but those voices are no longer heard.

Over the last several weeks, the press here in Washington has been reporting about Obama's charm offensive. Well, the truth of the matter is all I've been doing is just calling up folks and trying to see if we can break through some of the gobbledygook of our politics here. And I do believe that—at this juncture, one of the things I believe is that we've got to get Members of Congress involved in these discussions, not just leadership. Because I think a lot of them feel as if they don't have the opportunity to break out of some of this partisan gridlock. And ironically, I actually think some of the leadership want their membership to create a permission structure. They don't like getting too far ahead of their leadership. So we're reaching out to these individual Members so that they create a space where things can get done.

But the same principle applies doubly when it comes to the American people. And the only idea here that we're promoting is the notion that if the American people are speaking out, organized, activated, that may give space here in Washington to do the kind of work—hopefully, bipartisan work—that's required. But in order to do that I'm going to need all your help.

I used to say that being friends with a politician is like perpetually having a kid in college, because you're writing checks all the time and it doesn't seem like the kid ever graduates. Well, I've graduated. [*Laughter*] I've run my last campaign. But we're not done with the work that led me to run in the first place. And I'm hopeful that with your continued ideas and support, your voices, that we can continue to make progress over the next several years. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:44 p.m. at the Adour restaurant in the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to James A. Messina, national chairman, and Jon Carson, executive director, Organizing for Action; and actor George T. Clooney.

Statement on Senate Action on Gun Control Legislation
March 14, 2013

I thank the Senate for taking another step forward in our common effort to help reduce gun violence by advancing a bill that would reinstate and strengthen a ban on the sale of military-style assault weapons and set a 10-round limit for magazines. These weapons of war, when combined with high-capacity magazines, have one purpose: to inflict maximum damage as quickly as possible. They are designed for the battlefield, and they have no place on our streets, in our schools, or threatening our law enforcement officers.

The Senate has now advanced legislation addressing three of the most important elements of my proposal to help reduce the epidemic of gun violence in this country. Now the full

Senate and the House need to vote on this bill, as well as the measures advanced in the past week that would impose serious penalties on anyone who buys a gun as part of a scheme to arm criminals; improve school safety; and help keep guns out of the hands of criminals, people with a severe mental illness, and others who shouldn't have them. Each of these proposals deserves a vote.

Remarks at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Illinois
March 15, 2013

Hello, everybody! Hello, Illinois! Hello! It is good to be home!

Well, let me begin by thanking Ann for the great introduction, the great work she's doing, the leadership she's showing with her team on so many different, amazing technological breakthroughs. I want to thank Dr. Isaacs and Dr. Crabtree for giving me a great tour of your facilities.

It's not every day that I get to walk into a thermal test chamber. [*Laughter*] I told my girls that I was going to go into a thermal test chamber and they were pretty excited. I told them I'd come out looking like the Hulk. [*Laughter*] They didn't believe that. But——

I want to thank my friend and your friend, a truly great U.S. Senator, Senator Dick Durbin—huge supporter of Argonne. An outstanding Member of Congress who actually could explain some of the stuff that's going on here, Bill Foster is here. Congressman Bobby Rush, a big supporter of Argonne, glad he's here. We've got a number of State and local officials with us, including your mayor, Brian Reaves.

And I could not come to Argonne without bringing my own Nobel Prize–winning scientist, someone who has served our country so well over the past 4 years, our Energy Secretary, Dr. Steven Chu.

Now, I'm here today to talk about what should be our top priority as a nation, and that's reigniting the true engine of America's economic growth: a rising, thriving middle class and an economy built on innovation. In my State of the Union Address, I said our most important task was to drive that economic growth, and I meant it. And every day, we should be asking ourselves three questions: How do we make America a magnet for good jobs? How do we equip our people with the skills and training to do those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

Oh, those of you who have chairs—I wasn't sure everybody had chairs there. [*Laughter*] Please feel free to sit down, I'm sorry. Everybody was standing, and I thought Argonne—one of the effects of the sequester, you had to—[*laughter*]—get rid of chairs. That's good. I'm glad we've got some chairs.

So I chose Argonne National Lab because right now few areas hold more promise for creating good jobs and growing our economy than how we use American energy.

After years of talking about it, we're finally poised to take control of our energy future. We produce more oil than we have in 15 years. We import less oil than we have in 20 years. We've doubled the amount of renewable energy that we generate from sources like wind and solar, with 10,000—tens of thousands of good jobs to show for it. We're producing more natural gas than we ever have before, with hundreds of thousands of good jobs to show for it. We supported the first new nuclear power plant in America since the 1970s. And we're sending less carbon pollution into the environment than we have in nearly 20 years.

So we're making real progress across the board. And it's possible, in part, because of labs like this and outstanding scientists like so many of you, entrepreneurs, innovators—all of you who are working together to take your discoveries and turn them into a business.

So think about this: Just a few years ago, the American auto industry was flatlining. Today, thanks in part to discoveries made right here at Argonne, some of the most high-tech, fuel-efficient, pretty spiffy cars in the world are once

again designed, engineered, and built here in the United States.

And that's why we have to keep investing in scientific research. It's why we have to maintain our edge, because the work you're doing today will end up in the products that we make and sell tomorrow. You're helping to secure our energy future. And if we do it well, then that's going to help us avoid some of the perils of climate change and leave a healthier planet for our kids. But to do it, we've got to make sure that we're making the right choices in Washington.

Just the other day, Dr. Isaacs and directors of two of our other national laboratories wrote about the effects of the so-called sequester—these across-the-board budget cuts put in place 2 weeks ago—and specifically, the effects it will have on America's scientific research. And one of the reasons I was opposed to these cuts is because they don't distinguish between wasteful programs and vital investments. They don't trim the fat; they cut into muscle and into bone, like research and development being done right here that not only gives a great place for young researchers to come and ply their trade, but also ends up creating all kinds of spinoffs that create good jobs and good wages.

So Dr. Isaacs said these cuts will force him to stop any new project that's coming down the line. And I'm quoting him now, he says, "This sudden halt on new starts will freeze American science in place while the rest of the world races forward, and it will knock a generation of young scientists off their stride, ultimately costing billions of dollars in missed future opportunities." I mean, essentially because of this sequester, we're looking at 2 years where we don't start new research. And at a time when every month you've got to replace your smartphone because something new has come up, imagine what that means when China and Germany and Japan are all continuing to plump up their basic research and we're just sitting there doing nothing.

We can't afford to miss these opportunities while the rest of the world races forward. We have to seize these opportunities. I want the next great job-creating breakthroughs—whether it's in energy or nanotechnology or bioengineering—I want those breakthroughs to be right here in the United States of America, creating American jobs and maintaining our technological lead.

So I just want to be clear: These cuts will harm, not help, our economy. They aren't the smart way to cut our deficits. And that's why I'm reaching out to Republicans and Democrats to come together around a balanced approach, a smart, phased-in approach to deficit reduction that includes smart spending cuts and entitlement reforms and new revenue, and that won't hurt our middle class or slow economic growth. And if we do that, then we can move beyond governing from crisis to crisis to crisis, and we keep our focus on policies that actually create jobs and grow our economy and move forward to face all of the other challenges we face, from fixing our broken immigration system to educating our kids to keeping them safe from gun violence.

And few pieces of business are more important for us than getting our energy future right. So here at Argonne and other labs around the country, scientists are working on getting us where we need to get 10 years from now, 20 years from now. Today, what most Americans feel first when it comes to energy prices—or energy issues are prices that they pay at the pump. And over the past few weeks, we saw—we went through another spike in gas prices. And people are nodding here. They weren't happy about it. The problem is, this happens every year. It happened last year, the year before that. And it's a serious blow to family budgets. It feels like you're getting hit with a new tax coming right out of your pocket. And every time it happens, politicians, they dust off their three-point plans for $2 gas, but nothing happens, and then we go through the same cycle again.

But here's the thing: Over the past 4 years, we haven't just talked about it, we've actually started doing something about it. We've worked with the auto companies to put in place the toughest fuel economy standards in our history. What that means is, by the middle

of the next decade, our cars will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. And the standards that we set are part of what's driving some of the amazing scientists and engineers who are working here at Argonne Labs. We've set some achievable, but ambitious goals. So in the middle of the next decade, we expect that you'll fill up half as often, which means you spend half as much. And over the life of a new car, the average family will save more than $8,000 at the pump. That's worth applauding. That's big news.

In fact, a new report issued today shows that America is becoming a global leader in advanced vehicles. You walk into any dealership today, and you'll see twice as many hybrids to choose from as there were 5 years ago. You'll see seven times as many cars that can go 40 miles a gallon or more. And as costs go down, sales are going up.

Last year, General Motors sold more hybrid vehicles than ever before. Ford is selling some of the most fuel-efficient cars so quickly that dealers are having a tough time keeping up with the demand. So by investing in our energy security, we're helping our businesses succeed and we're creating good middle class jobs right here in America.

So we're making progress, but the only way to really break this cycle of spiking gas prices, the only way to break that cycle for good is to shift our cars entirely—our cars and trucks—off oil. That's why, in my State of the Union Address, I called on Congress to set up an energy security trust to fund research into new technologies that will help us reach that goal.

Now, I'd like to take credit for this idea, because it's a good idea, but I can't. Basically, my proposal builds off a proposal that was put forward by a nonpartisan coalition that includes retired generals and admirals and leading CEOs. And these leaders came together around a simple idea: Much of our energy is drawn from lands and waters that we, the public, own together. So what they've proposed is let's take some of our oil and gas revenues from public lands and put it towards research that will benefit the public so we can support American ingenuity without adding a dime to our deficit.

We can support scientists who are designing new engines that are more energy efficient; support scientists that are developing cheaper batteries that can go farther on a single charge; support scientists and engineers that are devising new ways to fuel our cars and trucks with new sources of clean energy, like advanced biofuels and natural gas, so drivers can one day go coast to coast without using a drop of oil.

And the reason so many different people from the private sector, the public sector, our military support this idea is because it's not just about saving money, it's also about saving the environment, but it's also about our national security. For military officials—like General Paul Kelley, a former Commandant of the Marine Corps—this is about national security. Our reliance on oil makes us way too dependent on other parts of the world, many of which are very volatile. For business leaders—like Fred Smith, the CEO of FedEx—this is about economic security, because when fuel prices shoot up, it's harder to plan investments, expand operations, create new jobs.

So these leaders all say we need to fix this. This is not a Democratic idea or a Republican idea, this is just a smart idea. And we should be taking their advice. Let's set up an energy security trust that helps us free our families and our businesses from painful spikes in gas once and for all. Let's do that. We can do it. We've done it before; we innovated here at Argonne.

And in the meantime, we'll keep moving on the all-of-the-above energy strategy that we've been working on for the last couple years, where we're producing more oil and gas here at home, but we're also producing more biofuels, we're also producing more fuel-efficient vehicles, more solar power, more wind power. We're working to make sure that here in America, we're building cars and homes and businesses that waste less energy.

We can do this. The nature of America's miraculous rise has been our drive, our restless spirit, our willingness to reach out to new horizons, our willingness to take risks, our willingness to innovate. We are not satisfied just be-

cause things—this is how things have been. We're going to try something that maybe we just imagine now, but if we work at it, we'll achieve it. That's the nature of America. That's what Argonne National Lab is about. That's what this facility is about.

Two decades ago, scientists at Argonne, led by Mike Thackeray, who's here today. Where is Mike? There he is right here. Mike started work on a rechargeable lithium battery for cars. And some folks at the time said the idea wasn't worth the effort. They said that even if you had the technology, the car would cost too much, it wouldn't go far enough.

But Mike and his team knew better. They knew you could do better. And America, our Government, our Federal Government made it a priority, and we funded those efforts. And Mike went to work. And when others gave up, the team kept on at it. And when development hit a snag, the team found solutions. And a few years ago, all of this hard work paid off, and scientists here at Argonne helped create a lithium ion battery that costs less, lasts longer than any that had come before.

So what was just an idea two decades ago is now rolling off assembly lines in cutting-edge, fuel-efficient cars that you can plug in at night. Well, imagine all the ideas right now with all of these young scientists and engineers that 20 years ago—or 20 years from now will be offering solutions to our problems that we can't even comprehend, as long as we're still funding these young scientists and engineers; as long as the pipeline for research is maintained; as long as we recognize, there are some things we do together as a country, because individually we can't do it. And by the way, the private sector on its own will not invest in this research because it's too expensive. It's too risky. They can't afford it in terms of their bottom lines.

So we've got to support it. And we'll all benefit from it, and our kids will benefit from it, and our grandkids will benefit from it. That's who we are. That's been the American story.

We don't stand still, we look forward. We invent. We build. We turn new ideas into new industries. We change the way we can live our lives here at home and around the world. That's how we sent a man to the Moon. That's how we invented the Internet.

When somebody tells us we can't, we say, yes, we can. And I'm telling all of you, I am absolutely confident that America is poised to succeed in the same way, as long as we don't lose that spirit of innovation and recognize that we can only do it together. And I'm going to work as hard as I can every single day to make sure that we do. All right?

So congratulations, Argonne. Let's keep it up. Thank you. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:31 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ann M. Schlenker, Director of the Center for Transportation Research, George Crabtree, Director of the Joint Center for Energy Storage Research, Michael Thackeray, Distinguished Fellow and Materials Scientist, and Eric D. Isaacs, Director, Argonne National Laboratory; Thom Mason, Director, Oak Ridge National Laboratory; and A. Paul Alivisatos, Director, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

Memorandum on Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians
March 15, 2013

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians

Since 1991, the United States has provided safe haven for Liberians who were forced to flee their country as a result of armed conflict and widespread civil strife, in part through granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The armed conflict ended in 2003 and conditions improved such that TPS ended effective October 1, 2007. President Bush then deferred the enforced departure of the Liberians originally granted TPS. I extended that grant of

Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) to March 31, 2013. I have determined that there are compelling foreign policy reasons to again extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States under the existing grant of DED.

Pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States, I have determined that it is in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 18 months the removal of any Liberian national, or person without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia, who is present in the United States and who is under a grant of DED as of September 30, 2011. The grant of DED only applies to an individual who has continuously resided in the United States since October 1, 2002, except for Liberian nationals, or persons without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia:

(1) who are ineligible for TPS for the reasons provided in section 244(c)(2)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1254a(c)(2)(B);

(2) whose removal you determine is in the interest of the United States;

(3) whose presence or activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States;

(4) who have voluntarily returned to Liberia or his or her country of last habitual residence outside the United States;

(5) who were deported, excluded, or removed prior to the date of this memorandum; or

(6) who are subject to extradition.

Accordingly, I direct you to take the necessary steps to implement for eligible Liberians:

(1) a deferral of enforced departure from the United States for 18 months from March 31, 2013; and

(2) authorization for employment for 18 months from March 31, 2013.

BARACK OBAMA

The President's Weekly Address
March 16, 2013

Hi, everybody. As a nation, our top priority is growing our economy and creating good, middle class jobs. That's why this week I'm speaking to you from the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois, because few areas hold as much promise as what they're focused on right here: harnessing American energy.

You see, after years of talking about it, we're finally poised to take control of our energy future. We produce more oil than we have in 15 years. We import less oil than we have in 20 years. We've doubled the amount of renewable energy we generate from sources like wind and solar, with tens of thousands of good jobs to show for it. We're producing more natural gas than ever before, with hundreds of thousands of good jobs to show for it. We've supported the first new nuclear power plant since the 1970s. And we're sending less carbon pollution into the environment than we have in nearly 20 years.

So we're making real progress. But over the past few weeks, we've got a reminder that we have more work to do. We went through another spike in gas prices, just like last year and the year before that. It happens every year. It's a serious blow to your budget, like getting hit with a new tax coming right out of your pocket.

Over the past 4 years, as part of our all-of-the-above energy strategy, we've taken steps to soften that blow by making sure our cars use less gas. We've put in place the toughest fuel economy standards in our history so that by the middle of the next decade, our cars will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. Over the life of a new car, the average family will save more than $8,000 at the pump.

But the only way we're going to break this cycle of spiking gas prices for good is to shift

our cars and trucks off of oil for good. That's why, in my State of the Union Address, I called on Congress to set up an energy security trust to fund research into new technologies that will help us reach that goal.

Here's how it would work. Much of our energy is drawn from lands and waters that we, the public, own together. So I'm proposing that we take some of our oil and gas revenues from public lands and put it towards research that will benefit the public so that we can support American ingenuity without adding a dime to our deficit. We can support scientists who are designing new engines that are more energy efficient, developing cheaper batteries that go farther on a single charge, and devising new ways to fuel our cars and trucks with new sources of clean energy—like advanced biofuels and natural gas—so drivers can one day go coast to coast without using a drop of oil.

Now, this idea isn't mine. It actually builds off a proposal put forward by a nonpartisan coalition of CEOs and retired generals and admirals. So let's take their advice and free our families and our businesses from painful spikes in gas prices once and for all.

And in the meantime, let's keep moving forward on an all-of-the-above energy strategy: a strategy where we produce more oil and gas here at home, but also more biofuels and fuel-efficient vehicles, more solar power and wind power; a strategy where we put more people to work building cars, homes, and businesses that waste less energy. We can do this. We're Americans. And when we commit ourselves to something, there's no telling how far we'll go.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12:40 p.m. on March 15 in Building 371 at the Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, IL, for broadcast on March 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 16.

Remarks on the Nomination of Thomas E. Perez To Be Secretary of Labor
March 18, 2013

The President. Thank you. Everybody have a seat. Have a seat. As I've said before, my top priority as President is doing everything we need to do to make sure that we're growing our economy and that we're strengthening our middle class. And as I said in my State of the Union Address last month, every day we should be asking ourselves three questions. One, how do we make sure America is a magnet for good jobs? Number two, how do we equip people with the skills they need to get those jobs? And number three, how do we make sure that hard work actually pays off in a decent living?

These are the challenges that I've instructed my team here at the White House and in my entire Cabinet to focus on. And a position that's instrumental to tackling these challenges is having an outstanding Secretary of Labor.

So I want to begin by thanking Hilda Solis and her entire team—[*applause*]—including Acting Secretary Seth Harris, for the outstanding work that they've been doing over the past 4 years. Their efforts at the Department of Labor have given more young people a chance to earn new skills, more returning vets the chance to find a job. They've looked out for worker safety from construction sites to coal mines. They've stood up for workers' rights to organize, women's rights to get paid equally for the work that they do. They've done an extraordinary job fighting on behalf of working families across the board.

And today I'm proud to nominate a leader to carry on those efforts as America's next Secretary of Labor, Tom Perez.

Like so many Americans, Tom knows what it's like to climb the ladder of opportunity. He is the son of Dominican immigrants. He helped pay his way through college as a garbage collector and working at a warehouse. He went on to become the first lawyer in his family. So his story reminds us of this country's promise: that if you're willing to work hard, it

doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what your last name is, you can make it if you try.

And Tom has made protecting that promise for everybody the cause of his life. As a civil rights attorney, an aide to Senator Ted Kennedy, a member of the Montgomery, Maryland, County Council, Tom fought for a level playing field where hard work and responsibility are rewarded and working families can get ahead.

And this is not the first time that he's chosen to be a labor secretary either. We've got here today Governor Martin O'Malley, and Martin appointed Tom as secretary of Maryland's Department of Labor, where he helped implement the country's first statewide living-wage law, because he understood that a minimum wage should be a wage that you can live on.

In his current role as the head of the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, Tom has fought to open pathways into the workforce for everyone willing to contribute, including people with disabilities, LGBT Americans, and immigrants. And he has helped settle some of the largest cases ever on behalf of families targeted by unfair mortgage lending.

Now, while he's tackled plenty of tough issues, Tom has also spent a career as a consensus builder. He's worked with CEOs, he's worked with labor leaders. He's worked at Federal, State, and local government levels. And throughout, he understands that our economy works best when the middle class and those working to get into the middle class have the security they need on the job, a democratic voice in the workplace, everybody playing by the same set of rules.

So Tom's knowledge and experience will make him an outstanding Secretary of Labor. And there's plenty of work to do. We're going to have to work very hard to make sure that folks find jobs with good wages and good benefits. We've got to make sure that our veterans who are returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan have a chance to put their incredible skills and leadership to work at home. We need to build an immigration system that works for every employee and every family and every business. I'm confident that Tom is going to be able to work to promote economic growth, but also make sure that that growth is broad based. And he's going to be an integral part of our overall economic team.

So these are just a few of the many challenges working families out there are facing and where they need an advocate, and Tom is the right person for that job. So I hope that the Senate will act swiftly to confirm Tom so we can work together to address all these concerns. I want to thank not only Tom but his wonderful family for agreeing to take on this new role. I just heard that Tom has been coaching basketball and baseball. He doesn't claim to be a great coach—[*laughter*]—but he brings passion to it. He may end up missing a few of the games over the next several months, but it's going to be for a good cause. And I appreciate his family being willing to make these sacrifices as well.

So with that, I would like to introduce my nominee to be our next Secretary of Labor, give him a chance to say a few words. And again, I'd urge the Senate to confirm him as quickly as possible.

Mr. Tom Perez.

Secretary-designate Perez. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. President, for your confidence in me.

[*At this point, Secretary-designate Perez made brief remarks in Spanish, and no transcript or translation was provided. He then continued in English as follows.*]

It is a remarkably humbling and exciting phenomenon to be here today.

My parents taught my four siblings and me to work hard, to give back to our community, and to make sure that the ladder of opportunity was there for those coming after us. Over my career, I've learned that true progress is possible if you keep an open mind, listen to all sides, and focus on results. I look forward to taking these lessons with me, if confirmed, to my new role as Secretary of the Department of Labor.

As you well know, our Nation still faces critical economic challenges, and the Department's mission is as important as ever. I am

confident that together with our partners in organized labor, the business community, grassroots communities, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike, we can keep making progress for all working families.

In the coming weeks, as the confirmation process unfolds, I look forward to meeting with Senators of both parties to discuss the Labor Department's key role: protecting and growing the middle class.

I'll close again, Mr. President, by thanking you once again for this tremendous opportunity.

[*Secretary-designate Perez made brief remarks in Spanish, and no transcript or translation was provided. He then concluded in English as follows.*]

I look forward to this opportunity to continue serving our Nation. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Women's History Month Reception
March 18, 2013

Well, hello, everybody! And can everybody please give Amanda another big round of applause? It seems to me she would be pretty good at sales. [*Laughter*] I was sold just listening to her right there.

Thank you, Amanda, for your—for sharing your story, the wonderful introduction. It is an honor to welcome all of you here to the White House.

Now, let's be clear: I am used to being surrounded every day by talented, accomplished women, from all the meetings I have in the West Wing to the dinner table with Michelle, Malia, and Sasha. [*Laughter*] But I have to say, even for somebody who is accustomed to it, this is a pretty exceptional group that I'm looking around here. We've got business leaders like Abbe Raven, CEO of the A&E Networks. There she is right there. We've got activists like Dolores Huerta and Lilly Ledbetter, all-star athletes like Tamika Catchings, and outstanding public servants from Congress and my administration, including Valerie Jarrett, who serves as our Chair of the Council for Women and Girls here at the White House.

And when I look around this room, it is hard to believe that 100 years ago this month, thousands of women were marching right outside this house demanding one of our most fundamental rights: the right to vote, to have a say in our democracy. And today, a century later, its rooms are full of accomplished women who have overcome discrimination, shattered glass ceilings, and become outstanding role models for all of our sons and daughters. And that means we've come a long way, and that's thanks to the efforts of so many people like you.

Because of the hard work and exemplary leadership of the women in this room, military families have protected family and medical leave. Women have legal recourse to fight against pay discrimination, as Amanda took advantage of. Women have the opportunity to serve on the front lines of our military conflicts, and that means that they're getting paid and promoted equally. Women have the opportunity to make their own choices about their health.

We're also seeing expanded opportunity for women's—to reach their full potential all around the world. That's in large part because 4 years ago, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—a tireless advocate for women herself—designated an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, whose sole job it is to make sure that women and girls are a central part of every aspect of our foreign policy, that their concerns are considered at the highest level of our diplomatic decisionmaking.

For 4 years, the incredible Melanne Verveer held that role. Where is Melanne? Is she here? All right, well, she's incredible. Take my word for it. [*Laughter*] We're so grateful for her service, along with the millions of women around the world that she helped to amplify and

helped to fight alongside on the causes that are so important. But with Melanne leaving on, we've got some big shoes to fill. So today I am very pleased to announce that I will be nominating Cathy Russell as our next Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.

Now, Cathy is a longtime advocate for women, for justice, for fairness. She's worked on preventing violence against women here and around the world. Throughout my first term, she's served as chief of staff to Dr. Jill Biden. She's worked tirelessly alongside Michelle and Jill to make sure that our military families get every single benefit and bit of assistance that they so richly deserve and have earned. I'm certain that Jill will miss Cathy, but I know she joins me in saying that we could not be prouder of Cathy's hard work and her advocacy. And we know that she's going to be a powerful voice on behalf of women and girls around the world. So thank you, Cathy, for your continued service.

It's women like Cathy, like Jill, like Amanda, like Michelle, like all of you, that inspire so much progress each and every day. And I've got to tell you, all of you inspire me to make sure that I'm doing everything that I can as President to carry on that progress and to do everything we can to ensure equality and opportunity for all women. Just last week, I was proud to sign the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women's Act, a law, by the way, that Cathy helped to make possible in the first place: securing for women the protections and the services to help them live their lives free from fear of violence and free to pursue their own measure of happiness.

And that's what everybody deserves in this country, the opportunity to make of their lives what they will, no matter who they are, what they look like, whether they are boys or girls, women or men. That's why I ran for President in the first place: to put the same rights and opportunities within the reach of all of our daughters and sons. And while there's still a lot of work to be done, I'm confident that we can reach that goal, that we can make sure that every single door is open, every dream is within reach—for Malia, for Sasha, for your daughters, for your granddaughters—to make sure that they never feel like there are barriers in front of them, and that if they work hard, they can make it.

So I want to thank all of you for your incredible advocacy. I could not be prouder of you. I'm glad that you had a chance to join us. I understand that we had some great panels earlier today, and I expect this conversation and, more importantly, the work will continue for many years to come.

So thank you very much, everybody. Enjoy the reception.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jackson, MS, resident Amanda McMillan, plaintiff in an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sex discrimination lawsuit against the Forrest City Grocery Co.; Dolores C. Huerta, cofounder, United Farm Workers; Lily Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. plant in Gadsden, AL; and Tamika Catchings, forward, Women's National Basketball Association's Indian Fever. The proclamation of February 28 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Nowruz
March 18, 2013

Dorood. As you and your families come together to celebrate Nowruz, I want to extend my best wishes to this new spring and new year. Around the world, and here in the United States, you're gathering at the Nowruz table to give thanks for loved ones, reflect on your blessings, and welcome all the possibilities of a new season.

As I have every year as President, I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to the people and leaders of Iran. Since taking office, I've offered the Iranian Government an oppor-

tunity: If it meets its international obligations, then there could be a new relationship between our two countries, and Iran could begin to return to its rightful place among the community of nations.

I have no illusions about the difficulty of overcoming decades of mistrust. It will take a serious and sustained effort to resolve the many differences between Iran and the United States. This includes the world's serious and growing concerns about Iran's nuclear program, which threatens peace and security in the region and beyond.

Iran's leaders say that their nuclear program is for medical research and electricity. To date, however, they have been unable to convince the international community that their nuclear activities are solely for peaceful purposes. That's why the world is united in its resolve to address this issue and why Iran is now so isolated. The people of Iran have paid a high and unnecessary price because of your leaders' unwillingness to address this issue.

As I've said all along, the United States prefers to resolve this matter peacefully, diplomatically. Indeed, if—as Iran's leaders say—their nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, then there is a basis for a practical solution. It's a solution that would give Iran access to peaceful nuclear energy while resolving once and for all the serious questions that the world has about the true nature of the Iranian nuclear program.

The United States, alongside the rest of the international community, is ready to reach such a solution. Now is the time for the Iranian Government to take immediate and meaningful steps to reduce tensions and work toward an enduring, long-term settlement of the nuclear issue.

Finding a solution will be no easy task. But if we can, the Iranian people will begin to see the benefits of greater trade and ties with other nations, including the United States, whereas if the Iranian Government continues down its current path, it will only further isolate Iran. This is the choice now before Iran's leaders.

I hope they choose a better path for the sake of the Iranian people and for the sake of the world. Because there's no good reason for Iranians to be denied the opportunities enjoyed by people in other countries, just as Iranians deserve the same freedoms and rights as people everywhere.

Iran's isolation isn't good for the world either. Just as your forbearers enriched the arts and sciences throughout history, all nations would benefit from the talents and creativity of the Iranian people, especially your young people. Every day that you are cut off from us is a day we're not working together, building together, innovating together, and building a future of peace and prosperity that is at the heart of this holiday.

As you gather with family and friends this Nowruz, many of you will turn to the poet Hafez, who wrote: "Plant the tree of friendship that bears the fruit of fulfillment; uproot the sapling of enmity that bears endless suffering."

As a new spring begins, I remain hopeful that our two countries can move beyond tension. And I will continue to work toward a new day between our nations that bears the fruit of friendship and peace.

Thank you, and *Eid-eh Shoma mobarak*.

NOTE: The remarks were recorded at approximately 1 p.m. on March 15 in Building 371 at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, IL.

Statement on the Resignation of Acting Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Commerce Rebecca M. Blank

March 18, 2013

I want to thank Dr. Blank for her hard work and exceptional service on behalf of the American people. Over the past 4 years, I have asked Becky to take on several roles at the Department of Commerce, and in each one, she has distinguished herself as a steady leader and a vital member of my economic team. A tireless advocate for American businesses, Becky has

helped to increase our competitiveness, support our innovators and entrepreneurs, and bring good-paying jobs back to our shores. While I will be sad to see her go this summer, I want to wish her the best of luck in her exciting new role. I know the University of Wisconsin Badgers will have an outstanding chancellor for years to come.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland
March 19, 2013

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome back Taoiseach Kenny to the Oval Office, to the White House and his entire delegation. Obviously, we cherish this opportunity once a year to reaffirm the incredible bond between the United States and Ireland. This year, it also gives us an excuse to stretch out St. Patrick's Day for a couple of extra days, which is always good.

This is now my fifth time to welcome the Taoiseach to the Oval Office. I've had the occasion to visit Ireland as well, one of the wonderful—truly wonderful—trips that I've taken as President of the United States. And the reason that these meetings go so well is because of the incredible bond and history between our two countries.

Obviously, the contributions of Irish Americans to the United States is legendary. But what is also true is that we have an incredibly strong partnership on economic issues, on security issues. The Taoiseach has shown great leadership during difficult times in Ireland. And we're seeing progress in the Irish economy. That's good for the U.S. economy because we have a lot of trade, a lot of investment in Ireland.

There was a story this morning about a deal between Ryanair and Boeing, in which we'll be selling a whole lot of airplanes to Ireland. And it's an example of how the progress that's made in Ireland benefits jobs and businesses here in the United States. Obviously, the Taoiseach is very interested, as well as in continuing to attract direct investment from the United States to Ireland. So this will be a major topic of discussion.

Ireland also punches above its weight internationally when it comes to humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping. Irish troops are in many very difficult places in the world and provide the kinds of stabilization and humanitarian efforts that make all the difference and save lives.

And so I'm very much looking forward to having a good conversation. I'm sure we will also touch on the issue of Northern Ireland, in which we have continued to see progress coming out of the Good Friday agreements, but we also have to recognize that there's a lot more work to be done before there's true unity of effort in that country. And I know that both in discussions with the Taoiseach as well as in talking to the Ministers who are here from Northern Ireland, we'll have an opportunity to find out how the United States can be helpful in that overall effort as well.

So again, Taoiseach, I want to welcome you. Thank you for giving me an excuse to break out my green tie. [*Laughter*] And I'm sure that we'll have a wonderful lunch up on Capitol Hill and once again be able to reaffirm the incredible friendship between our peoples.

Prime Minister Kenny. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Prime Minister Kenny. Could I to say that it's a particular privilege to be able to come here to the White House to visit President Obama, to continue this wonderful tradition that the American Governments over the years has shown to Ireland because of the particular and unique relationship between our countries covering many centuries.

I come here both as Taoiseach, but also as the Presidency of the European Union. I suppose I should say this because I'll never get the chance again, it's great to meet on Presidential terms here. [*Laughter*] The President of the United States, an Irishman, and the President of Europe, an Irishman, meeting in the Oval Office. [*Laughter*]

But I would like to say seriously, it's an opportunity for me to brief the President on the progress being made in challenging times for the Irish Government, following a very clear and strategic plan. It's also an opportunity to brief the President on issues of the European Union and the progress being made by the European Council, with particular reference to the EU-U.S. trade—participation and free trade, to which the President referred in his State of the Union Address. I'd like to follow that through with him. Also, to brief the President on updates in respect of Northern Ireland, immigration—undocumented Irish—and of course, the general perspectives both for the world economy. And as the President is moving to the Middle East this evening, I can give him an update on the recent meeting and discussion that the European Council held there.

Besides, it's a real opportunity to celebrate St. Patrick's week. I have a second tie for the President, if he so wishes. And of course, there is a standing open invitation to President Obama to come back to Ireland whenever is convenient and appropriate and when he so wishes. And maybe the next time, when our economies are moving in a more positive direction, we might actually have time to take out the sticks on the golf course. I'm looking forward to that sometime in the future.

So to First Lady Michelle, the children, Malia and Sasha, we wish the President continued success and good fortune in the very onerous responsibilities that lay upon his shoulders as the leader of the free world. And it's a pleasure and a privilege to be here in the Oval Office.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:41 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland.

Remarks at the Congressional Friends of Ireland Luncheon
March 19, 2013

President Obama. Thank you so much. Please, everybody, have a seat.

To our host, Speaker Boehner, to the distinguished Members of the House and the Senate, thank you all for having me here today. Obviously, we are thrilled to have the Taoiseach back, and his lovely wife and his delegation.

But before I begin, I just want to say a few words about a tragic accident in Nevada that took the lives of seven U.S. servicemembers and wounded several others yesterday. All of us share our thoughts and prayers with their families. And I think this should serve as a reminder that even as we're able to gather today in tradition and in friendship, it's the extraordinary and enduring sacrifice of our men and women in uniform that make this possible and the sacrifices that their families make as well. And all Americans stand united in grateful support of all that they do.

Now, I know I speak for everyone when I say we're pleased to welcome Taoiseach Kenny and his wife Fionnuala back to Washington. They are just wonderful friends. I also want to welcome First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness from Northern Ireland. Where are Peter and Martin? There they are right here.

We spend the whole year trying to bring this town together, and these leaders are able to do it in a single afternoon. They even get us to dress alike. [*Laughter*] So my question is, how long can you stay? [*Laughter*] Because we've got some budget discussions coming up. Perhaps you can be helpful.

Now, even though most of the debate in Congress on this day is about who is more Irish than whom, that doesn't make it any less heated. But no matter how much green is in your family tree, remember that Speaker Boehner is part Irish and spent much of his childhood surrounded by characters in his father's bar, so the rest of us are probably playing for second place in this contest.

I will say that after visiting my ancestral hometown of Moneygall 2 years ago, I've now seen the official Irish records proving my Irish

heritage on my mother's side. I thought that would come in handy more often, but it turns out that on St. Patrick's Day, people just take your word for it. [*Laughter*] I'm keeping all my records. [*Laughter*] Just in case. [*Laughter*]

The truth is we have plenty of Irish men and women here today, but not just today, here every day. They represent the latest in the long line of sons and daughters of Erin who have walked the halls of Congress and who've occupied the Oval Office. To adapt an old saying, the curse of the Irish is not that they don't have an opinion about anything, it's that they have an opinion about everything. So it's not hard to see why politics has always been a good fit.

But no matter how far Irish Americans travel or how high they climb, the Emerald Isle always has a way of pulling at their heart strings. President Kennedy once joked that he would support any Presidential candidate who offered him an Ambassadorship to Ireland after he left office. His younger brother Teddy Kennedy remembered walking along the beach as a boy and hearing Jack tell him that on a clear day, you could see all the way to Ireland.

And then there was President Reagan, one of the founders of this gathering. During his time in office, he made a pilgrimage back to his home county of Tipperary, and walking through the ruins of an ancient cemetery, Reagan came across a large stone with the following inscription: "Remember me as you pass by, for as you are, so once was I. But as I am, you will be, so be content to follow me."

And apparently, one visitor could let that stand because below the inscription, somebody had carved: "To follow you I am content, I wish I knew which way you went." [*Laughter*]

For my part, I will never forget the magical day that Michelle and I spent in Ireland. The Irish people were incredibly warm and incredibly gracious, even with a little mist falling. They made Michelle and me feel right at home, and we both left with thousands of new friends and dozens of new relatives. And I'm very much looking forward to visiting Northern Ireland for the G–8 summit this June.

So, on this St. Patty's Day, let's remember the Irish, both those who have left us and those who are with us today, who have fought and bled and labored to make this country a better place for their children and for ours. Let's give thanks for the men and women who proved that through hard work and perseverance, anybody can earn themselves a piece of the American Dream.

And let's welcome our Irish brethren who have welcomed so many of us, not just as allies and as friends, but as family as well.

So to our guest, the Taoiseach of Ireland, I would like to propose a toast: To the eternal friendship between our two countries.

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

And with that, should I go ahead and just introduce him, or you got something to say? [*Laughter*] With that, let me introduce Taoiseach Kenny.

Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland. Please. I am not the President of the United States, I'm a visiting Taoiseach from Ireland. Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, *Tánaiste* Gilmore, Ambassadors, First Minister, Deputy First Minister, ladies and gentlemen: You have no idea of the impact that a day like this makes on us and the honor that is bestows on us for our people.

I want to thank you for your grandmother's recipe for the spinach. It's absolutely delicious. [*Laughter*] So it's a privilege, actually, to come back here again to Capitol Hill on this St. Patrick's week, the extension of a tradition going back for very many years to celebrate Irishness and the connection between the United States and Ireland in so many forms over the years.

When I came here 2 years ago, I was able to report that we had come through very challenging times and were starting on the implementation of a strategy and a program to rescue our public finances, to restore our economic independence, to put our people back to work, to restore our integrity and credibility internationally. And I'm very happy to be able to say to you that 2 years on, despite the enormous challenge that this has presented, Ireland has made very steady progress. We hope to exit the IMF-EU program later this year and be able to be back fully in the bond markets next

year and play our part as a constructive, competent country in the interest of our people.

So to have our third consecutive year of economic growth, a return to the bond markets has been on a phased basis. We had a $5 billion sale, with yields down from 14 percent to just over 4 percent in less than 15 months, which was quite a significant move for Ireland.

But I also come here not just as an Irishman or as Taoiseach, but as the Presidency of the European Union. I did say to the President that I'll only get this chance once, because the Presidency revolves through the Union on a 6-monthly basis, so it will be 16 years or thereabouts before it comes back to Ireland again. It's a great thing that as the President of Europe, I can meet the President of the United States on our own ground, both Irishmen. [*Laughter*] Think about that.

But to be serious, may I say, I want to thank America and the United States for their continued interest, for their support—for their tangible support—in respect of Northern Ireland and the difficulties that we've had there over the years. And in the presence of the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister, the *Tánaiste*, and the Speaker and the President, I want you all to understand that this a time of great fragility in Northern Ireland. It's a time for clear political leadership. And we as a Government in the Republic—together with the executive First and Deputy First Minister, the British Government, and all the parties—want this to succeed. We want it to succeed. We do not want a situation where those minority who have bad thoughts and bad blood want to turn the days back to the dark days of the Troubles. We do not want that to happen.

As we approach the 15th anniversary of the Good Friday agreement, as one of the coguarantors of that agreement, we, together with the British Government, the executive of the elected assembly in Northern Ireland, will walk with all of these partners to restore a clear sense of political leadership and progress for peace and continued peace.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker and Mr. President, it's absolutely critical that the American administration continue to show the support that they've always done down through the years, and there are Representatives here from Congress and from the Senate who have demonstrated that more than amply.

So my plea is to keep that interest very much alive, because we intend to work very diligently on that in the time ahead, both the *Tánaiste* and I. I might say that this year we mark the 50th anniversary of the visit of President Kennedy to Ireland in 1963. And as he said, it was his words and his visit that time when he said, "We are divided by distance, but united by history." And these things are so true.

And that's why the year of the gathering in 2013 is Ireland's call to people from all over the world to come back in the year of 2013 to sample the delights and the hospitality of our country if they choose to do so. We don't want them all to come together, because 75 million might be a bit too much to arrive at one time. [*Laughter*] That's why I know that the President was happy to speak about the Ryanair deal with Boeing. Even all those planes fully laden, flying 24 hours a day, wouldn't be able to get that diaspora in there fully.

So let me just say that this is a time of great confidence returning to our country. Yes, fragility and obstacles up ahead, but as a small country, we want to play our part in the European Union with our great friends here in the United States.

On Thursday—on Sunday, I had the privilege of going to Breezy Point to see the devastation wreaked by Sandy, but also to see the spirit of the community which is focused on being—rebuilding that community stronger than ever. I admire their courage. I admire their consistency. And there is a word for it, Speaker, in Ireland, when communities come together with a common objective, support and assistance is given pro bono, we call it the *meitheal* concept—m-e-i-t-h-e-a-l. It means that when communities are down, communities rally together, and our sense of values and conviction and belief are stronger than ever. I was very happy to go to Breezy Point and see that.

Now, the news is not out yet, but on some golf course in Ireland, some morning, the local greenkeeper is going to wake up, and he says, a three ball gone down there, and they're not sure who it is. None of them are really good golfers, though, they could have impact in other places. This match has yet to be arranged. It's between the Speaker of the House here, Mr. Boehner, who proclaims that he's the best of the trio——

Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner. I do. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Kenny. ——the President of the United States, and the Taoiseach of Ireland. And we can't go on Air Force One; it's too obvious. We can't go on a military machine, because they would know it's from the U.S. Air Force. So you're going to have to arrive by Irish style, and in that sense, we have our own ways of getting onto golf courses that nobody knows about. [*Laughter*] And if they find out, you'll understand what the digital communications system is able to do, because I doubt if you'll get off the place without having to sign thousands of autographs.

Listen, thank you, here in Congress, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, for your diligence, for your friendship, for your courtesy. We love this country and want to work with you for the benefit of so many people. So we've spoken about immigration, Northern Ireland, EU-U.S. trade—that's where the future is. And after all, the future is the only place where we all have to live.

Thank you very much, indeed.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. Prime Minister Kenny referred to Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore of Ireland; Ireland's Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Collins; and U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Daniel M. Rooney. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a St. Patrick's Day Reception
March 19, 2013

President Obama. Hello, everybody! Good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening.

President Obama. Welcome to St. Patrick's week here at the White House. Not just a day, we get a week.

I want to welcome back our good friend Taoiseach Kenny and his wonderful wife Fionnuala. We are so glad that they are here, and we want to thank them for bringing some genuine Irish shamrocks. I want to say a special thanks to Michael Collins, who has done such an outstanding job here as the Irish Ambassador to the United States. This is his last St. Patrick's Day in America before heading to Germany, so we want to wish him and his lovely wife all the best.

I also want to welcome First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland, who are with us here today. And as I said earlier, I am very much looking forward to visiting Northern Ireland for the G–8 summit in June.

Now, we have way too many Irish and Irish American and wannabe Irish Americans in the house for me to name—[*laughter*]—but I will say that the next 4 years are shaping up to be very green ones here in the White House. My new Chief of Staff is a McDonough. My National Security Adviser is a Donilon. Our new CIA Director is a Brennan. My new head speechwriter is a Keenan. And Joe Biden has very kindly agreed to stay on as Irishman in Chief. [*Laughter*]

Now, Joe couldn't be here tonight because he is on his way back from the installation of Pope Francis in Rome. For those of you who know Joe, literally, the only thing that could keep him away from St. Patrick's Day at the White House is the installation of a new Pope. [*Laughter*] So he sends his best.

Ever since the first son or daughter of the Emerald Isle set foot here on American soil, this day has served as a reminder of just how many threads of green are woven into the red, white, and blue. And in times of war and

peace, good times and bad, Americans have always found a way to celebrate that heritage.

During the Civil War, a quartermaster for the Irish Brigade was sent to Washington to secure a St. Patrick's Day dinner consisting of a side of roasted ox, a pig stuffed with boiled turkeys, and 35 hams. And even during the Great Depression, when food was scarce and families were struggling, a judge in New York informed the District Attorney that he would not try any cases on St. Patrick's Day in which the defendant or the lawyers were Irish. [*Laughter*]

Now, just to be clear: I looked into continuing some of these traditions. No, I could not get the White House chefs to go along or the Attorney General to go along with these traditions. [*Laughter*] So tonight we're going in a slightly different direction, but we do so mindful of the fact that even in times of trouble, if we're lucky enough to be Irish—even if it's only in spirit—then we're lucky enough. And that's reason to give thanks.

Looking out on this room, it's clear just how much America owes to our brothers and sisters from across the Atlantic, and how many of us—myself included—wouldn't be here if it were not for the brave souls who set off for the New World with no earthly idea of what awaited them on the other side.

And it's a reminder of just how many trials the people of Ireland have endured, from hunger and troubles, to the economic challenges of recent years. It's yet another reason why we need to build an immigration system for the 21st century, one that works for families and businesses and our economy. But it's also a tribute to the incredible resilience of the Irish character and the enormous power of faith: in God, in one another, and in the possibility of a better life.

It was that faith that brought millions of Irish to our shores, but that faith alone didn't join our two nations in common cause. It was how the Irish put that faith into practice in their new Nation. They wanted a government of and by and for the people, so they helped us design one. And they understood the importance of saving the Union, so they fought and died for the cause. They saw potential in our railways, bridges, and skyscrapers, so they poured their sweat and blood into building them. And they believed that each of us has an obligation, not just to ourselves, but to each other and to our country. So that's how they lived their lives here in America.

A great nation is one that contributes more to the world than it takes out, and by that definition, America owes a profound debt of gratitude to the great nation of Ireland. And together, our people have never stopped dreaming of a better future and never stopped working to make that dream a reality.

And we saw that again in October, when Hurricane Sandy set off one of the worst residential fires in New York City's history. Hundreds of homes were left charred and flooded, and many families were suddenly faced with the task of picking up the pieces and rebuilding their lives, including in Breezy Point, a neighborhood with a large Irish American population. In fact, more than half of Breezy Point residents can trace their families to the old country, and the folks back in the old country were not about to sit by and watch their American brothers and sisters struggle alone.

So they pitched in. Gaelic rock stars raised money. Athletes from the Gaelic Games did construction work and brought the Sam Maguire chalice with them to lift spirits. The Irish Tenors came over to sing Christmas carols. The Irish Government pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars, not just to help the residents of Breezy Point, but to help folks rebuild across the region. And the Taoiseach himself was in Breezy Point on Sunday to attend Mass.

As one official said, "New York has been very good to the Irish, and now the Irish are giving back to New York." And that's the story of America and Ireland: We look out for each other, we have each other's backs, and we recognize that no challenge is too great, no obstacle is too high, if you've got a friend beside you and a nation behind you. That's been our history; that will be our future.

So I hope everyone has a wonderful time. There's an old Irish saying that the recipe for a long life is to leave the table hungry, leave the bed sleepy, leave the bar thirsty. [*Laughter*]

We'll see if that works tonight. Happy Saint Patrick's Day, everybody.

And now I'd like to introduce my good friend and our honored guest, Taoiseach Kenny.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland said a phrase in Irish, and no transcript or translation was provided.*]

Prime Minister Kenny. Mr. President, First Lady, Happy Saint Patrick's week to you, your families, and the American people. I'm delighted to be here. I want to join with the President in wishing Ambassador Michael Collins and his wife Marie the very best. Thank you for your service to this country and to Ireland.

I'd like to add to that the service given by Ambassador Dan Rooney and his wife Patricia from the United States to Ireland, two wonderful people also. And thank you, Mr. President, for your warm welcome that you've given to Fionnuala and to me, to the *Tánaiste* and Carol, and indeed everyone in the Irish delegation. It really is a privilege and wonderful to be back. Our warmest congratulations on your second term. Perhaps there will be—[*applause*]—perhaps there will be a second visit home in due course. [*Laughter*]

For generations now, there's been a very special relationship between the President of the United States and the Irish people. In fact, if the truth could be confirmed—and it's difficult to do so—there are reports that President Lincoln himself is living in County Wicklow—[*laughter*]—and he's married to Arthur Miller's daughter. [*Laughter*]

In 1963, President Kennedy came home to Ireland. He told our Parliament, our Dáil, about the Irish Brigade, the Fighting 69th. Thanks to him, that brigade's green flag speaks almost as eloquently as he did, at Leinster House today. From Bull Run to Fredericksburg to Gettysburg, the Fighting 69th distinguished themselves on the battleground, showing outstanding courage and resilience and intelligence. And for you, Mr. President, their battle cry in Irish was *fág an bealach*—"clear the way." Can you say that? *Fág an bealach*.

President Obama. Fág an bealach.

Prime Minister Kenny. [*Inaudible*] Generations on, it rings out loud and clear on the other side of the Atlantic, because after difficult years, we, the Irish people, are at last clearing the way. *Táimid ag fágaint an bealach*: To a brighter, better, more prosperous future, both this time for all our people.

Mr. President, a *chairde Gael*, we've still a long way to go on our journey to national recovery. But tonight I'm proud to say here in the White House: That confidence is returning to our country and to our people.

Here this evening with this bowl of shamrock that contains traditional Irish shamrock, we've got a perfect example of that new confidence and that new hope. Because unlike the bowl that James Joyce spoke of at the Atlantic, of "the bowl of bitter tears," or President Kennedy, this bowl here was made by Sean Egan, unemployed 4 years ago. He spent 300 hours creating this in a labor of love.

It sparkles with the story of who we are now. It glistens with the story of what we once brought here on the risky yet life-giving journey to America, not only those memories of place and home and family, but our songs, our music, our stories, sung and recited until they were threadbare so that new generations—many of you here—could actually make them your own.

Just as we Irish made our own of America, today in Ireland, we do as we have always done. As a nation, we make joy from sadness. As a country, we forge success from difficulty. As a republic, we create ourselves anew. And as we do, we remember and we honor the old.

They say that if you laid out a timber memorial for every Irish man, woman, and child buried at sea on the Famine Crossing that you could walk from Cork to Boston. They say, as we say in Irish, that they're *idir eadartha*—"in between"—between past and future, between two nations, two republics who stand proud and determined and strong, either side of the Atlantic Ocean; exhilarated indeed by the possibilities of science, intrigued by the potential of discovery, and curious about the secrets and the powers of invention; united in our passionate belief in the capacity of experiment and

thought and imagination and, indeed, intuition itself to transform our world.

And when the crew of the International Space Station—who are on Twitter—[*inaudible*]—these days, when they look on this world, on our planet and see it go a little greener, chances are they don't just think American, they don't just think British or Indonesian or any place else, they might well think that down there, that's our human family, the family of man, and they are at home.

And because we are, Mr. President. For all we build, for all we make in finance, in politics, in business or economics, we know, because of these connections, that our real wealth are the reserves of love and kindness and insight and understanding and courage and compassion that were so carefully attained and accrued over those many long years. And as we celebrate St. Patrick and St. Patrick's week, let us build on those reserves to build better nations, better people, and a better world. There, here, Mr. President, the sun is new every day. And may it shine brightly on our peoples and on all that we undertake together in the cause of each other.

So in your responsibilities all around the world, the many onerous responsibilities you carry, we wish you good fortune and good health and success. And in the words of the Fighting 69th: "Our Union, our country, and Ireland forever. *Fág an bealach*." *Is féidir linn*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Director of Speechwriting Cody S. Keenan. Prime Minister Kenny referred to Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore of Ireland and his wife Carol Hanney; author and filmmaker Rebecca Miller, wife of Irish actor Daniel Day-Lewis, who portrayed Abraham Lincoln in the film "Lincoln"; and crystal engraver Sean Egan.

Statement on the 10th Anniversary of the Iraq War
March 19, 2013

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the Iraq war, Michelle and I join our fellow Americans in paying tribute to all who served and sacrificed in one of our Nation's longest wars. We salute the courage and resolve of more than 1.5 million servicemembers and civilians who, during multiple tours, wrote one of the most extraordinary chapters in military service. We honor the memory of the nearly 4,500 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice to give the Iraqi people an opportunity to forge their own future after many years of hardship. And we express our gratitude to our extraordinary military families who sacrificed on the home front, especially our Gold Star families who remain in our prayers.

The last of our troops left Iraq with their heads held high in 2011, and the United States continues to work with our Iraqi partners to advance our shared interest in security and peace. Here at home, our obligations to those who served endure. We must ensure that the more than 30,000 Americans wounded in Iraq receive the care and benefits they deserve and that we continue to improve treatment for traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress disorder. With a strong post-9/11 GI bill, we must help our newest veterans pursue their education and find jobs worthy of their incredible talents. And all Americans can continue to support and honor our military families who are pillars of so many of our communities. On this solemn anniversary, we draw strength and inspiration from these American patriots who exemplify the values of courage, selflessness, and teamwork that define our Armed Forces and keep our Nation great.

Remarks at an Arrival Ceremony in Tel Aviv, Israel
March 20, 2013

Shalom. President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and most of all, to the people of Israel: thank you for this incredibly warm welcome. This is my third visit to Israel, so let me just say *tov lihiyot shuv ba-aretz*.

I'm so honored to be here as you prepare to celebrate the 65th anniversary of a free and independent State of Israel. Yet I know that in stepping foot on this land, I walk with you on the historic homeland of the Jewish people.

More than 3,000 years ago, the Jewish people lived here, tended the land here, prayed to God here. And after centuries of exile and persecution, unparalleled in the history of man, the founding of the Jewish State of Israel was a rebirth, a redemption unlike any in history.

Today, the sons of Abraham and the daughters of Sarah are fulfilling the dream of the ages to be masters of their own fate in their own sovereign state. And just as we have for these past 65 years, the United States is proud to stand with you as your strongest ally and your greatest friend.

As I begin my second term as President, Israel is the first stop on my first foreign trip. This is no accident. Across this region, the winds of change bring both promise and peril. So I see this visit as an opportunity to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between our nations, to restate America's unwavering commitment to Israel's security, and to speak directly to the people of Israel and to your neighbors.

I want to begin right now by answering a question that is sometimes asked about our relationship: Why? Why does the United States stand so strongly, so firmly with the State of Israel? And the answer is simple. We stand together because we share a common story: patriots determined to be a free people in our land, pioneers who forged a nation, heroes who sacrificed to preserve our freedom, and immigrants from every corner of the world who renew constantly our diverse societies.

We stand together because we are democracies. For as noisy and messy as it may be, we know that democracy is the greatest form of government ever devised by man.

We stand together because it makes us more prosperous. Our trade and investment create jobs for both our peoples. Our partnerships in science and medicine and health bring us closer to new cures, harness new energy, and have helped transform us into high-tech hubs of our global economy.

We stand together because we share a commitment to helping our fellow human beings around the world. When the earth shakes and the floods come, our doctors and rescuers reach out to help. When people are suffering, from Africa to Asia, we partner to fight disease and overcome hunger.

And we stand together because peace must come to the Holy Land. For even as we are clear eyed about the difficulties, we will never lose sight of the vision of an Israel at peace with its neighbors.

So, as I begin this visit, let me say as clearly as I can: the United States of America stands with the State of Israel because it is in our fundamental national security interest to stand with Israel, it makes us both stronger, it makes us both more prosperous, and it makes the world a better place.

That's why the United States was the very first nation to recognize the State of Israel 65 years ago. That's why the Star of David and the Stars and Stripes fly together today. And that is why I'm confident in declaring that our alliance is eternal. It is forever: *lanetzach*.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at Ben Gurion Airport.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Shimon Peres of Israel in Jerusalem

March 20, 2013

President Peres. President Obama, it is a great privilege for me and for the people of Israel to host you here in Jerusalem.

It was a real pleasure to sit with a true friend—very knowledgeable, unfortunately—and see that we can agree and discuss with you openly and freely.

After the meeting we just had, I am even more confident that your vision can be—transform the Middle East. Your vision is achievable. You arrived here already with an impressive record of answering our needs, particularly—and unforgettably—in the domain of security. I want to thank you personally, dear friend, for the long days and for many long, sleepless nights—that we know about them—which you spend caring for our country and for our future.

We live in an age that is both global and domestic, inseparably. Interest may divide people; vision may unite them. There is common vision uniting us to confront the dangers, to bring peace closer as soon as possible. The greatest danger is the nuclear—is a nuclear Iran; so you said, so you do. We trust your policy, which calls to, first, by nonmilitary—to fight by nonmilitary means with a clear statement that other options remain on the table. You made it clear that your intention is not to contain, but to prevent.

We are trying together to restart negotiations with the Palestinians. We already agreed that the goal is a two-state—for the two people—solution. There is no better one or more achievable one. We consider that the President of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen, is our partner in that effort to stop terror and bring peace.

Hamas remains a terror organization that targets innocent people. On our northern border, Iran's proxy Hizballah continues to stockpile arms and threaten our civilians while they urgently—while they target innocent people across the world. Hizballah is destroying Lebanon and supporting the brutal massacre of the Syrian people by President Asad. Fortunately, the Syrian nuclear capacity was destroyed. But unfortunately, thousands of their chemical weapons remain. We cannot allow that those weapons to fall in the terrorists' hands. It could lead to an epic tragedy.

There is an attempt to bring spring to the Arab world. It is an Arab choice. It is an Arab initiative. It may bring peace to the region, freedom to the people, economic growth to the Arab States. If realized, it can lead to a better tomorrow. We pray it will become a reality.

I believe the real division is between skeptics and those who believe in peace. Your voice will encourage belief. You came to us with a clear message that no one should let skepticism win the day, a vision that says clearly that peace is not only a wish, but a possibility. I fully support your call. There is no other way to make the future better. There is no better leader to make it possible.

Your visit is a historic step in that direction. We shall journey with you all the way. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

Well, thank you, President Peres, for your very generous words and your warm welcome. It is wonderful to be here once again. I first visited you when I was still a Senator and had the opportunity to visit the lovely garden, and for me to be able to bring a tree from the United States that will find a home in that garden, I think, is symbolic of not only the friendship between our two nations, but between the two of us personally.

Mr. President, you once remarked that a Prime Minister's job is to rule, a President's job is to charm. Well, as with all our visits together, I have once again succumbed to your charms, and I'm grateful to your hospitality.

It is wonderful to be back in Jerusalem, this Eternal City. And I'm pleased to begin my visit with a son of Israel who's devoted his life to keeping Israel strong and sustaining the bonds between our two nations. President Peres

knows that this is a work of generations. Just as he joined the struggle for Israeli independence in his early twenties, he's always looking ahead, connecting with young people. And I'm especially grateful for the time that he allowed me to share with those extraordinary Israeli boys and girls.

Their dreams are much the same as children everywhere. In another sense, though, their lives reflect the difficult realities that Israelis face every single day. They want to be safe. They want to be free from rockets that hit their homes or their schools. They want a world where science and technology is created to build and not destroy. They want to live in peace, free from terror and threats that are so often directed at the Israeli people. That's the future that they deserve. That's the vision that is shared by both our nations. And that is Shimon Peres's life work.

And, Mr. President, Michelle and I have such fond memories of your visit to the White House last spring, when I was honored to present you with America's highest civilian honor: our Medal of Freedom. And that medal was a tribute to your extraordinary life, in which you've held virtually every position in the Israeli Government.

So today was another opportunity for me to benefit from the President's perspective on a whole range of topics: from the historic changes that are taking place across the region to the perils of a nuclear-armed Iran, to the imperatives of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, to the promise of our digital age.

And I should note that one of the advantages of talking to President Peres is not only does he have astonishing vision, but he's also a pretty practical-minded politician and consistently has good advice in terms of how we can approach many of these problems.

I reaffirmed to President Peres, as I work—as I will throughout my visit, that in this work, the State of Israel will have no greater friend than the United States. And the work we do in our time will make it more likely that the children that we saw today—alongside children from throughout the region—have the opportunity for security and peace and prosperity.

This obligation to future generations, I think, was well symbolized by the tree-planting that we started our meeting with. The Talmud recounts the story of Honi, the miracle worker, who saw a man planting a carob tree. And he asked the man, "How long before this tree yields fruit?" To which the man responded, "Seventy years." And so Honi asked, "Are you sure you'll be alive in another 70 years to see it?" And the man replied: "When I came into the world, I found carob trees. As my forefathers planted for me, so will I plant for my children."

President Peres, I think, understands that story well. And so we want to all thank you for all the seeds you've planted—the seeds of progress, the seeds of security, the seeds of peace—all the seeds that have helped not only Israel grow, but also the relationship between our two nations grow. And I believe that if we tend to them, if we nurture them, they will yield fruit in every hill and valley of this land, not only for the children we met today, but for Israelis, for Palestinians, for Arabs across the region. That's not only good for the children of this region, but it's good for my children and the children of America.

I deeply believe that. And I couldn't ask for a more wise or more thoughtful partner in that process. I'm very grateful for you hospitality, and I look forward to our continued work in the future.

President Peres. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:10 p.m. at the President's Residence. President Peres referred to President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel in Jerusalem
March 20, 2013

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Mr. President, Barack, it's a great pleasure for me to host you here in Jerusalem. You've graciously hosted me many times in Washington, so I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to reciprocate. I hope that the good will and warmth of the people of Israel has already made you feel at home.

President Obama. Very much so.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. We had an opportunity to—today to begin discussing the wide range of issues that are critical to both our countries. And foremost among these is Iran's relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons. Mr. President, you have made it clear that you are determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. I appreciate your forthright position on this point. I also appreciate that you have noted—that you have acted to thwart this threat both through determined diplomacy and strong sanctions that are getting stronger yet.

Notwithstanding our joint efforts and your great success in mobilizing the international community, diplomacy and sanctions so far have not stopped Iran's nuclear program. And as you know, my view is that in order to stop Iran's nuclear programs peacefully, diplomacy and sanctions must be augmented by a clear and credible threat of military action.

In this regard, Mr. President, I want to thank you once again for always making clear that Israel must be able to defend itself, by itself, against any threat. I deeply appreciate those words because they speak to the great transformation that has occurred in the life of the Jewish people with the rebirth of the Jewish state. The Jewish people only two generations ago were once a powerless people, defenseless against those who sought our destruction. Today, we have both the right and the capability to defend ourselves.

And you said earlier today, the essence of the State of Israel, the essence of the rebirth of the Jewish state is we've fulfilled the age-old dream of the Jewish people to be masters of our fate in our own state. And I think that was a wonderful line that I will cherish because it really gets down to the essence of what this state is about. That is why I know that you appreciate that Israel can never cede the right to defend ourselves to others, even to the greatest of our friends. And Israel has no better friend than the United States of America. So I look forward to continuing to work with you to address what is an existential threat to Israel and a grave threat to the peace and security of the world.

Mr. President, we discussed today the situation in Syria. We share the goal of seeing a stable and peaceful Syria emerge from the carnage that we have witnessed over the last 2 years. That carnage has already resulted in the deaths of over 70,000 people and the suffering of millions. We also share a determination to prevent the deadly arsenal of weapons within Syria from falling into the hands of terrorist hands. And I have no doubt that the best way to do that is to work closely with the United States and other countries in the region to address this challenge. And that is what we intend to do.

Finally, Mr. President, your visit gave us an opportunity to try to find a way to advance peace between Israelis and Palestinians. My government—new government was sworn in 2 days ago. I know there have been questions regarding what the policy of the new government will be towards peace with the Palestinians. So let me be clear: Israel remains fully committed to peace and to the solution of two states for two peoples. We extend our hand in peace and in friendship to the Palestinian people.

I hope that your visit, along with the visit of Secretary of State Kerry, will help us turn a page in our relations with the Palestinians. Let us sit down at the negotiating table. Let us put aside all preconditions. Let us work together to achieve the historic compromise that will end our conflict once and for all.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, on a personal note. I know how valuable the time and the energies of the American President, of yourself. This is the 10th time that we have met since you became President and since I became Prime Minister. You've chosen Israel as your first venue in your visit—your foreign visits in your second term. I want to thank you for the investment you have made in our relationship and in strengthening the friendship and alliance between our two countries. It is deeply, deeply appreciated.

You've come here on the eve of Passover. I've always considered it as our most cherished holiday. It celebrates the Jewish people's passage from slavery to freedom. Through the ages, it has also inspired people struggling for freedom, including the foundings—the Founding Fathers of the United States. So it's a profound honor to host you, the leader of the free world, at this historic time in our ancient capital.

Mr. President, welcome to Israel. Welcome to Jerusalem.

President Obama. Thank you.

Well, thank you, Prime Minister Netanyahu, for your kind words and for your wonderful welcome here today. And I want to express a special thanks to Sara as well as your two sons for their warmth and hospitality. It was wonderful to see them. They are—I did inform the Prime Minister that they are very good-looking young men who clearly got their looks from their mother. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, I can say the same of your daughters. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. This is true. Our goal is to improve our gene pool by marrying women who are better than we are.

Mr. Prime Minister, I want to begin by congratulating you on the formation of your new government. In the United States, we work hard to find agreement between our two major parties. Here in Israel, you have to find consensus among many more. And few legislatures can compete with the intensity of the Knesset. But all of this reflects the thriving nature of Israel's democracy.

As Bibi mentioned, this is our 10th meeting. We've spent more time together, working together, than I have with any leader. And this speaks to the closest—the closeness of our two nations, the interests and the values that we share, and the depth and breadth of the ties between our two peoples.

As leaders, our most solemn responsibility is the security of our people; that's job number one. My job as President of the United States, is—first and foremost, is to keep the American people safe. Bibi, as Prime Minister, your first task is to keep the people of Israel safe. And Israel's security needs are truly unique, as I've seen myself. In past trips, I've visited villages near the Blue Line. I've walked through Israeli homes devastated by Hizballah rockets. I've stood in Sderot and met with children who simply want to grow up free from fear. And flying in today, I saw again how Israel's security can be measured in mere miles and minutes.

As President, I've therefore made it clear America's commitment to the security of the State of Israel is a solemn obligation, and the security of Israel is nonnegotiable.

Today, our military and intelligence personnel cooperate more closely than ever before. We conduct more joint exercises and training than ever before. We're providing more security assistance and advanced technology to Israel than ever before. And that includes more support for the missile defenses like Iron Dome, which I saw today and which has saved so many Israeli lives.

In short—and I don't think this is just my opinion; I think, Bibi, you would share this—America's support for Israel's security is unprecedented, and the alliance between our nations has never been stronger.

That's the sturdy foundation we built on today as we addressed a range of shared challenges. As part of our long-term commitment to Israel's security, the Prime Minister and I agreed to begin discussions on extending military assistance to Israel. Our current agreement lasts through 2017, and we've directed our teams to start working on extending it for the years beyond.

I'm also pleased to announce that we will take steps to ensure that there's no interruption of funding for Iron Dome. As a result of decisions that I made last year, Israel will receive approximately $200 million this fiscal year, and we will continue to work with Congress on future funding of Iron Dome. These are further reminders that we will help to preserve Israel's qualitative military edge so that Israel can defend itself, by itself, against any threat.

We also discussed the way forward to a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians. And I very much welcomed Bibi's words before I spoke. I'll be meeting with President Abbas tomorrow, and will—and I will have more to say on this topic in the speech that I deliver to the Israeli people tomorrow. But for now, let me just reiterate that a central element of a lasting peace must be a strong and secure Jewish state, where Israel's security concerns are met, alongside a sovereign and independent Palestinian state.

In this regard, I'd note that last year was a milestone: the first year in four decades when not a single Israeli citizen lost their life because of terrorism emanating from the West Bank. It's a reminder that Israel has a profound interest in a strong and effective Palestinian Authority. And as the Prime Minister's new government begins its work, we'll continue to look for steps that both Israelis and Palestinians can take to build trust and confidence upon which lasting peace will depend.

We also reaffirmed the importance of ensuring Israel's security given the changes and uncertainty in the region. As the United States supports the Egyptian people in their historic transition to democracy, we continue to underscore the necessity of Egypt contributing to regional security, preventing Hamas from rearming and upholding its peace treaty with Israel.

With respect to Syria, the United States continues to work with allies and friends and the Syrian opposition to hasten the end of Asad's rule, to stop the violence against the Syrian people, and begin a transition toward a new government that respects the rights of all its people.

Asad has lost his legitimacy to lead by attacking the Syrian people with almost every conventional weapon in his arsenal, including Scud missiles. And we have been clear that the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people would be a serious and tragic mistake. We also share Israel's grave concern about the transfer of chemical or other weapon systems to terrorists—such as Hizballah—that might be used against Israel. The Asad regime must understand that they will be held accountable for the use of chemical weapons or their transfer to terrorists.

And finally, we continued our close consultation on Iran. We agree that a nuclear-armed Iran would be a threat to the region, a threat to the world, and potentially, an existential threat to Israel. And we agree on our goal. We do not have a policy of containment when it comes to a nuclear Iran. Our policy is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

We prefer to resolve this diplomatically, and there's still time to do so. Iran's leaders must understand, however, that they have to meet their international obligations. And meanwhile, the international community will continue to increase the pressure on the Iranian Government. The United States will continue to consult closely with Israel on next steps. And I will repeat: All options are on the table. We will do what is necessary to prevent Iran from getting the world's worst weapons.

Now, meeting none of these challenges will be easy. It will demand the same courage and resolve as those who have preceded us.

And on Friday, I'll be honored to visit Mount Herzl and pay tribute to the leaders and soldiers who have laid down their lives for Israel. One of them was Yoni Netanyahu. And in one of his letters home, he wrote to his family, "Don't forget, strength, justice, and staunch resolution are on our side, and that is a great deal."

Mr. Prime Minister, like families across Israel, you and your family have served and sacrificed to defend your country and to pass it, safe and strong, to your children just as it was passed on to you. Standing here today, I can say with confidence that Israel's security is

guaranteed because it has a great deal on its side, including the unwavering support of the United States of America.

Syria

Moderator. The first question, Israel Channel 2, Udi Segal.

Q. Mr. President, may I ask you about Syria a practical question and a moral one? Morally, how is it possible that for the last 2 years, tens of thousands of innocent civilians are being massacred and no one—the world, the United States, and you—are doing anything to stop it immediately? On a practical level, you have said today and also in the past that the use of chemical weapons would be a crossing of a red line. It seems like this line was crossed yesterday. What specifically do you intend to do about it?

President Obama. I'll answer the question in reverse order, if you don't mind. I'll talk about the chemical weapons first and then the larger question.

With respect to chemical weapons, we intend to investigate thoroughly exactly what happened. Obviously, in Syria right now you've got a war zone. You have information that's filtered out, but we have to make sure that we know exactly what happened: what was the nature of the incident, what can we document, what can we prove. So I've instructed my teams to work closely with all other countries in the region and international organizations and institutions to find out precisely whether or not this red line was crossed.

I will note, without at this point having all the facts before me, that we know the Syrian Government has the capacity to carry out chemical weapon attacks. We know that there are those in the Syrian Government who have expressed a willingness to use chemical weapons, if necessary, to protect themselves. I am deeply skeptical of any claim that, in fact, it was the opposition that used chemical weapons. Everybody who knows the facts of the chemical weapon stockpiles inside Syria as well as the Syrian Government's capabilities, I think, would question those claims. But I know that they're floating out there right now.

The broader point is, is that once we establish the facts, I have made clear that the use of chemical weapons is a game changer. And I won't make an announcement today about next steps because I think we have to gather the facts. But I do think that when you start seeing weapons that can cause potential devastation and mass casualties and you let that genie out of the bottle, then you are looking potentially at even more horrific scenes than we've already seen in Syria. And the international community has to act on that additional information.

But I—as is always the case when it comes to issues of war and peace, I think having the facts before you act is very important.

More broadly, as I said in my opening statement, I believe that the Asad regime has lost all credibility and legitimacy. And I think Asad must go, and I believe he will go. It is incorrect for you to say that we have done nothing. We have helped to mobilize the isolation of the Asad regime internationally. We have supported and recognized the opposition. We have provided hundreds of millions of dollars in support for humanitarian aid. We have worked diligently with other countries in the region to provide additional tools to move towards a political transition within Syria.

If your suggestion is, is that I have not acted unilaterally militarily inside of Syria, well, the response has been—or my response would be that, to the extent possible, I want to make sure that we're working as an international community to deal with this problem because I think it's a world problem, not simply a United States problem or an Israel problem or a Turkish problem. It's a world problem when tens of thousands of people are being slaughtered, including innocent women and children.

And so we will continue to work in an international framework to try to bring about the kind of change that's necessary in Syria. Secretary Kerry has been working nonstop since he came into his current position to try to help mobilize and organize our overall efforts, and we will continue to push every lever that we have to try to bring about a resolution inside of Syria that respects the rights and the safety and

security of all people, regardless of whatever sectarian lines currently divide Syria.

Last point I'll make, which is probably obvious, is this is not easy. When you start seeing a civil war that has sectarian elements to it, and you've got a repressive Government that is intent on maintaining power, and you have mistrust that has broken out along sectarian lines, and you have an opposition that has not had the opportunity or time to organize itself both politically as well as militarily, then you end up seeing some of the devastation that you've been seeing. And we're going to do everything we can to continue to prevent it. And I know that the vast majority of our international partners feel the same way.

Iran

White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney. From the White House press corps, Matt Spetalnick of Reuters.

Q. Yes, thank you. There was some friendly banter between you two gentlemen on the tarmac today about red lines, and I'm wondering how much of a serious matter that actually became in your talks and will be in your talks to come tonight. President Obama has said it will take Iran at least a year to build a bomb. That's months longer than the Prime Minister believes.

Mr. President, are you asking the Prime Minister to be more patient, to hold off for at least a year on any kind of military action against Iran?

Mr. Prime Minister, has President Obama's words, have they convinced you that he is putting forth the credible military threat that you have repeatedly asked for, or does he need to go further? Thank you.

President Obama. Bibi, why don't you go—take a first swing at this.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, first of all, there are so many strips of different colors on the tarmac that we—[*laughter*]—we had a—we did have a joke about that. But obviously, this matter is no joke. It relates to our very existence and to something also that the President correctly identified as a grave strategic threat to the United States and to the peace and security of the world.

I'm absolutely convinced that the President is determined to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons. I appreciate that. And I also appreciate something that he said, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, that the Jewish people have come back to their own country to be the masters of their own fate. And I appreciate the fact that the President has reaffirmed—more than any other President—Israel's right and duty to defend itself, by itself, against any threat. We just heard those important words now, and I think that sums up our, I would say, our common view.

Iran is a grave threat to Israel, a grave threat to the world—a nuclear Iran. The United States is committed to deal with it. Israel is committed to deal with it. We have different vulnerabilities obviously and different capabilities. We take that into account. But what we do maintain—and the President, I think, is the first to do so—is that Israel has a right to independently defend itself against any threat, including the Iranian threat.

President Obama. I think the only thing I would add is that our intelligence cooperation on this issue—the consultation between our militaries, our intelligence—is unprecedented, and there is not a lot of light—a lot of daylight between our countries' assessments in terms of where Iran is right now.

I think that what Bibi alluded to, which is absolutely correct, is each country has to make its own decisions when it comes to the awesome decision to engage in any kind of military action, and Israel is differently situated than the United States. And I would not expect that the Prime Minister would make a decision about his country's security and defer that to any other country, any more than the United States would defer our decisions about what was important for our national security.

I have shared with Bibi, as I've said to the entire world, as I've said to the Iranian people and Iranian leaders, that I think there is time to resolve this issue diplomatically. The question is, will Iranian leadership seize that opportunity? Will they walk through that door?

And it would be in everybody's interests—not just Israel's interests, not just the United States interests—it would be in the interest of the Iranian people if this gets resolved diplomatically. Because the truth of the matter is, is that the most permanent solution to the Iranian situation is ultimately going to be their decision that it is not worth it for them to pursue nuclear weapons. That will be the lasting change. If we can get that, that's good for everybody, including Iran, because it would allow them to break out of the isolation that has hampered their society and their economic development for many years.

But I don't know whether they're going to be willing to take that step. And obviously, their past behavior indicates that, in the words of—or a play on words on what Ronald Reagan said, we can't even trust yet, much less verify. But we do have to test the proposition that this can be resolved diplomatically. And if it can't, then I've repeated to Bibi what I've said publicly, and that is, is that we will leave all options on the table in resolving it.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, do you agree or disagree with the President's 1-year assessment?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. We have another question.

Moderator. Channel 1 Israel, Ayala Hasson.

President Obama's Visit to Israel/Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Q. Thank you. Welcome, Mr. President. On your way back to Washington on Friday, what will you consider a successful visit? Convincing the Israeli leaders that they can rely on you on the Iranian issue, especially that they learned that there are differences between Israel and the United States concerning the enrichment of the uranium, or convincing both sides—Israelis and the Palestinians—to revive the floundering negotiation, reviving the peace process, the floundering peace process?

President Obama. Well, my main goal on this trip has been to have an opportunity to speak directly to the Israeli people at a time when obviously what was already a pretty tough neighborhood has gotten tougher and let them know that they've got a friend in the United States, that we have your back; that we consider Israel's security of extraordinary importance to us, not just because of the bonds between our peoples, but also because of our own national security interests.

In that context, what I have also sought to achieve here is further consultations, building on what we've already discussed—as Bibi has just formed a new government, as I am entering my second term—that we continue to have close consultation around these—some of these shared interests that we've already discussed, Iran being obviously a prominent shared concern. I want to make sure that the Israeli people and the Israeli Government consistently understand my thinking and how I'm approaching this problem. And I want to understand how the Israeli Government and the Prime Minister is approaching this problem to make sure that there are no misunderstandings there.

With respect to the peace process, as I said, I'll have more to say about this tomorrow. But I think you are absolutely right that over the last year, year and a half, 2 years, 2½ years, we haven't gone forward. We haven't seen the kind of progress that we would like to see.

There's some elements of good news. I mean, the fact of the matter is, is that even with all that's been happening in the region, the Palestinian Authority has worked effectively in cooperation with the international community—in part, because of some of the training that we, the United States, provided—to do its part in maintaining security in the West Bank. We have seen some progress when it comes to economic development and opportunity for the Palestinian people.

But the truth of the matter is trying to bring this to some sort of clear settlement, a solution that would allow Israelis to feel as if they've broken out of the current isolation that they're in, in this region, that would allow the incredible economic growth that's taking place inside this country to be a model for trade and commerce and development throughout the region at a time when all these other countries need technology and commerce and jobs for their young people; for Palestinians to feel a sense

that they, too, are masters of their own fate; for Israel to feel that the possibilities of rockets raining down on their families has diminished—that kind of solution we have not yet seen.

And so what I want to do is listen, hear from Prime Minister Netanyahu—tomorrow I'll have a chance to hear from Abu Mazen—to get a sense from them, how do they see this process moving forward. What are the possibilities and what are the constraints, and how can the United States be helpful? And I purposely did not want to come here and make some big announcement that might not match up with what the realities and possibilities on the ground are. I wanted to spend some time listening before I talked, which my mother always taught me was a good idea.

And so, hopefully, I'll consider it a success if when I go back on Friday, I'm able to say to myself, I have a better understanding of what the constraints are, what the interests of the various parties are, and how the United States can play a constructive role in bringing about a lasting peace and two states living side by side in peace and security. Thank you.

Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Press Secretary Carney. Chuck Todd, from NBC.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister.

Mr. President, I want to follow up a little bit on the peace process. You began your term, your first term, big fanfare: the Cairo speech to talk to the Muslim world, the decision to have a Middle East envoy early. You said you weren't going to let this slip to your second term. We're in your second term with the Mideast peace process. What went wrong? Why are we further away from a two-state solution? I know you said you want to talk more about this tomorrow, but I am curious to—what do you believe went wrong? Did you push Israel too hard? What do you wish you would have done differently?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to help out my colleague over here on the follow-up that he had, which had to do with, do you accept the President's understanding that Iran is a year away when it comes to nuclear weapons? And a question—another question I had for you——

President Obama. How many have you got? Do you guys do this in the Israeli press? You say you get one question, and then you add, like, five?

Q. Well, I'm helping him. I'm helping him with his follow-up.

President Obama. You see how the young lady from Channel 1, she had one question. She was very well behaved, Chuck.

Q. I had that one for you and—[*laughter*].

Prime Minister Netanyahu. These are commuted questions they have. [*Laughter*]

Q. Apparently. I thought I had four questions.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Reiterations.

Q. Passover starts in a couple of days. [*Laughter*] I get four questions, right?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Look, this is not a kosher question, but don't hog it. [*Laughter*]

Q. I guess my question to you was going to be, why do you believe the Israeli people have not embraced President Obama the same way they embraced our last two U.S. Presidents? Thank you.

President Obama. Oh, so you had to get a polling question in there right at the end? [*Laughter*] Chuck, I mean, you're just incorrigible. [*Laughter*]

Well, look, the opening premise of your question was that having failed to achieve peace in the Middle East in my first term, that I must have screwed up somehow. And I will tell you I hope I'm a better President now than when I first came into office, but my commitment was not to achieve a peace deal in my first year or in my second year or my third year. That would have been nice. What I said was I was not going to wait to start on the issue until my second term, because I thought it was too important. And that's exactly what I did.

I'm absolutely sure that there are a host of things that I could have done that would have been more deft and would have created better optics. But ultimately, this is a really hard problem. It's been lingering for over six decades. And the parties involved have some

profound interests that you can't spin, you can't smooth over. And it is a hard slog to work through all of these issues.

I will add that both parties also have politics, just like we do back home. There are a whole bunch of things that I'd like to do back in the United States that I didn't get done in my first term. And I'm sure I could have been more deft there as well. But some of it's just because it's hard, and people disagree, and it takes, I think, a confluence of both good diplomatic work, but also timing, serendipity, things falling into place at the right time, the right players feeling that this is the moment to seize it.

And my goal here is just to make sure that the United State is a positive force in trying to create those opportunities as frequently as possible and to be as clear as possible as to why we think that this is an important priority, not only because of some Pollyannaish views about can't we all get along and hold hands and sing "Kumbaya," but because I actually believe that Israel's security will be enhanced with a resolution to this issue. I believe that Palestinians will prosper and can channel their extraordinary energies and entrepreneurship in more positive ways with a resolution to this issue. The entire region, I think, will be healthier with a resolution to this issue.

So I'm going to keep on making that argument. And I will admit that, frankly, sometimes, it would be easier not to make the argument and to avoid the question, precisely because it's hard. That's not the approach that I've tried to take.

And there have probably been times where, when I've made statements about what I think needs to happen, the way it gets filtered through our press, it may be interpreted in ways that get Israelis nervous, just like there are folks back home who sometimes get nervous about areas where they aren't sure exactly where I stand on things. That's why I always like the opportunity to talk directly to you guys. Hopefully, you'll show the live film, as opposed to the edited version.

With that, I think you've got four questions to answer, Bibi. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I think that there's a misunderstanding about time. If Iran decides to go for a nuclear weapon—that is, to actually manufacture the weapon—then it probably—then it would take them about a year. I think that's correct. They could defer that a long time, but still get through the enrichment process. That is, to make a weapon, you need two things; You need enriched uranium of a critical amount, and then you need a weapon. You can't have the weapon without the enriched uranium, but you can have the enriched uranium without the weapon.

Iran right now is enriching uranium. It will—it's pursuing it. It hasn't yet reached the red line that I had described in my speech at the U.N.; they're getting closer though.

And the question of manufacturing the weapon is a different thing. The President said correctly that we have—on these issues that are a little arcane; they sound a little detailed to you—but on these matters we share information and we have a common assessment. We have a common assessment.

In any case, Iran gets to an immunity zone when they get through the enrichment process, in our view—in our view—and whatever time is left, there's not a lot of time. And every day that passes diminishes it. But we do have a common assessment. On these schedules, on intelligence, we share that intelligence, and we don't have any argument about it. I think it's important to state that clearly.

I think that people should get to know President Obama the way I've gotten to know him. And I think you've just heard something that is very meaningful. It may have escaped you, but it hasn't escaped me. And that is, the President announced that in addition to all the aid that his administration has provided—including Iron Dome, including defense funding for Israel during very difficult times—he has announced that we are going to begin talks on another 10-year process arrangement to ensure American military assistance to Israel. I think this is very significant.

And I want to express my thanks for everything that you have done. And I want to thank

you also for that statement you just made. I think it's very, very important.

So I think Israelis will judge this by the unfolding events and by what is happening, what is actually taking place. And for this, you know, there's a very simple answer to your question—the gentleman from NBC, right? Yes. Well, for this, you need, you see, a second term as President and a third term as Prime Minister. That really fixes things. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. All right, thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:30 p.m. on the patio of the Prime Minister's Residence. In his remarks, the President referred to Yair and Avner Netanyahu, sons of Prime Minister Netanyahu; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. A reporter referred to former U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell.

The President's News Conference With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, West Bank
March 21, 2013

President Abbas. In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Mr. President Barack Obama, I wish to warmly welcome you and the accompanying delegation to Palestine.

Mr. President, during your visit to our country, you will meet a people proud of their history, heritage, culture, and symbols; a young, creative, and entrepreneurial people who have made the miracle and arose from the calamities of the Nakba and continue the path of their ancestors, extending since the ancient times over this land, their land; a people who adhere to their rights and are in harmony and keep abreast with the realities of the age, its language and methods; a people who build institutions of the state of Palestine, giving an exemplary model despite all hardships and hurdles.

The people of Palestine, Mr. President, who receive you today aspire to attain their simplest rights—the right to freedom, independence, and peace—and look forward to that day to come quickly in which they exercise normal and natural life over the land of the state of Palestine—the independent state of Palestine—along the borders of the 4th of June, 1967, with Jerusalem, the "Lady of the Cities," as its capital, alongside the State of Israel.

We, Mr. President, believe that peace is necessary and inevitable, and we also believe that it is possible. We believe that peacemaking—and as much as it requires, political courage—also requires an expression of good faith, a recognition of people's rights, respect for the other, and dissemination of a culture of peace and the commitment to international legitimacy and its resolutions. Certainly, peace shall not be made through violence, occupation, walls, settlements, arrests, siege, and denial of refugee rights.

We are extremely in pleasure to receive you today in our country. Our people share with American people—and with you personally—the belief in the values and principles of freedom, equality, justice, and respect for human rights. And we, together with the peoples of the world, are partners in the pursuit to achieve a just peace that ends occupation and war and achieves security, stability, and prosperity to all the peoples of our region.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, we have conducted a good and useful round of talks with His Excellency President Obama. It was an opportunity to focus, on our side, on the risks—and the disastrous risks—that the continuation of settlement activity represent on this two-state solution and over the need to release prisoners.

I asserted to His Excellency the President that Palestine has taken long and additional steps for the sake of making peace. I hereby assert again that we are ready to implement all our commitments and obligations and to

respect the signed agreements and international legitimacy resolutions in order to provide for the requirements of launching the peace process and achieving the two-state solutions, Palestine and Israel.

We are also serious in ending the division and achieve the Palestinian reconciliation, which constitutes an additional source of power for us to continue our march towards making peace, security, and stability in the region.

I have renewed confidence that the United States, represented by His Excellency President Obama and Mr. John Kerry, shall intensify its efforts to remove the obstacles ahead of the efforts to achieve a just peace, which the peoples of the region have long awaited.

Here I wish to thank the President for his continuous confirmation of the U.S. commitment to provide support to the Palestinian people and to thank him and his administration for the support that has been provided during the past years—various forms of support—to the Palestinian treasury, to development projects, and to the UNRWA.

Mr. President, once again, you are welcome in Palestine. Thank you.

President Obama. Marhaba. Thank you, President Abbas, for your generous words and for welcoming me to Ramallah. I was last here 5 years ago, and it's a pleasure to be back, to see the progress that's happened since my last visit, but also to bear witness to the enduring challenges to peace and security that so many Palestinians seek. I've returned to the West Bank because the United States is deeply committed to the creation of an independent and sovereign state of Palestine.

The Palestinian people deserve an end to occupation and the daily indignities that come with it. Palestinians deserve to move and travel freely and to feel secure in their communities. Like people everywhere, Palestinians deserve a future of hope: that their rights will be respected; that tomorrow will be better than today; and that they can give their children a life of dignity and opportunity. Put simply, Palestinians deserve a state of their own.

I want to commend President Abbas and his Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, for the progress that they've made in building the institutions of a Palestinian state. And the United States is a proud partner in these efforts, as the single largest donor of assistance that improves the lives of Palestinians, both in the West Bank and Gaza. As your partner, we salute your achievements, and we mourn your losses. We offer condolences, in particular, over the loss of your fellow Palestinians last weekend in the tragic accident in Jordan.

And Ramallah is a very different city than the one I visited 5 years ago. There's new construction. There's new businesses, new startups, including many high-tech companies, connecting Palestinians to the global economy. The Palestinian Authority is more efficient and more transparent. There are new efforts to combat corruption so entrepreneurs and development can expand. Palestinian security forces are stronger and more professional, serving communities like Bethlehem, where President Abbas and I will visit the Church of the Nativity tomorrow.

Moreover, this progress has been achieved under some extremely challenging circumstances. So I want to pay tribute to President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad for their courage, for their tenacity, and for their commitment to building the institutions upon which a lasting peace and security will depend.

I would point out that all this stands in stark contrast to the misery and repression that so many Palestinians continue to confront in Gaza because Hamas refuses to renounce violence, because Hamas cares more about enforcing its own rigid dogmas than allowing Palestinians to live freely, and because too often it focuses on tearing Israel down rather than building Palestine up. And we saw the continuing threat from Gaza again overnight, with the rockets that targeted Sderot. We condemn this violation of the important cease-fire that protects both Israelis and Palestinians, a violation that Hamas has a responsibility to prevent.

Now, here in the West Bank, I realize that this continues to be a difficult time for the Palestinian Authority financially. So I'm pleased that in recent weeks the United States has been able to provide additional assistance to

help the Palestinian Authority bolster its finances. Projects through USAID will help strengthen governance, rule of law, economic development, education, and health. We consider these to be investments in a future Palestinian state, investments in peace, which is in all of our interests.

And more broadly, in our discussions today, I reaffirmed to President Abbas that the United States remains committed to realizing the vision of two states, which is in the interests of the Palestinian people and also in the national security interests of Israel, the United States, and the world. We seek an independent, a viable, and contiguous Palestinian state as the homeland of the Palestinian people, alongside the Jewish State of Israel: two nations enjoying self-determination, security, and peace.

As I've said many times, the only way to achieve that goal is through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians themselves. There is no shortcut to a sustainable solution.

In our discussion with President Abbas, I heard him speak eloquently about the difficult issues that cannot be ignored, among them problems caused by continued settlement activity, the plight of Palestinian prisoners, and access to holy sites in Jerusalem. I understand that the status quo isn't really a status quo, because the situation on the ground continues to evolve in a direction that makes it harder to reach a two-state solution. And I know that the Palestinian people are deeply frustrated.

So one of my main messages today—the same message I'm conveying in Israel—is that we cannot give up. We cannot give up on the search for peace, no matter how hard it is. As I said with Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday, we will continue to look for steps that both Israelis and Palestinians can take to build the trust and the confidence upon which lasting peace will depend. And I very much appreciate hearing President Abbas's ideas on what those steps could be.

I want both sides to know that, as difficult as the current situation is, my administration is committed to doing our part. And I know that Secretary of State John Kerry intends to spend significant time, effort, and energy in trying to bring about a closing of the gap between the parties. We cannot give up on the search for peace. Too much is at stake.

And if we're going to succeed, part of what we're going to have to do is to get out of some of the formulas and habits that have blocked progress for so long. Both sides are going to have to think anew. Those of us in the United States are going to have to think anew. But I'm confident that we can arrive at our destination to advance the vision of two nations, two neighbors at peace: Israel and Palestine.

If given the chance, one thing that I'm very certain of is that the Palestinians have the talent, the drive, and the courage to succeed in their own state. I think of the villages that hold peaceful protests because they understand the moral force of nonviolence. I think of the importance that Palestinian families place on education. I think of the entrepreneurs determined to create something new, like the young Palestinian woman I met at the entrepreneurship summit that I hosted who wants to build recreation centers for Palestinian youth. I think of the aspirations that so many young Palestinians have for their future, which is why I'm looking forward to visiting with some of them right after we conclude this press conference.

That's why we can't give up, because of young Palestinians and young Israelis who deserve a better future than one that is continually defined by conflict. Whenever I meet these young people, whether they're Palestinian or Israeli, I'm reminded of my own daughters, and I know what hopes and aspirations I have for them. And those of us in the United States understand that change takes time, but it is also possible, because there was a time when my daughters could not expect to have the same opportunities in their own country as somebody else's daughters.

What's true in the United States can be true here as well. We can make those changes, but we're going to have to be determined. We're going to have to have courage. We're going to have to be willing to break out of the old habits, the old arguments, to reach for that new place, that new world. And I want all the

people here and throughout the region to know that you will have the President of the United States and an administration that is committed to achieving that goal.

Thank you very much.

Arab-Israeli Peace Process/Entrepreneurial Spirit of Israelis and Palestinians/Israeli Settlements in the West Bank

Moderator. Thank you, President Obama. Thank you, President Abbas. We will now open the floor to questions. We will take two questions. First question, Ali Sawafta, Reuters.

Q. Mr. President, after you meet leaders from both sides, is there any chance to resume peace talks as soon as possible? And do you think that the two-state solution is still valid in this policy of expanding settlements is continuing going on? And my last question: Did you raise the freezing of settlement activity with the Prime Minister Netanyahu when you met him? Thanks.

President Obama. Based on the conversations that I've had with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas, I do think the possibility continues to exist for a two-state solution. I continue to believe it is our best—and indeed, in some ways, our only—chance to achieve the kinds of peaceful resolution of old conflicts, but also the opening up of new opportunities for peoples on both sides to thrive, to succeed, for both Israel and a state of Palestine to be incorporated into the global economy.

I mean, one of the striking things, one of the ironies of this conflict is that both the Israelis people and the Palestinian people are extremely entrepreneurial. They have a keen business sense. They could be hugely successful in helping to lift up the economy of the region as a whole.

I was with President Peres this morning before I came here, looking at a high-tech exhibit that was taking place in Jerusalem. And there was actually a program that U.S.—a U.S. company, Cisco, had set up, where it was hiring young Arab engineers and Palestinian engineers because they were so well qualified, so talented, and there was a great hunger for those kinds of skills. Well, imagine if you have a strong, independent state that's peaceful, all the talent that currently is being untapped that could be creating jobs and businesses and prosperity throughout this area.

So I absolutely believe that it is still possible. But I think it is very difficult. I think it's difficult because of all sorts of political constraints on both sides. I think it's difficult, frankly, because sometimes, even though we know what compromises have to be made in order to achieve peace, it's hard to admit that those compromises need to be made, because people want to cling on to their old positions and want to have 100 percent of what they want or 95 percent of what they want, instead of making the necessary compromises.

And as a politician, I can say it's hard for political leaders to get too far ahead of your constituencies. And that's true for Prime Minister Netanyahu; I'm sure it's true for President Abbas as well.

But if we can get direct negotiations started again, I believe that the shape of a potential deal is there. And if both sides can make that leap together, then not only do I believe that the Israeli people and the Palestinian people would ultimately support it in huge numbers, but I also think the world and the region would cheer. There would be some who would be upset because they benefit from the current conflict. They like the status quo; they like the arrangement as it is. But I actually think that there are majorities out there who right now don't feel helpful, but still would strongly support both Palestinian and Israeli leadership that made the necessary effort and compromises for peace.

Now, one of the challenges, I know, has been continued settlement activity in the West Bank area. And I've been clear with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other Israeli leadership that it has been the United States policy, not just for my administration, but for all preceding administrations, that we do not consider continued settlement activity to be constructive, to be appropriate, to be something that can advance the cause of peace. So I don't

think there's any confusion in terms of what our position is.

I will say, with respect to Israel, that the politics there are complex, and I recognize that that's not an issue that's going to be solved immediately. It's not going to be solved overnight.

On the other hand, what I shared with President Abbas and I will share with the Palestinian people is that if the expectation is, is that we can only have direct negotiations when everything is settled ahead of time, then there's no point for negotiations.

So I think it's important for us to work through this process, even if there are irritants on both sides. The Israelis have concerns about rockets flying into their cities to—last night. And it would be easy for them to say, you see, this is why we can't have peace, because we can't afford to have our kids in beds sleeping and suddenly a rocket comes through the roof. But my argument is, even though both sides may have areas of strong disagreement, may be engaging in activities that the other side considers to be a breach of good faith, we have to push through those things to try to get to an agreement, because if we get an agreement, then it will be very clear what the nature of that agreement is: There will be a sovereign Palestinian state, a sovereign Jewish State of Israel.

And those two states, I think, will be able to deal with each other the same way all states do. I mean, the United States and Canada has arguments once in a while, but they're not the nature of arguments that can't be solved diplomatically. And I think we can keep pushing through some of these problems and make sure that we don't use them as an excuse not to do anything.

Israeli Settlements in the West Bank/Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Moderator. Our second question comes from the U.S. delegation, and it will be the last question, from Major Garrett of CBS News.

Q. Mr. President, President Abbas, on behalf of all my colleagues, I want to get a little bit more specific on the question of settlements and the overall peace process. Mr. President, when you started your administration, you called for a halt of new settlement activity. That held up for a while, but then it dissipated. And then late last year when the Israeli Government announced very sensitive settlement activity in the E–1 zone, your administration put out a statement that many in this region thought was either tepid or completely nonresponsive. What would you say here, in Ramallah, Mr. President, to those entrepreneurial Palestinians you referenced who believe you've either been equivocal or nonresponsive to the issue of Israeli settlements?

And do you, President Abbas, do you believe it is necessary for the peace process to start with a declaration publicly from the Israeli Government that it will either slow down or stop entirely new settlement activity?

And broadly, on the peace process itself, Mr. President, you talked about thinking anew. Historically, the theory has been nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to. Are you, Mr. President Obama and President Abbas, open to a theory that would say, if things are agreed to, they shall be implemented, to build confidence on both sides and restart the peace process? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, Major, I think I answered the question previously about settlements. You mentioned E–1, in particular. I think that is a—an example of a—at least a public statement by the Israeli Government that would be very difficult to square with a two-state solution. And I've said that to Prime Minister Netanyahu. I don't think that's a secret.

With respect to whether there's a requirement for a freeze or moratorium, I want to repeat what I just said earlier, which is, if the only way to even begin the conversations is that we get everything right at the outset—or at least, each party is constantly negotiating about what's required to get into talks in the first place—then we're never going to get to the broader issue, which is, how do you actually structure a state of Palestine that is sovereign, contiguous, and provides the Palestinian people dignity, and how do you provide Israel

confidence about its security, which are the core issues?

The core issue right now is, how do we get a—sovereignty for the Palestinian people and how do we assure security for the Israeli people? And that's the essence of this negotiation. And that's not to say settlements are not important. It is to say that if we solve those two problems, the settlement problem will be solved.

So I don't want to put the cart before the horse. I want to make sure that we are getting to the core issues and the substance, understanding that both sides should be doing what they can to build confidence, to rebuild a sense of trust. And that's where, hopefully, the U.S. Government can be helpful.

On your last point, I think that part of my goal during this trip has been to hear from both President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu about what they would need and how they would see a potential path, how it would be structured. And so I think it's premature for me to give you an answer to the question you just posed. I think it was a good one, I think it was a legitimate one, but I'm still hearing from them. And me, Secretary Kerry, others, we're going to go back and look at what we've heard from both sides and make a determination as to what has the best prospect for success.

I will say this: that I think incremental steps that serve to delay and put off some of the more fundamental issues, rather than incremental steps that help to shape what a final settlement might look like, are probably not going to be the best approach, because I—it's not clear that that would, in fact, build trust. If you have a situation where it looks like the incremental steps replace the broader vision, as opposed to incremental steps in pursuit of a broader vision, then I think what you end up getting is 4 more years, 10 more years, 20 more years of conflict and tension, in which both sides are testing the boundaries of those incremental agreements.

Whereas if we can get a broad-based agreement that assures the Palestinians that they have a state, and you have a comprehensive approach that ensures Israel the kind of security that they need, the likelihood of that deal holding—and ultimately, the sense of trust that comes from people-to-people relations, not just governmental relations—I think that's much more likely to occur.

President Abbas. Regarding the issue of settlements, it is not only our perception that settlements are illegal, but it is a global perspective. Everybody considers settlements not only a hurdle, but even more than a hurdle, towards the two-state solution.

We mentioned and we remember that the Security Council, during the seventies and eighties, had issued more than 13 resolutions not only condemning settlements, but demanding ending them and removing them because they are illegal. We are asking for nothing outside the framework of international legitimacy. Hence, it is the duty of the Israeli Government to at least halt the activity so that we can speak of issues. And when we define our borders and their borders together, each side will know its territory in which it can do whatever it pleases.

So the issue of settlements is clear. We never give up our vision, whether now or previously, but we continue to maintain this vision, and we believe the settlements are illegal and that settlement activity is illegal. We hope that the Israeli Government understands this. We hope they listen to many opinions inside Israel itself speaking of the illegality of settlements.

We spoke about this with Mr. President, and we clarified our point of view on how we can reach a solution. Many Palestinians, when they see settlements everywhere in the West Bank—and I don't know who gave Israel that right—they do not trust the two-state solution or vision anymore. And this is very dangerous, that people and the new generation reaches the conviction that it is no more possible to believe in the two-state solution.

We continue to believe in the two-state vision on the 1967 borders, and consequently, if peace between us and the Israelis is achieved, the Israelis will know very well that the Arab and Islamic world all together, which means 57 Arab and Muslim States, shall immediately rec-

ognize the State of Israel according to the road map—and thank you—and the Arab initiative.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:33 p.m. at the Muqata Presidential Compound. In his remarks, President Obama referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres of Israel. President Abbas referred to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the International Convention Center in Jerusalem
March 21, 2013

Shalom. Thank you so much. Well, it is a great honor to be with you here in Jerusalem, and I'm so grateful for the welcome that I've received from the people of Israel. Thank you. I bring with me the support of the American people and the friendship that binds us together.

Over the last 2 days, I've reaffirmed the bonds between our countries with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Peres. I've borne witness to the ancient history of the Jewish people at the Shrine of the Book, and I've seen Israel's shining future in your scientists and your entrepreneurs. This is a nation of museums and patents, timeless holy sites, groundbreaking innovation. Only in Israel could you see the Dead Sea Scrolls and the place where the technology onboard the Mars Rover originated at the same time.

But what I've most looked forward to is the ability to speak directly to you, the Israeli people—especially so many young people who are here today—to talk about the history that brought us here today and the future that you will make in the years to come.

Now, I know that in Israel's vibrant democracy, every word and every gesture is carefully scrutinized. [*Laughter*] But I want to clear something up just so you know: Any drama between me and my friend Bibi over the years was just a plot to create material for "Eretz Nehederet." That's the only thing that was going on. We just wanted to make sure the writers had good material. [*Laughter*]

I also know that I come to Israel on the eve of a sacred holiday, the celebration of Passover. And that is where I would like to begin today.

Just a few days from now, Jews here in Israel and around the world will sit with family and friends at the Seder table and celebrate with songs, wine, and symbolic foods. After enjoying Seders with family and friends in Chicago and on the campaign trail, I'm proud that I've now brought this tradition into the White House, and I did so because I wanted my daughters to experience the *Haggadah* and the story at the center of Passover that makes this time of year so powerful.

It's a story of centuries of slavery and years of wandering in the desert, a story of perseverance amidst persecution and faith in God and the Torah. It's a story about finding freedom in your own land. And for the Jewish people, this story is central to who you've become. But it's also a story that holds within it the universal human experience, with all of its suffering, but also all of its salvation.

It's a part of the three great religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—that trace their origins to Abraham and see Jerusalem as sacred. And it's a story that's inspired communities across the globe, including me and my fellow Americans.

In the United States, a nation made up of people who crossed oceans to start anew, we're naturally drawn to the idea of finding freedom in our land. To African Americans, the story of the Exodus was perhaps the central story, the most powerful image about emerging from the grip of bondage to reach for liberty and human dignity, a tale that was carried from slavery through the civil rights movement into today.

For generations, this promise helped people weather poverty and persecution, while holding on to the hope that a better day was on the

horizon. For me, personally, growing up in far-flung parts of the world and without firm roots, the story spoke to a yearning within every human being for a home.

Of course, even as we draw strength from the story of God's will and His gift of freedom expressed on Passover, we also know that here on Earth, we must bear our responsibilities in an imperfect world. That means accepting our measure of sacrifice and struggle, just like previous generations. It means us working through generation after generation on behalf of that ideal of freedom.

As Dr. Martin Luther King said on the day before he was killed: "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land." So just as Joshua carried on after Moses, the work goes on for all of you, the Joshua generation, for justice and dignity, for opportunity and freedom.

For the Jewish people, the journey to the promise of the State of Israel wound through countless generations. It involved centuries of suffering and exile, prejudice and pogroms and even genocide. Through it all, the Jewish people sustained their unique identity and traditions, as well as a longing to return home. And while Jews achieved extraordinary success in many parts of the world, the dream of true freedom finally found its full expression in the Zionist idea: to be a free people in your homeland. That's why I believe that Israel is rooted not just in history and tradition, but also in a simple and profound idea: the idea that people deserve to be free in a land of their own.

Over the last 65 years, when Israel has been at its best, Israelis have demonstrated that responsibility does not end when you reach the Promised Land, it only begins. And so Israel has been a refuge for the diaspora, welcoming Jews from Europe, from the former Soviet Union, from Ethiopia, from North Africa.

Israel has built a prosperous nation, through *kibbutzim* that made the desert bloom, business that broadened the middle class, innovators who reached new frontiers, from the smallest microchip to the orbits of space. Israel has established a thriving democracy, with a spirited civil society and proud political parties and a tireless free press and a lively public debate; "lively" may be an understatement.

And Israel has achieved all this even as it's overcome relentless threats to its security, through the courage of the Israel Defense Forces and the citizenry that is so resilient in the face of terror.

This is the story of Israel. This is the work that has brought the dreams of so many generations to life. And every step of the way, Israel has built unbreakable bonds of friendship with my country, the United States of America.

Those ties began only 11 minutes after Israeli independence, when the United States was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel. As President Truman said in explaining his decision to recognize Israel, he said, "I believe it has a glorious future before it not just as another sovereign nation, but as an embodiment of the great ideals of our civilization." And since then, we've built a friendship that advances our shared interests.

Together, we share a commitment to security for our citizens and the stability of the Middle East and North Africa. Together, we share a focus on advancing economic growth around the globe and strengthening the middle class within our own countries. Together, we share a stake in the success of democracy.

But the source of our friendship extends beyond mere interests, just as it has transcended political parties and individual leaders. America is a nation of immigrants. America is strengthened by diversity. America is enriched by faith. We are governed not simply by men and women, but by laws. We're fueled by entrepreneurship and innovation, and we are defined by a democratic discourse that allows each generation to reimagine and renew our Union once more. So in Israel, we see values that we share, even as we recognize what makes us different. That is an essential part of our bond.

Now, I stand here today mindful that for both our nations, these are some complicated times. We have difficult issues to work through within our own countries, and we face dangers and upheaval around the world. And when I look at young people within the United States,

I think about the choices that they must make in their lives to define who we'll be as a nation in this 21st century, particularly as we emerge from two wars and the worst recession since the Great Depression. But part of the reason I like talking to young people is because, no matter how great the challenges are, their idealism, their energy, their ambition always gives me hope.

And I see the same spirit in the young people here today. I believe that you will shape our future. And given the ties between our countries, I believe your future is bound to ours.

[*At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.*]

No, no, this is part of the lively debate that we talked about. This is good. You know, I have to say, we actually arranged for that, because it made me feel at home. [*Laughter*] I wouldn't feel comfortable if I didn't have at least one heckler. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to focus on how we—and when I say "we," in particular, young people—can work together to make progress in three areas that will define our times: security, peace, and prosperity.

Let me begin with security. I'm proud that the security relationship between the United States and Israel has never been stronger. Never. More exercises between our militaries; more exchanges among our political and military and intelligence officials than ever before; the largest program to date to help you retain your qualitative military edge. These are the facts. These aren't my opinions, these are facts. But to me, this is not simply measured on a balance sheet. I know that here, in Israel, security is something personal.

Here's what I think about when I consider these issues. When I consider Israel's security, I think about children like Osher Twito, who I met in Sderot: children the same age as my own daughters, who went to bed at night fearful that a rocket would land in their bedroom simply because of who they are and where they live.

That reality is why we've invested in the Iron Dome system to save countless lives, because those children deserve to sleep better at night. That's why we've made it clear, time and again, that Israel cannot accept rocket attacks from Gaza, and we have stood up for Israel's right to defend itself. And that's why Israel has a right to expect Hamas to renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist.

When I think about Israel's security, I think about five Israelis who boarded a bus in Bulgaria, who were blown up because of where they came from, robbed of the ability to live and love and raise families. That's why every country that values justice should call Hizballah what it truly is: a terrorist organization. Because the world cannot tolerate an organization that murders innocent civilians, stockpiles rockets to shoot at cities, and supports the massacre of men and women and children in Syria right now.

The fact that Hizballah's ally, the Asad regime, has stockpiles of chemical weapons only heightens the urgency. We will continue to cooperate closely to guard against that danger. I've made it clear to Bashar al-Asad and all who follow his orders: We will not tolerate the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people or the transfer of those weapons to terrorists. The world is watching; we will hold you accountable.

The Syrian people have the right to be freed from the grip of a dictator who would rather kill his own people than relinquish power. Asad must go so that Syria's future can begin. Because true stability in Syria depends upon establishing a government that is responsible to its people, one that protects all communities within its borders, while making peace with countries beyond them.

These are the things I think about when I think about Israel's security. When I consider Israel's security, I also think about a people who have a living memory of the Holocaust, faced with the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iranian Government that has called for Israel's destruction. It's no wonder Israelis view this as an existential threat. But this is not simply a challenge for Israel, it is a danger for the entire

world, including the United States. A nuclear-armed Iran would raise the risk of nuclear terrorism. It would undermine the nonproliferation regime. It would spark an arms race in a volatile region. And it would embolden a Government that has shown no respect for the rights of its own people or the responsibilities of nations.

That's why America has built a coalition to increase the cost to Iran of failing to meet their obligations. The Iranian Government is now under more pressure than ever before, and that pressure is increasing. It is isolated. Its economy is in dire straits. Its leadership is divided. And its position—in the region and the world—has only grown weaker.

I do believe that all of us have an interest in resolving this issue peacefully. Strong and principled diplomacy is the best way to ensure that the Iranian Government forsakes nuclear weapons. Peace is far more preferable to war. And the inevitable costs, the unintended consequences that would come with war means that we have to do everything we can to try to resolve this diplomatically. Because of the cooperation between our governments, we know that there remains time to pursue a diplomatic resolution. That's what America will do, with clear eyes, working with a world that's united and with the sense of urgency that's required.

But Iran must know this time is not unlimited. And I've made the position of the United States of America clear: Iran must not get a nuclear weapon. This is not a danger that can be contained, and as President, I've said all options are on the table for achieving our objectives. America will do what we must to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

For young Israelis, I know that these issues of security are rooted in an experience that is even more fundamental than the pressing threat of the day. You live in a neighborhood where many of your neighbors have rejected the right of your nation to exist. Your grandparents had to risk their lives and all that they had to make a place for themselves in this world. Your parents lived through war after war to ensure the survival of the Jewish state. Your children grow up knowing that people they've never met may hate them because of who they are, in a region that is full of turmoil and changing underneath your feet.

So that's what I think about when Israel is faced with these challenges, that sense of an Israel that is surrounded by many in this region who still reject it and many in the world who refuse to accept it. And that's why the security of the Jewish people in Israel is so important. It cannot be taken for granted.

But make no mistake: Those who adhere to the ideology of rejecting Israel's right to exist, they might as well reject the earth beneath them or the sky above, because Israel is not going anywhere. And today I want to tell you—particularly, the young people—so that there's no mistake here: So long as there is a United States of America: *Atem lo levad*—you are not alone.

The question is, what kind of future Israel will look forward to? Israel is not going anywhere, but especially for the young people in this audience, the question is, what does its future hold? And that brings me to the subject of peace.

I know Israel has taken risks for peace. Brave leaders—Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Rabin—reached treaties with two of your neighbors. You made credible proposals to the Palestinians at Annapolis. You withdrew from Gaza and Lebanon and then faced terror and rockets. Across the region, you've extended a hand of friendship and all too often, you've been confronted with rejection and, in some cases, the ugly reality of anti-Semitism. So I believe that the Israeli people do want peace, and I also understand why too many Israelis—maybe an increasing number, maybe a lot of young people here today—are skeptical that it can be achieved.

But today, Israel is at a crossroads. It can be tempting to put aside the frustrations and sacrifices that come with the pursuit of peace, particularly when Iron Dome repels rockets, barriers keep out suicide bombers. There's so many other pressing issues that demand your attention. And I know that only Israelis can make the fundamental decisions about your country's future. I recognize that.

I also know, by the way, that not everyone in this hall will agree with what I have to say about peace. I recognize that there are those who are not simply skeptical about peace, but question its underlying premise, have a different vision for Israel's future. And that's part of a democracy. That's part of the discourse between our two countries. I recognize that. But I also believe it's important to be open and honest, especially with your friends. I also believe that.

Politically, given the strong bipartisan support for Israel in America, the easiest thing for me to do would be to put this issue aside, just express unconditional support for whatever Israel decides to do. That would be the easiest political path. But I want you to know that I speak to you as a friend who is deeply concerned and committed to your future, and I ask you to consider three points.

First, peace is necessary. I believe that. I believe that peace is the only path to true security. You can be—you have the opportunity to be the generation that permanently secures the Zionist dream, or you can face a growing challenge to its future. Given the demographics west of the Jordan River, the only way for Israel to endure and thrive as a Jewish and democratic state is through the realization of an independent and viable Palestine. That is true.

There are other factors involved. Given the frustration in the international community about this conflict, Israel needs to reverse an undertow of isolation. And given the march of technology, the only way to truly protect the Israeli people over the long term is through the absence of war. Because no wall is high enough and no Iron Dome is strong enough or perfect enough to stop every enemy that is intent on doing so from inflicting harm.

And this truth is more pronounced given the changes sweeping the Arab world. I understand that with the uncertainty in the region—people in the streets, changes in leadership, the rise of nonsecular parties in politics—it's tempting to turn inward, because the situation outside of Israel seems so chaotic. But this is precisely the time to respond to the wave of revolution with a resolve and commitment for peace. Because as more governments respond to popular will, the days when Israel could seek peace simply with a handful of autocratic leaders, those days are over. Peace will have to be made among peoples, not just governments.

No one—no single step—can change overnight what lies in the hearts and minds of millions. No single step is going to erase years of history and propaganda. But progress with the Palestinians is a powerful way to begin, while sidelining extremists who thrive on conflict and thrive on division. It would make a difference.

So peace is necessary. But peace is also just. Peace is also just. There is no question that Israel has faced Palestinian factions who turned to terror, leaders who missed historic opportunities. That is all true. And that's why security must be at the center of any agreement. And there is no question that the only path to peace is through negotiations, which is why, despite the criticism we've received, the United States will oppose unilateral efforts to bypass negotiations through the United Nations. It has to be done by the parties. But the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, their right to justice, must also be recognized.

Put yourself in their shoes. Look at the world through their eyes. It is not fair that a Palestinian child cannot grow up in a state of their own, living their entire lives with the presence of a foreign army that controls the movements not just of those young people, but their parents, their grandparents, every single day. It's not just when settler violence against Palestinians goes unpunished. It's not right to prevent Palestinians from farming their lands or restricting a student's ability to move around the West Bank or displace Palestinian families from their homes. Neither occupation nor expulsion is the answer. Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people in their own land.

I'm going off script here for a second, but before I came here, I met with a group of young Palestinians from the age of 15 to 22. And talking to them, they weren't that different from my daughters. They weren't that different from your daughters or sons. I honestly believe that if any Israeli parent sat down with

those kids, they'd say, I want these kids to succeed; I want them to prosper. I want them to have opportunities just like my kids do. I believe that's what Israeli parents would want for these kids if they had a chance to listen to them and talk to them. I believe that.

Now, only you can determine what kind of democracy you will have. But remember that as you make these decisions, you will define not simply the future of your relationship with the Palestinians, you will define the future of Israel as well.

As Ariel Sharon said—I'm quoting him—"It is impossible to have a Jewish democratic state, at the same time to control all of Eretz Israel. If we insist on fulfilling the dream in its entirety, we are liable to lose it all." Or from a different perspective, I think of what the novelist David Grossman said shortly after losing his son, as he described the necessity of peace: "A peace of no choice," he said, "must be approached with the same determination and creativity as one approaches a war of no choice."

Now, Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with anyone who is dedicated to its destruction. But while I know you have had differences with the Palestinian Authority, I genuinely believe that you do have a true partner in President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. I believe that. And they have a track record to prove it. Over the last few years, they have built institutions and maintained security on the West Bank in ways that few could have imagined just a few years ago. So many Palestinians—including young people—have rejected violence as a means of achieving their aspirations.

There is an opportunity there, there's a window, which brings me to my third point: Peace is possible. [*Applause*] It is possible. I'm not saying it's guaranteed. I can't even say that it is more likely than not. But it is possible. I know it doesn't seem that way. There are always going to be reasons to avoid risk. There are costs for failure. There will always be extremists who provide an excuse not to act.

I know there must be something exhausting about endless talks about talks and daily controversies and just the grinding status quo. And I'm sure there's a temptation just to say, "Ah, enough." Let me focus on my small corner of the world and my family and my job and what I can control. But it's possible.

Negotiations will be necessary, but there's little secret about where they must lead: two states for two peoples. [*Applause*] Two states for two peoples.

There will be differences about how to get there. There are going to be hard choices along the way. Arab States must adapt to a world that has changed. The days when they could condemn Israel to distract their people from a lack of opportunity or government corruption or mismanagement, those days need to be over. Now is the time for the Arab world to take steps towards normalizing relations with Israel.

Meanwhile, Palestinians must recognize that Israel will be a Jewish state and that Israelis have the right to insist upon their security. Israelis must recognize that continued settlement activity is counterproductive to the cause of peace and that an independent Palestine must be viable with real borders that have to be drawn.

I've suggested principles on territory and security that I believe can be the basis for these talks. But for the moment, put aside the plans and the process. I ask you instead to think about what can be done to build trust between people.

Now, 4 years ago, I stood in Cairo in front of an audience of young people; politically, religiously, they must seem a world away. But the things they want, they're not so different from what the young people here want. They want the ability to make their own decisions and to get an education, to get a good job, to worship God in their own way, to get married, to raise a family. The same is true of those young Palestinians that I met with this morning. The same is true for young Palestinians who yearn for a better life in Gaza.

That's where peace begins, not just in the plans of leaders, but in the hearts of people; not just in some carefully designed process, but in the daily connections, that sense of empathy that takes place among those who live to-

gether in this land and in this sacred city of Jerusalem.

And let me say this as a politician. I can promise you this: Political leaders will never take risks if the people do not push them to take some risks. You must create the change that you want to see. Ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things.

I know this is possible. Look to the bridges being built in business and civil society by some of you here today. Look at the young people who've not yet learned a reason to mistrust or those young people who've learned to overcome a legacy of mistrust that they inherited from their parents because they simply recognize that we hold more hopes in common than fears that drive us apart. Your voices must be louder than those who would drown out hope. Your hopes must light the way forward.

Look to a future in which Jews and Muslims and Christians can all live in peace and greater prosperity in this Holy Land. Believe in that. And most of all, look to the future that you want for your own children, a future in which a Jewish, democratic, vibrant state is protected and accepted for this time and for all time.

There will be many who say this is not possible, but remember this: Israel is the most powerful country in this region. Israel has the unshakeable support of the most powerful country in the world. Israel is not going anywhere. Israel has the wisdom to see the world as it is, but—this is in your nature—Israel also has the courage to see the world as it should be.

Ben Gurion once said, "In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles." Sometimes, the greatest miracle is recognizing that the world can change. That's a lesson that the world has learned from the Jewish people.

And that brings me to the final area that I'll focus on: prosperity and Israel's broader role in the world. I know that all the talk about security and peace can sometimes seem to dominate the headlines, but that's not where people live. And every day, even amidst the threats that you face, Israelis are defining themselves by the opportunities that you're creating.

Through talent and hard work, Israelis have put this small country at the forefront of the global economy.

Israelis understand the value of education and have produced 10 Nobel laureates. Israelis understand the power of invention, and your universities educate engineers and inventors. And that spirit has led to economic growth and human progress: solar power and electric cars; and bandages and prosthetic limbs that save lives; stem cell research and new drugs that treat disease; cell phones and computer technology that changed the way people around the world live.

So if people want to see the future of the world economy, they should look at Tel Aviv, home to hundreds of startups and research centers. Israelis are so active on social media that every day seemed to bring a different Facebook campaign about where I should give this speech. [*Laughter*]

That innovation is just as important to the relationship between the United States and Israel as our security cooperation. Our first free trade agreement in the world was reached with Israel, nearly three decades ago. Today, the trade between our two countries is at $40 billion every year. More importantly, that partnership is creating new products and medical treatments; it's pushing new frontiers of science and exploration.

That's the kind of relationship that Israel should have—and could have—with every country in the world. Already, we see how that innovation could reshape this region. There's a program here in Jerusalem that brings together young Israelis and Palestinians to learn vital skills in technology and business. An Israeli and Palestinian have started a venture capital fund to finance Palestinian startups. Over 100 high-tech companies have found home on the West Bank, which speaks to the talent and entrepreneurial spirit of the Palestinian people.

One of the great ironies of what's happening in the broader region is that so much of what people are yearning for—education, entrepreneurship, the ability to start a business without paying a bribe, the ability to connect to the global economy—those are things that can be

found here in Israel. This should be a hub for thriving regional trade and an engine for opportunity.

Israel is already a center for innovation that helps power the global economy. And I believe that all of that potential for prosperity can be enhanced with greater security, enhanced with lasting peace.

Here, in this small strip of land that has been the center of so much of the world's history, so much triumph and so much tragedy, Israelis have built something that few could have imagined 65 years ago. Tomorrow I will pay tribute to that history: at the grave of Herzl, a man who had the foresight to see the future of the Jewish people had to be reconnected to their past; at the grave of Rabin, who understood that Israel's victories in war had to be followed by the battles for peace; at Yad Vashem, where the world is reminded of the cloud of evil that can descend on the Jewish people and all of humanity if we ever fail to be vigilant.

We bear all that history on our shoulders. We carry all that history in our hearts. Today, as we face the twilight of Israel's founding generation, you, the young people of Israel, must now claim its future. It falls to you to write the next chapter in the great story of this great nation.

And as the President of a country that you can count on as your greatest friend, I am confident that you can help us find the promise in the days that lie ahead. And as a man who's been inspired in my own life by that timeless calling within the Jewish experience, *tikkun olam*, I am hopeful that we can draw upon what's best in ourselves to meet the challenges that will come, to win the battles for peace in the wake of so much war, and to do the work of repairing this world. That's your job. That's my job. That's the task of all of us.

May God bless you. May God bless Israel. May God bless the United States of America. *Toda raba.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:37 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Osher Twito of Sderot, Israel, who was wounded in a rocket attack on February 9, 2008; former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and author David Grossman.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Shimon Peres of Israel in Jerusalem
March 21, 2013

President Peres. I think that's the President's remarks. Mr. President, can I read your speech, if you want me to? [*Laughter*] They are mistaken. [*Laughter*]

President Barack Obama, my dear friend, let me say first of all, bravo. Bravo, President.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you tonight. I was moved the way in which you spoke to the hearts of our young Israelis. Our youngsters, in time of need, are always willing to stand up and defend their country. Today you have seen how much the same young people long for peace. How enthusiastic they were, how engaged they were, listening to the vision of peace, which you beautifully delivered and moved the heart.

Mr. President, this morning several rockets were shot from the Gaza Strip toward the civilian targets in Israel, including Sderot, that you have visited. From here, in the name of all of us, I want to convey our love to the inhabitants of the south around Gaza, who carry this heavy burden courageously and continue to plow their land, their—plant their trees, raise their children. It is an inspiration to each of us. Today the enemies of peace spoke in the only language they know: the language of terror. I am convinced that together, we shall defeat them.

Dear Barack, your visit here is a historic event. We are so happy to receive you and your distinguished delegation. I am very glad to see Secretary John Kerry, a reassured friend. John, I know you are and I know you will be successful. I'm not sure that the prophets have had speechwriters—[*laughter*]—but if they had, I imagine Isaiah would have said—but actually,

he has said on that occasion, and I'm quoting him—"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation." Well, you have to be satisfied with my tired language; I cannot speak like him. [*Laughter*]

It is my privilege to present you with our country's highest honor: the Medal of Distinction. This award speaks to you, to your tireless work to make Israel strong, to make peace possible. Your Presidency has given the closest ties between Israel and the United States a new height, a sense of intimacy, a vision for the future.

The people of Israel are particularly moved by your unforgettable contribution to their security: You are defending our skies. To you—[*inaudible*]—in the domain of intelligence, which is the right way to preempt bloodshed. The diplomatic and the military bonds between us have reached an unprecedented level.

When I visit you in Washington, I thought in my heart, America is so great, and we are so small. I learned that you don't measure us by size, but by values. Thank you. When it comes to values, we are you, and you are us. On occasions when we were alone, you stood with us so we were not alone. We were alone together. We shall never forget it.

During your previous visit to Israel, you asked me if I had any advice to offer. Well, it's not my nature not to let questions go unanswered. [*Laughter*] So I suggested that, while people say that the future belongs to the young, it is the present that really belongs to the young. Leave the future to me. I have time. [*Laughter*]

I think I was right, because the moment you came into office, you immediately had to face daunting and demanding challenges day in, day out. I prayed that you would meet them with wisdom and determination, without losing hope, without allowing others to lose hope. The prayers were answered; after all, they came from Jerusalem, and they came to us as a great message. It is a tribute to your leadership, to the strength of your character, to your principles, that you have never surrendered to hopelessness. You stood and stand firmly by your vision. Your values serve your nation. They serve our nation as well.

So I know that you will never stop to strive for a better world, as you say today in a good Hebrew, *tikkun olam*. We have a rich heritage and a great dream. As I look back, I feel that the Israel of today has exceeded the vision we have had 65 years ago. Reality has surpassed the dreams. The United States of America helped us to make this possible.

Still, the path to tomorrow may be fraught with obstacles. I believe that we can overcome them by our determination and by your commitment. I'm convinced that you will do whatever is necessary to free the world's horizons and the skies of Jerusalem from the Iranian threat. Iran denies the Shoah and calls for a new one. Iran is building a nuclear bomb and denies it. The Iranian regime is the greatest danger to the world peace. History has shown time and again that peace, prosperity, and stable civil society cannot flourish when threats and belligerency abound.

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight the Iranian people are celebrating their New Year, Nowruz. I wish them, from the depths of my heart, a happy holiday and a real freedom.

Israel will seize any opportunity for peace. Being small, we have to maintain our qualitative edge. I know that you responded and will respond to it. The strength of Israel is its defense forces. They afford us the ability to seek peace. And what America has contributed to Israel's security is the best guarantee to end the march of folly, the march of terror and bloodshed.

We watch with admiration the way you lead the United States of America, the way you stayed true, time and again, to your bonds of friendship with us. Your commitment and deeds speaks volumes about the principles that guides America. To strive for freedom and democracy at home, but also all over the world, you send the boys to fight for the freedom of others. What is uplifting is that the United States brought freedom not only to its own

people, but never stops, and never will stop, to help other people to become free.

You represent democracy at its best. You have deepened its meaning: namely, that democracy is not just the right to be equal, but the equal right to be different. Democracy is not just a free expression, but is self-expression as well.

You exemplify the spirit of democracy by striving for justice and equality of opportunity in the American society. As the world has now become global and yet remains individual, and you offer those principles. You have shown global responsibility and individual sensitivity.

On Monday night, Mr. President, we shall celebrate Passover, the festival of freedom, the celebration of spring. The celebration of spring means our journey from the house of slaves to the home of the free that started more than 3,000 years ago. We remember it every year. We are commended to feel as though each of us personally participated in that journey. We shall not forget where we came from. We shall remember always where we are headed to, which is to make the Promised Land a land of promise: a land of freedom, justice, and equality.

While reality calls for vigilance, Passover calls to remain believers. Israel is an island in a stormy sea. We have to make our island safe, and we wish that the sea will become tranquil. We converted our desert into a garden. It was achieved by the talents of our people and the potential of science. What we have done, Mr. President, can be done all over the Middle East, as you have rightly said tonight. Israel is described as a startup nation. The Middle East can become a startup region.

Dear President, you noted in your address today that peace is the greatest hope for the human being. I share your vision. Your call to reopen the peace process may pave the way for the implementation of the two-state solution agreed by all of us, as you said: a Jewish state, Israel; an Arab state, Palestine.

If I'm not wrong, next to you sits our Prime Minister, who was just reelected. He opened his address in the Knesset by reiterating his commitment to the two-state solution. Dear friends, I have seen in my life—I earned the right to believe—that peace is attainable. As you felt today, I know, this is the deep conviction of our people. With our resolve and your support, dear Barack Obama, we shall win, and it will happen.

Mr. President, I am privileged to bestow upon you the Medal of Distinction. It was recommended by a committee of seven prominent Israeli citizens, headed by our former Chief of Justice Meir Shamgar, and includes our former President Yitzhak Navon. It was my view and I was glad to accept their recommendation. You inspired the world with your leadership. *Toda raba*, Mr. President. *Toda* from a grateful nation to a very great leader.

God bless America. God bless Israel.

[*At this point, the citation was read, and President Obama received the medal. President Peres then offered a toast.*]

President Obama. Thank you so much. President Peres; Prime Minister Netanyahu and First Lady Sara; distinguished guests and friends: This is a extraordinary honor for me, and I could not be more deeply moved. And I have to say, after the incredible welcome I've received over the past 2 days and the warmth of the Israeli people, the tribute from President Peres, the honor of this medal, I mean, as you say, *dayenu*.

Now, I'm told that the Talmud teaches that you shouldn't pronounce all the praises of a person in their presence. And, Mr. President, if I praised all the chapters of your remarkable life, then we would be here all night. [*Laughter*] So let me simply say this about our gracious host. Mr. President, the State of Israel has been the cause of your life: through bitter wars and fragile peace, through hardship and prosperity. You've built her. You've cared for her. You've strengthened her. You've nurtured the next generation who will inherit her.

Ben Gurion. Meir. Begin. Rabin. These giants have left us. Only you are with us still: a founding father in our midst. And we are so grateful for your vision, your friendship, but most of all, for your example, including the example of your extraordinary vitality. Every time I see your President, I ask him who his

doctor is. [*Laughter*] We all want to know the secret.

So with gratitude for your life and your service, and as you prepare to celebrate your 90th birthday this summer—and since I'm starting to get pretty good at Hebrew—[*laughter*]—let me propose a toast, even though you've taken away my wine—[*laughter*]. Come on. Bring another one.

How are you?

Server. Here you are, sir. You're welcome.

President Obama. A toast. *Ad me'ah ve'esrim. L'chaim!*

[*President Obama offered a toast.*]

Mmm, that's good wine. [*Laughter*] Actually, we should probably get this out of the photograph. All these people will say I'm having too much fun in Israel. [*Laughter*]

Just a few more words, Mr. President. You mentioned that this medal is presented in recognition of progress toward the ideals of equality and opportunity and justice. But I am mindful that I stand here tonight because of so many others, including the example and the sacrifices of the Jewish people.

In a few days, as we do at every Seder, we'll break and hide a piece of matzoh. It's a great way to entertain the kids. Malia and Sasha, even though they are getting older, they still enjoy it. And there are a lot of good places to hide it in the White House. [*Laughter*] But on a much deeper level, it speaks to the scope of our human experience: how parts of our lives can be broken while other parts can be elusive; how we can never give up searching for the things that make us whole. And few know this better than the Jewish people.

After slavery and decades in the wilderness and with Moses gone, the future of the Israelites was in doubt. But with Joshua as their guide, they pushed on to victory. After the First Temple was destroyed, it seemed Jerusalem was lost. But with courage and resolve, the Second Temple reestablished the Jewish presence. After centuries of persecution and pogroms, the Shoah aimed to eliminate the entire Jewish people. But the gates of the camps flew open; there emerged the ultimate rebuke to hate and to ignorance: Survivors would live and love again.

When the moment of Israel's independence was met by aggression on all sides, it was unclear whether this nation would survive. But with heroism and sacrifice, the State of Israel not only endured, but thrived. And during 6 days in June and Yom Kippur one October, it seemed as though all you had built might be lost. But when the guns fell silent, it was clear: "The nation of Israel lives."

As I said in my speech earlier today, this story—from slavery to salvation, of overcoming even the most overwhelming odds—is a message that's inspired the world. And that includes Jewish Americans, but also African Americans, who have so often had to deal with their own challenges, but with whom you have stood shoulder to shoulder.

African Americans and Jewish Americans marched together at Selma and Montgomery, with rabbis carrying the Torah as they walked. They boarded buses for freedom rides together. They bled together. They gave their lives together: Jewish Americans like Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner alongside African American James Chaney.

Because of their sacrifice, because of the struggle of generations in both our countries, we can come together tonight, in freedom and in security. So if I can paraphrase the Psalm: They turned our mourning into dancing; they changed our sack cloths into robes of joy.

And this evening, I'd like to close with the words of two leaders who brought us some of this joy. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was born in Poland and lost his mother and sister to the Nazis. He came to America. He raised his voice for social justice. He marched with Martin Luther King. And he spoke of the State of Israel in words that could well describe the struggle for equality in America. "Our very existence is a witness that man must live toward redemption," he said, and "that history is not always made by man alone."

Rabbi Joachim Prinz was born in Germany, expelled by the Nazis, and found refuge in America, and he built support for the new State of Israel. And on that August day in 1963,

he joined Dr. King at the March on Washington. And this is what Rabbi Prinz said to the crowd:

> In the realm of the spirit, our fathers taught us thousands of years ago that when God created man, he created him as everybody's neighbor. Neighbor is not a geographic concept. It is a moral concept. It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man's dignity and integrity.

President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, friends: Our very existence, our presence here tonight, is a testament that all things are possible, even those things that, in moments of darkness and doubt, may seem elusive. The stories of our peoples teach us to never stop searching for the things—the justice and the peace—that make us whole. And so, as we go forward together with confidence, we'll know that, while our countries may be separated by a great ocean, in the realm of the spirit, we will always be neighbors and friends.

I very humbly accept this award, understanding that I'm accepting it on behalf of the American people, who are joined together with you.

May God bless you, and may He watch over our two great nations. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 p.m. at the President's Residence.

Remarks at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem
March 22, 2013

"Unto them I will give my house and within my walls a memorial and a name, an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."

President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chairman Shalev, Rabbi Lau: Thank you for sharing this house, this memorial, with me today. Thank you to the people of Israel for preserving the names of the millions taken from us, of blessed memory, names that shall never be forgotten.

This is my second visit to this living memorial. Since then, I've walked among the barbed wire and guard towers of Buchenwald. Rabbi Lau told me of his time there, and we reminisced about our good friend, Elie Wiesel, and the memories that he shared with me. I've stood in the old Warsaw ghetto, with survivors who would not go quietly. But nothing equals the wrenching power of this sacred place, where the totality of the Shoah is told. We could come here a thousand times, and each time our hearts would break.

For here, we see the depravity to which man can sink, the barbarism that unfolds when we begin to see our fellow human beings as somehow less than us, less worthy of dignity and of life. We see how evil can, for a moment in time, triumph when good people do nothing and how silence abetted a crime unique in human history.

Here, we see their faces, and we hear their voices. We look upon the objects of their lives: the art that they created, the prayer books that they carried. We see that even as they had hate etched into their arms, they were not numbers. They were men and women and children—so many children—sent to their deaths because of who they were, how they prayed, or who they loved.

And yet here, alongside man's capacity for evil, we also are reminded of man's capacity for good: the rescuers, the "righteous among nations" who refused to be bystanders. And in their noble acts of courage, we see how this place—this accounting of horror—is in the end a source of hope.

For here, we learn that we are never powerless. In our lives we always have choices: to succumb to our worst instincts or to summon the better angels of our nature; to be indifferent to suffering wherever it may be, whoever it may be visited upon, or to display empathy that is at the core of our humanity. We have the choice to acquiesce to evil or make real our solemn vow: "Never again." We have the choice to ignore what happens to others or to act on

behalf of others and to continually examine in ourselves whatever dark places there may be that might lead to such actions or inactions. This is our obligation: not simply to bear witness, but to act.

For us, in our time, this means confronting bigotry and hatred in all of its forms, racism, especially anti-Semitism. None of that has a place in the civilized world: not in the classrooms of children, not in the corridors of power. And let us never forget the link between the two. For our sons and daughters are not born to hate, they are taught to hate. So let us fill their young hearts with the same understanding and compassion that we hope others have for them.

Here, we hope. Because after you walk through these halls, after you pass through the darkness, there is light: a glorious view of the Jerusalem Forest, with the Sun shining over the historic homeland of the Jewish people; a fulfillment of the prophecy, "you shall live again . . . upon your own soil." Here, on your ancient land, let it be said for all the world to hear: The State of Israel does not exist because of the Holocaust. But with the survival of a strong Jewish State of Israel, such a Holocaust will never happen again.

Here, we pray that we all can be better, that we can all grow, like the sapling near the Children's Memorial, a sapling from a chestnut tree that Anne Frank could see from her window. The last time she described it in her diary, she wrote: "Our chestnut tree is in full bloom. It's covered with leaves and is even more beautiful than last year." That's a reminder of who we can be. But we have to work for it. We have to work for it here in Israel. We have to work for it in America. We have to work for it around the world: to tend the light and the brightness as opposed to our worst instincts.

So may God bless the memory of the millions, may their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life, and may each spring bring a full bloom even more beautiful than the last.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. at the Children's Memorial. In his remarks, he referred to Avner Shalev, chairman of the directorate, Yad Vashem; Yisrael Meir Lau, chief rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yaffo and former chief rabbi of Israel; and Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel.

Statement on Israel-Turkey Relations
March 22, 2013

I welcome the call today between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Erdogan. The United States deeply values our close partnerships with both Turkey and Israel, and we attach great importance to the restoration of positive relations between them in order to advance regional peace and security. I am hopeful that today's exchange between the two leaders will enable them to engage in deeper cooperation on this and a range of other challenges and opportunities.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

Statement on the Resignation of Julius M. Genachowski as Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission
March 22, 2013

I want to thank Chairman Genachowski for his dedicated service on behalf of the American people. Over the last 4 years, Julius has brought to the Federal Communications Commission a clear focus on spurring innovation, helping our businesses compete in a global

economy, and helping our country attract the industries and jobs of tomorrow. Because of his leadership, we have expanded high-speed Internet access, fueled growth in the mobile sector, and continued to protect the open Internet as a platform for entrepreneurship and free speech. I am grateful for his service and friendship, and I wish Julius the best of luck.

Statement on the Withdrawal of the Nomination of Caitlin J. Halligan To Be a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

March 22, 2013

Today I accepted Caitlin Halligan's request to withdraw as a nominee for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. I am deeply disappointed that even after nearly 2½ years, a minority of Senators continued to block a simple up-or-down vote on her nomination. This unjustified filibuster obstructed the majority of Senators from expressing their support. I am confident that with Caitlin's impressive qualifications and reputation, she would have served with distinction.

The DC Circuit is considered the Nation's second highest court, but it now has more vacancies than any other circuit court. This is unacceptable. I remain committed to filling these vacancies to ensure equal and timely access to justice for all Americans.

The President's News Conference With King Abdullah II of Jordan in Amman, Jordan

March 22, 2013

King Abdullah. First of all, Mr. President, if you allow me, on behalf of myself and all Jordanians, to welcome you and your distinguished delegation back here in Jordan. I fondly remember your visit here several years ago when you were a Senator, and it is a great delight to welcome you back to Jordan as the President of the United States, enjoying your second term.

We are delighted with the in-depth discussions that were very, very fruitful on our strategic and historic partnership, and you have been an old friend, as has the United States, for so many decades. We are very grateful to you, sir, and the administration, as well as Congress and the American people, for the continuous support that has been shown to Jordan over so many years. And the U.S. assistance that has helped us throughout so many years has allowed us to get Jordan to where we are today and, hopefully, will continue to help us advance our shared goals of development, security, and regional peace.

We did have the opportunity to discuss Syria. And obviously, we are all horrified by the loss of life and the brutality of the conflict. We are extremely concerned of the risk of prolonged sectarian conflict that—if it continues as we're seeing—leads to the fragmentation of Syria, which obviously will have disastrous consequences on the region for generations to come. Therefore, it is immediate—it is important to have an immediate need for an inclusive political transition that ends the conflict and the threats that emanate from it.

What we are facing now, today, obviously is an urgent need for the international community to help in humanitarian assistance to catch up to the challenges that we are facing, as the countries bordering Syria. And not only do we need to look at the ability to stockpile humanitarian supplies to the Syrian people inside their country, but also to be able to assist those that have fled.

Jordan today is hosting, by far, the largest number of Syrian refugees. The numbers have

just exceeded 460,000 Syrians. That is 10 percent of our population. And the alarming figures—if the rates continue as we're seeing today—will probably double by the end of the year. So for the Americans in the audience, that's the equivalent of 30 million refugees crossing into the United States, the possibility of that going up to 60 million by the end of the year, relative obviously to our populations.

The refugee camp in the north—Zaatari refugee camp—today is the fifth largest city in Jordan. And obviously, this has added economic and financial costs due to the influx, and has further strained the economy that is already under considerable external pressures, with an unstable region, a sluggish global economy that is still recovering.

But having said that, as I already alluded to, we are so grateful to the U.S. assistance in shouldering this enormous responsibility, and together, we continue to appeal to the international community for more help to face this humanitarian calamity.

We had the opportunity obviously to talk about the peace process. And we were very delighted by the vision and the depth of wisdom that the President showed over the past several days in his trip with the Israelis and the Palestinians. Obviously, I reiterate Jordan's commitment to the peace process and the crucial importance of U.S. leadership in resuming the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations based on the two-state solution.

There is simply no other formula, no other alternative. The two-state solution is the only way to go. And if you compare that also with the radicalization of Syria—together with the impasse in the peace process—this is going to be a serious threat to an already volatile region.

I believe there is a window of opportunity to make a serious push for resuming negotiations on the final status issues. But the window, I believe, is fast closing, primarily due to increasing settlement activities. So there is no time to waste.

And lastly, I had the opportunity with the Prime Minister-designate to share details of Jordan's homegrown reform model and its supporting roadmap. We believe that we have a model that has a clear end goal of parliamentary government, with milestones and prerequisites, built on strong democratic institutions, that guarantees checks and balances of proper democracy, an empowered Parliament, and a new constitutional court.

We also have a new independent elections commission, and we are looking at Jordan as a model that is evolutionary, consensual, and peaceful and ensures pluralism, openness, tolerance, moderation, and unity, and equally as important, a level playing field. This will ensure safeguards for civil liberties and political rights and obviously encourage political participation.

Today, we're looking forward to our Prime Minister-designate forming his parliamentary government, hopefully, in the next couple of weeks. Based on his consultations with Parliament, which is an extension of the same consultation process that led to his designation as a result of receiving the highest number of nominations.

So I'm very proud of the progress so far. The hard work is definitely ahead of us. This is the Jordanian moment, what we're saying is the "third way" in the Middle East. What we are saying that the Arab Spring is behind us; we in Jordan are looking now at the "Arab summer" for us all, which means that we all have to roll our sleeves. It's going to be a bumpy and difficult road, but I am very encouraged with the process, and I am very excited about the future.

So again, Mr. President, very welcome to Jordan. I wish you all the success in what you've been able to achieve in the past several days, and I hope that the success will continue in your visit here to Jordan. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much.

Well, it's a great pleasure to be back in Jordan. I'm grateful to my good friend, His Majesty King Abdullah. Thank you for your kind words. Thank you to the Jordanian people for the extraordinary warmth and hospitality that I remembered well from my first visit as a Senator.

The thing I mainly remember when I came here was that His Majesty was kind enough to

personally drive me to the airport. I won't tell you how fast he was going, but Secret Service I don't think could keep up. So nevertheless, we're very much appreciative for you welcoming me and my delegation.

The reason I'm here is simple. Jordan is an invaluable ally. It is a great friend. We've been working together since the early years of the Kingdom under His Majesty's great-grandfather, King Abdullah I, who gave his life in the name of peace. Today, our partnership in development, education, health, science, technology, improve the lives of our peoples. Our close security cooperation helps keep your citizens and ours safe from terrorism. Your military and police help train other security forces from the Palestinian Authority to Yemen.

And I'm especially grateful to His Majesty, who, like his father—memorialized by the mosque I saw when I arrived—is a force for peace in word and in deed. You've invested deeply and personally in strengthening the ties between our countries. And that's why you were the first Arab leader I welcomed to the Oval Office when I became President. And I very much appreciate the work we've done together on a broad range of challenges. And so I've come to Jordan to build on what is already a very strong foundation and to deepen what is already extraordinary cooperation.

As His Majesty mentioned, today was a chance for me to hear from him about the necessary political reforms that are underway here. And I want to commend the people of Jordan on this year's parliamentary elections, which represented a positive step toward a more transparent and credible and inclusive political process. I appreciated hearing His Majesty's plans for a parliamentary government that responds to the aspirations of the Jordanian people, and I very much welcome his commitment to active citizenship, where citizens play a larger role in the future of this nation.

At a time of so much change and tumult across the region, I think His Majesty recognizes Jordan has a great opportunity to show the benefits of genuine and peaceful reform—including stronger political parties and good governance and transparency—all of which makes government more effective and makes sure that the people feel a connection to their government.

Your Majesty, you've been a driving force for these efforts, and you can be assured that the United States will continue to work with you and Prime Minister Nsour as you build on this progress.

We also discussed the economic progress that has to come with political progress. The Jordanian Government is working hard to manage its current budget challenges. I think His Majesty outlined the enormous pressures that Jordan is experiencing, often not because of any factors internal, but rather, a range of external factors as well. And I recognize that while the economic reforms are difficult, they are essential over the long term to creating the kind of growth and opportunity and dynamism in the economy that will help the Jordanian people achieve their dreams. So we want you to succeed.

So my administration is therefore working with Congress to provide loan guarantees to Jordan this year. Together, I believe we can help deliver the results that Jordanians deserve: to see their schools better, their roads improved, health care, clean water all enhanced; the training that I know a lot of Jordanians seek, particularly young people, to get a job or to turn entrepreneurial skills into a business that creates even more jobs.

And I was proud to welcome some young Jordanians to the entrepreneurship summit that I hosted back in Washington. And we're going to continue to focus on creating economic opportunities, because the people here in Jordan deserve the same opportunities as people everywhere.

We spent a good deal of time on regional challenges. And I updated His Majesty on my discussions with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. As I said in my speech yesterday, I believe there are steps that side—both sides can take to build confidence and trust, and move a serious negotiation forward. We're not there yet, but I'm confident that it can happen, in part, because it must happen. It

will be good for the Israelis, and it will be good for the Palestinians.

I'm very grateful for His Majesty's readiness to advance these efforts. As has been true in the past, His Majesty and Jordan will be critical to making progress towards a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

And we spent a significant amount of time consulting on Syria. I want to commend His Majesty for his leadership, and I want to commend the Jordanian people for their compassion during an extraordinarily difficult time for their neighbors. His Majesty was the first Arab leader to publicly call on Asad to step down, because of the horrific violence that was being inflicted on the Syrian people. Jordan has played a leading role in trying to begin a political transition toward a new government. We're working together to strengthen a credible Syrian opposition.

We share Jordan's concerns about violence spilling across the border, so I want to take this opportunity to make it clear: The United States is committed to the security of Jordan, which is backed by our strong alliance.

As has been mentioned, during this crisis, the Jordanian people have displayed extraordinary generosity, but the strains of so many refugees inevitably is showing. Every day, Jordanians are extending a hand of support to neighbors far from home, but this is a heavy burden. And the international community needs to step up to make sure that they are helping to shoulder this burden.

The United States will certainly do our part. We are already the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. Some of this has helped people here in Jordan, and today I'm announcing that my administration will work with Congress to provide Jordan with an additional $200 million in budget support this year, as it cares for Syrian refugees and Jordanian communities affected by this crisis.

This will mean more humanitarian assistance in basic services, including education for Syrian children so far from home whose lives have been upended. And I think, as parents, we can only imagine how heartbreaking that must be for any parent to see their children having to go through the kinds of tumult that they're experiencing.

Our cooperation on Syria is an example of how the partnership between the United States and Jordan improves the lives not only of the Jordanian people, but peoples across the region.

So again, Your Majesty, I want to express my great appreciation for our partnership. I want to thank you and the Jordanian people for the friendship and hospitality that they've shown me and to my fellow Americans. And just as I visited the Citadel here in Amman on my last visit, I'm looking forward to seeing Petra tomorrow—weather permitting—one of the great wonders of history that the world can experience, thanks to the care and dedication of Jordan and its people.

So *shukran*. Thank you.

King Abdullah. Thank you. Sa'ad.

Syria

Q. Thank you, Your Majesty, Mr. President.

Sir, I want to ask you, Your Majesty, for how long are you going to keep your borders open for the Syrian refugees? Next to you is a land of war, and anything could happen any time. If the regime, let's say, shut the electricity or the water, you are not too far from the Damascus, from the capital. It's, like, less than one hours. You might find a thousand of thousand of refugees, not just the number that you spoke about, Your Majesty.

And, Mr. President, thank you again, and I just want to know—you are a superpower; you are leading the superpower, the United States of America. You don't have a plan to put an end for what's going on in Syria: the bloodshed, the killing? And now they are talking about using the chemical weapon. What's your comment about that?

Thank you, Your Majesty.

King Abdullah. Well, first of all, Sa'ad, the problem with refugees comes down to an humanitarian issue. I mean, how are you going to turn back women, children, and the wounded? This is something that we just can't do. It's not the Jordanian way. We have historically

opened our arms to many of our neighbors through many decades of Jordan's history. So that is a challenge that we just can't turn our backs on. So that's the reality that we are facing on the ground. So Jordan has always been a safe haven to people around us through many, many decades. So, unfortunately, from that point of view, refugees will continue to come to Jordan, and we will continue, within our means, to look after them as best as we can.

The problem is obviously that the burden it's having on Jordan, and we've tried to quantify it as much as possible; the latest figures are it's going to cost us roughly $550 million a year. But if those figures double, as we think they will, by the end of the year, then obviously, we're talking a billion-plus. Not only is that a problem, but it's going to be a tremendous strain obviously on infrastructure, and it's creating social problems and security problems.

And so this is one of the reasons that we're asking for the international community to help. But physically, you can't turn away young children, women, people in desperate need, and the wounded. So we will continue to burden that responsibility.

President Obama. Since the start of the situation in Syria, we have stepped up, as not just a superpower, as you phrased it, but also because of basic humanity, to say that Asad had needed to go. We haven't just led with words, but we've also led with deeds. As I indicated, we're the single largest humanitarian donor to the Syrian people. We have worked diligently in cooperation with the international community to help organize and mobilize a political opposition that is credible, because in the absence of a credible political opposition, it will be impossible for us to transition to a more peaceful and more representative and legitimate government structure inside of Syria.

And that's an area where we have been involved on almost a daily basis. First, Secretary Hillary Clinton helped to spearhead the efforts that formed a coherent Syrian opposition council. Now you've got Secretary Kerry, who's deeply involved in that effort as well. And we are providing not just advice, not just words, but we're providing resources, training, capacity, in order for that political opposition to maintain links within Syria and to be able to provide direct services to people inside of Syria, including the kinds of relief efforts that obviously we've—we're seeing here in Jordan, but there are a whole bunch of people who are internally displaced inside of Syria who need help.

I think that what your question may be suggesting is, why haven't we simply gone in militarily? And I think it's fair to say that the United States often finds itself in a situation where if it goes in militarily, then it's criticized for going in militarily, and if doesn't go in militarily, then people say, why aren't you doing something militarily?

And my response at this stage is to make sure that what we do contributes to bringing an end to the bloodshed as quickly as possible. And working in a multilateral context, in an international context, because we think our experience shows that when we lead, but we are also working with others—like the Jordanians, like the Turks, like other interested parties in the region—then the outcomes are better. When we are working with the Syrians themselves, so that this is not externally imposed, but rather something that is linked directly with the aspirations and hopes of the people inside of Syria, it will work better. And so we are going to continue to use every lever and every bit of influence that we have to effect the situation inside of Syria.

You mentioned the issue of chemical weapons. We have called for, and we know that the U.N. is now moving forward on an investigation of exactly what happened. We're monitoring the situation ourselves. I have said publicly that the use of chemical weapons by the Asad regime would be a game changer from our perspective, because once you let that situation spin out of control, it's very hard to stop and can have enormous spillover effects across the region.

And so we are going to continue to closely consult with everybody in the region and do everything we can to bring an end to the bloodshed and to allow the Syrian people to get out from under the yoke of a leader who has lost all

legitimacy because he is willing to slaughter his own people. And I'm confident that Asad will go. It's not a question of if, it's when.

And so part of what we have to spend a lot of time thinking about is what's the aftermath of that, and how does that work in a way that actually serves the Syrian people and, by the way, serves the Syrian people from all walks of life, from all religious affiliations. Because one of the things that we know is happening in this region is that if we fail to create a model in the Arab world in which people can live side by side, regardless of whether they are Sunni or Shi'a or Alawites or Druze—regardless of the manner in which they worship their God—if we don't create that possibility, then these problems are going to recur again and again and again and again.

I think His Majesty understands that. I think the people of Jordan understand that. And these kinds of sectarian and tribal faultlines are part of what we have to get beyond, because they don't work in a modern world. They don't create jobs. They don't put food in the mouths of children. They don't provide an education. They don't create a thriving economy.

And that's going to be a central challenge not just in Syria, but across the region. And the United States, I think, has something to say about that, because part of what makes us a superpower is because we have people of every walk of life, every background, every religion, and if they've got a good idea and they're willing to work hard, they can succeed. And that's got to be something that's more consistently spoken about not just in—with respect to the Syria situation, but I think with respect to this enormous moment of both promise, but also danger in the Arab world and in North Africa.

Julie Pace [Associated Press].

Syria/Israel-Turkey Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the aftermath of the Asad regime. There's a lot of concern in Jordan and elsewhere that the upheaval in Syria is creating havens for extremism.

President Obama. Yes.

Q. How concerned are you at this point that extremists or jihadists could actually take over in Syria and perhaps be even worse than Asad? And I was also hoping you could give us some insight into how you brokered the call today between Prime Ministers Erdogan and Netanyahu. And how much of their willingness to talk do you think is actually driven by the urgency in Syria?

And, Your Majesty, you have offered Asad asylum, which he rejected. Does that offer of asylum still stand? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, I am very concerned about Syria becoming an enclave for extremism, because extremists thrive in chaos. They thrive in failed states. They thrive in power vacuums. They don't have much to offer when it comes to actually building things, but they're very good about exploiting situations that are no longer functioning. They fill that gap.

And that's why I think it's so important for us to work as an international community to help accelerate a political transition that is viable, so that a Syrian state continues to function; so that the basic institutions can be rebuilt, that they're not destroyed beyond recognition; that we are avoiding what inevitably becomes Syrian—or sectarian divisions—because, by definition, if you're an extremist, then you don't have a lot of tolerance for people who don't share your beliefs.

So this is part of the reason why, for the American people, we've got to recognize, we have a stake here. We can't do it alone. And the outcome in Syria is not going to be ideal. Even if we execute our assistance and our coordination and our planning and our support flawlessly, the situation in Syria now is going to be difficult. And that's what happens when you have a leader who cares more about clinging to power than they do about holding their country together and looking after their people.

It's tragic. It's heartbreaking. And the sight of children and women being slaughtered that we've seen so much, I think, has to compel all of us to say, what more can we do? And that's a question that I'm asking as President every

single day. And that's a question I know His Majesty is asking in his capacity here in Jordan.

And what I am confident about is that ultimately, what the people of Syria are looking for is not replacing oppression with a new form of oppression. What they're looking for is replacing oppression with freedom and opportunity and democracy and the capacity to live together and build together. And that's what we have to begin planning for now, understanding that it is going to be difficult.

Something has been broken in Syria, and it's not going to be put back together perfectly, immediately, anytime soon, even after Asad leaves. But we can begin the process of moving it in a better direction. And having a cohesive political opposition, I think, is critical to that.

With respect to the conversation that took place between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Erdogan, I have long said that it is in both the interests of Israel and Turkey to restore normal relations between two countries that have historically had good ties. It broke down several years ago as a consequence of the flotilla incident. For the last 2 years, I've spoken to both Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Erdogan about why this rupture has to be mended, that they don't have to agree on everything in order for them to come together around a whole range of common interests and common concerns.

During my visit, it appeared that the timing was good for that conversation to take place. I discussed it with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and both of us agreed that the moment was right, and fortunately, they were able to begin the process of rebuilding normal relations between two very important countries in the region.

This is a work in process. It's just beginning. As I said, there are obviously going to still be some significant disagreements between Turkey and Israel, not just on the Palestinian question, but on a range of different issues. But they also have a whole range of shared interests, and they both happen to be extraordinarily strong partners and friends of ours, and so it's in the interest of the United States that they begin this process of getting their relationship back in order. And I'm very glad to see that it's happening.

King Abdullah. Thank you. I think the question about asylum is something that Asad has to answer himself. First, is he interested in asylum, and would he be interested in coming to Jordan?

Obviously, from our point of view, as we were saying, we need an inclusive political transition as quickly as possible, so if the issue of asylum ever came up, that's something that I think all of us would have to put our heads together and figure out whether or not, if that, sort of, ends the violence quickly, is something worth pursuing. So that's a question that's slightly beyond my pay grade at this stage, but something that I'm sure if it ever came up, would be something that we discussed at the level of international community. Samir.

Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Q. Thank you, Your Majesty, last year Jordan managed to break the impasse in the peace process by hosting the Amman talks, bringing Israelis and Palestinians together at the negotiating table. Now, there was no follow-up to that. Do you have anything in mind? Or are you going to have any similar effort?

And, Mr. President, would you support any such effort, particularly that we know that the two sides need to be prodded back to the negotiating table? Thank you.

King Abdullah. Well, Samir, at this stage—obviously, last year, we kept Israelis and Palestinians—the dialogue going simply because we wanted to keep the process alive as much as we could, knowing full well that we were waiting for this opportunity. The President has, I think, finished a very successful visit to both the Israelis and Palestinians. We have been in close contact with State Department leading up to this visit, and I think Secretary Kerry has been very right in keeping expectations low so that what I call the homework stage is still in effect.

Obviously, we're all consulting at this stage of how to build on this visit, and I believe that as we all share notes, we'll have a better understanding, over the next several weeks, what is the next step.

Jordan's role is to be there as a facilitator and a support to both the Israelis and Palestinians, to bring them closer together, so that I believe in the next several weeks to this next several months, we'll have the homework or the framework that allows both sides to come together and move forward.

So Jordan obviously will welcome hosting Israelis and Palestinians together if that's what they want. And we always have been in a support mode for both sides. And as I said earlier, we see a window of opportunity, and I believe the statements that the President has made to the Israeli and to the Palestinian is an opportunity to regalvanize the effort and one that we will stand by in support mode as we compare notes of the President's visit to the three countries.

President Obama. Well, first of all, I think His Majesty described what I've tried to accomplish on this trip very well. This is a trip to make sure I'm doing my homework. We all recognize how vital it could be to see a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We set expectations low precisely because there's been a lot of talk over decades, but it hasn't produced the results that everybody wants to see.

And so my approach here has been, let me listen to the parties first; let me find out exactly what the roadblocks are for progress; let me discuss with them ways that we might move those roadblocks out of the way in order to achieve a concrete result.

And I've also been modest because frankly, peace will not be achieved unless ultimately the parties themselves want peace.

I think all of us in the international community share this frustration: Why can't we get this problem solved? I think the Israeli people are frustrated that they feel this problem is not solved. They don't enjoy the isolation that has resulted from this conflict. I think the Palestinian people certainly feel that frustration.

As I mentioned in my speech yesterday, I had the opportunity to meet with young people who are growing up unable to do the basic things that a free people should expect they should be able to do, simple things like travel or enjoying the kinds of privacy in their own homes that so many of us take for granted. And these are children, these are young people, these are young men and women who, as I described yesterday, aren't very different from my daughters, and they deserve the same opportunities. They deserve this cloud to be lifted from their lives, because they can achieve, and they have enormous potential, and I don't want them living up under a sense of constricted possibility.

I also don't want the Israeli people continually looking over their shoulder, thinking that at any point, their house may be hit by a rocket, or a bus may be blown up. And so part of the tragedy of the situation has been that neither side is getting exactly what they want, but it's not been possible to break out of old patterns and a difficult history.

So my hope and expectation is that, as a consequence of us doing our homework, we can explore with the parties a mechanism for them to sit back down, to get rid of some of the old assumptions, to think in new ways, and to get this done. And I think if it gets done in a timely way, then the Israeli people will be safer and the Palestinian people will be freer. And children on both sides will have a better life. And as a consequence, the region and a whole—as a whole will be strengthened, and the world will be safer.

I can't guarantee that that's going to happen. What I can guarantee is we'll make the effort. What I can guarantee is that Secretary Kerry is going to be spending a good deal of time in discussions with the parties. What I can assure you is, is that nobody feels a greater interest in us achieving this than His Majesty. And so we're just going to keep on plugging away.

The one thing I did say, I think, to both sides is the window of opportunity still exists, but it's getting more and more difficult. The mistrust is building instead of ebbing. The logistics of providing security for Israel get more difficult with new technologies. And the logistics of creating a contiguous and functioning Palestinian state become more difficult with settlements. And so both sides have to begin to think about their long-term strategic interests

instead of worrying about, can I gain a short-term tactical advantage here or there, and say to themselves, what's the big picture and how do we get this done?

And that's ultimately what I believe both peoples want, which is why I think—I think it was very interesting that in my speech in Jerusalem, some of the strongest applause came when I addressed the Israeli people and I said, you have to think about these Palestinian children like your own children. It tapped into something that they understood inherently. And that gives me hope. I think that shows there's possibility there. But it's hard. And I—what I also said was that ultimately, people have to help provide the structures for leaders to take some very difficult risks.

So that's why I wanted to speak directly to the Israeli people and to the Palestinian people, so that they help empower their leadership to make some very difficult decisions and tradeoffs in order to achieve a compromise where neither side is going to get a hundred percent of what they want. And so we'll see if we can make it happen.

Jon Karl [ABC News].

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, King Abdullah.

Mr. President, you have said repeatedly on this trip and before that all options are on the table to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, including military action. Yesterday the Supreme Leader of Iran came out and said that if any action is taken against his country, he will raze the cities in Israel of Tel Aviv and Haifa to the ground. So my question to you is, are you prepared to deal with the retaliation, the fallout that would come after a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities?

And to King Abdullah, if I can ask what you think would happen here: What would be the aftermath of a military strike, whether taken by the United States or by Israel, against Iran? What is a bigger threat to stability in this region: Iran with nuclear weapons or another war in this region?

President Obama. Well, first of all, Jon, I'm not going to engage in a whole bunch of hypotheticals. Because what I've said from the moment I came into office was that the best resolution of this situation is through diplomacy, and I continue to believe that.

We have organized the international community around a sanctions regime that is having an impact on Iran, not because we forced other countries to do it, because they recognize that if you trigger a nuclear arms race in this region, as volatile as it is, if you have the prospect of nuclear weapons getting into the hands of terrorists and extremists, that it's not just Israel that's threatened, it's a whole range of people that could be threatened.

We're talking right now about the possibility of Syria using chemical weapons. What would be the conversation if Syria possessed nuclear weapons?

So this is not just a problem for Israel. It's not just a problem for the United States. It's a regional and worldwide problem. And by the way, we have been consistent in saying that nonproliferation is a problem around the globe, not just with respect to Iran. Now, the fact of the matter is, is that Iran has not been able to establish credibly with the international community that, in fact, it is simply pursuing peaceful nuclear power. There's a reason why it's subject to all these resolutions and violations identified by the United Nations. That's not something we made up.

There are a lot of other countries who have the technical capacity, but for some reason, they are able to get right with the international community. Iran has not been able to do so.

Now, if in fact what the Supreme Leader has said is the case, which is that developing a nuclear weapon would be un-Islamic and that Iran has no interest in developing nuclear weapons, then there should be a practical, verifiable way to assure the international community that it's not doing so. And this problem will be solved, to the benefit of the region and to the benefit of the Iranian people.

The Iranian people are celebrating Nowruz, their most important holiday. And every year, I deliver a Nowruz message. And I remind the

people of Iran that they are a great civilization; they have an extraordinary history; they have unbelievable talent. They should be fully integrated into the international community, where they can thrive and build businesses and expand commerce. And there should be exchanges and travel and interactions with the Iranian people and everyone else, including the United States. That should be the vision, not threats to raze Israeli cities to the ground.

Part of the frustration that I think we all feel sometimes is that it seems as if people spend all their time organizing around how they can gain advantage over other people or inflict violence on other people or isolate other people, instead of trying to figure out how do we solve problems. This is a solvable problem if in fact Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

And so we're going to continue to apply the pressure that we have, in a nonmilitary way, to try to resolve the problem. We will continue to try to pursue diplomatic solutions to the situation.

But yes, I have said as President of the United States that I will maintain every option that's available to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon because I think the consequences for the region and for the world would be extraordinarily dangerous.

I—my hope and expectation is, is that, among a menu of options, the option that involves negotiations, discussions, compromise, and resolution of the problem is the one that's exercised. But as President of the United States, I would never take any option off the table.

King Abdullah. There's very little that I would like to add to what the President said. I think, looking from the Jordanian point of view and the challenges that Jordan faces as we look around the region—the challenges of what the Israelis and the Palestinians that we'll be facing in 2012, the instability as you're seeing in Syria, we have the concerns as to what's happening in Iraq—any military action at the moment, whether Israeli or Iranian, to me at this stage is Pandora's box, because nobody can guarantee what the outcome will be.

So, hopefully, there is another way of resolving this problem. At a time with so much instability in the Middle East, we just don't need another thing on our shoulders.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you to the people of Jordan.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:23 p.m. at the Royal Al Hummar Offices. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran.

The President's Weekly Address
March 23, 2013

It has now been 3 months since the tragic events in Newtown, Connecticut: 3 months since we lost 20 innocent children and 6 dedicated adults who had so much left to give; 3 months since we, as Americans, began asking ourselves if we're really doing enough to protect our communities and keep our children safe.

For the families who lost a loved one on that terrible day, 3 months doesn't even begin to ease the pain they're feeling right now. It doesn't come close to mending the wounds that may never fully heal.

But as a nation, the last 3 months have changed us. They forced us to answer some difficult questions about what we can do—what we must do—to prevent the kinds of massacres we've seen in Newtown and Aurora and Oak Creek, as well as the everyday tragedies that happen far too often in big cities and small towns all across America.

Today, there's still genuine disagreement among well-meaning people about what steps we should take to reduce the epidemic of gun violence in this country. But you, the American

people, have spoken. You've made it clear that it's time to do something. And over the last few weeks, Senators here in Washington have listened and taken some big steps forward.

Two weeks ago, the Senate advanced a bill that would make it harder for criminals and people with a severe mental illness from getting their hands on a gun, an idea supported by 9 out of 10 Americans, including a majority of gun owners. The Senate also made progress on a bill that would crack down on anyone who buys a gun as part of a scheme to funnel it to criminals, reducing violent crime and protecting our law enforcement officers. Finally, the Senate took steps to reinstate and strengthen a ban on the sale of military-style assault weapons, set a 10-round limit for magazines, and make our schools safer places for kids to learn and grow.

These ideas shouldn't be controversial. They're common sense. They're supported by a majority of the American people. And I urge the Senate and the House to give each of them a vote.

As I've said before, we may not be able to prevent every act of violence in this country. But together, we have an obligation to try. We have an obligation to do what we can.

Right now we have a real chance to reduce gun violence in America and prevent the very worst violence. We have a unique opportunity to reaffirm our tradition of responsible gun ownership and also do more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals or people with a severe mental illness.

We've made progress over the last 3 months, but we're not there yet. And in the weeks ahead, I hope Members of Congress will join me in finishing the job: for our communities and, most importantly, for our kids. Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:05 p.m. on March 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on March 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 23.

Statement on the Third Anniversary of the Signing of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

March 23, 2013

Three years ago today, I signed into law the principle that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one should go broke just because they get sick. The Affordable Care Act will give hard-working, middle class families the health care security they deserve and protect every American from the worst insurance company abuses. Already, millions of seniors are saving $600 a year on their prescription drugs. Millions of young people have been able to stay on their family's health plan until age 26. Preventive care, like mammograms for women and wellness visits for seniors, is covered free of charge. Most importantly, for the sake of our fiscal future, the growth of health care costs is beginning to slow. In fact, last year, Medicaid costs fell for the first time in decades.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies will no longer have unchecked power to cancel your policy, deny you coverage, or charge women more than men. And soon, no American will ever again be denied care or charged more due to a preexisting condition like cancer or even asthma.

Later this year, millions of Americans will finally have the opportunity to buy the same kind of health care Members of Congress give themselves. Beginning in October, you'll be able to sign up for new private health care plans through a new health insurance marketplace where private plans will compete to save middle class families money. Through these marketplaces, Americans and small-business owners will be able to choose from a menu of health plans that fit their budget and provide quality coverage they can count on when they need it most. If you like the plan you have, you can keep it. If you cannot afford a plan, you or

your small business may get financial assistance to make it affordable.

There's more work to do to implement this law, and I look forward to working with leaders of both parties to help Americans save money on health care and extend the security of coverage to every family.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony for Active Duty Servicemembers and Civilians

March 25, 2013

Thank you so much. Well, good morning, everybody. Secretary Napolitano, thank you for administering the oath and making it official. Director Mayorkas, distinguished guests, family and friends, it is a great pleasure to have you here at the White House. And it is an honor to be among the first to greet some of my fellow citizens of the United States.

Today, here in the people's house—a house designed by an Irish immigrant—we welcome 28 men and women, immigrants themselves, who from this day forward have earned the precious right to call this country home.

And I know this is an incredibly special moment for you and your families, but I have to say, it's a special moment for the rest of us as well. Because as we look out across this room, we're reminded that what makes somebody American isn't just their bloodlines, it's not just an accident of birth. It's a fidelity to our founding principles, a faith in the idea that anyone, anywhere, can write the next great chapter in this American story.

That's the promise of America. And today we know it's alive and well in each and every one of you.

At first glance, of course, it would be easy to define this group by their differences. They all hail from different corners of the world, from Nigeria to Nicaragua, from the Philippines to Peru. They arrived here in different ways. Some of you came here as children, carried by parents who wished for a life that they had never had. Others came as adults, leaving behind everything you knew to seek a new life. But what binds you together—what binds us all together—is something more meaningful than anything of that. A love for this country and all that it represents—that's what unites each and every one of you.

For Nikita Kirichenko—there's Nikita right here—that love runs so deep it led him to enlist in our military. Nikita came here at the age of 11 from Ukraine. His mother saw America as the one place on Earth where her son could do anything he wanted. And a few years ago, Nikita decided that he wanted to join the Air Force so that, in his words, "I could give back to a country that took me in and gave me a better life." Thank you, Nikita. Today we proudly salute him not just as a member of our military, but also as a citizen of our country.

Today we salute Elrina Brits. Where did Elrina go? There she is. Elrina was born in South Africa, came here as a child, grew up in Washington State. When Elrina decided to join the Navy, somebody told her that she wouldn't be able to cut it. But even though she wasn't yet American on paper, she had that American quality of being defiant when somebody says you can't do something. [*Laughter*] So she proved them wrong. She deployed twice to the Middle East, once to Haiti, showcasing another quintessentially American impulse, and that's helping others in need. And as a new citizen, Elrina hopes to serve her country in a new way: as a police officer. So congratulations, Elrina.

Elrina, Nikita, every member of the military with us have shown incredible patriotism; a willingness to risk their lives in defense of a nation that was not yet their own. And that's a remarkable act. And it made each of them one of us. It made each of them in some ways American even before it was official. Because that kind of service and sacrifice has defined our Nation for more than two centuries.

In America, we look out for one another. We see citizenship not just as a collection of rights, but also as a set of responsibilities. That's who we are. And that's what brought so many to our shores, including Kingsley Elebo. Kingsley came here at the age of 35 from Nigeria, pursued his master's in information technology. He's now pursuing his doctorate. He wants to become a professor so he can help America lead the world in high-tech industries of tomorrow. And what Kingsley said is, "What makes this country great is that if you're a citizen you're part of something bigger than yourself." And he's right. And we're glad that, as of today, Kingsley is part of it too.

We're also glad to welcome Pertula George-Redd. Pertula arrived in America from St. Lucia at the age of 23, leaving behind her parents and seven siblings. She came here to study international development. She stayed, for over a decade now, to work at nonprofits that teach our kids about sustainable foods and how to live a healthier life by eating well—which I know Michelle is very happy about. Today she also has the gratitude of her new nation. So thank you so much.

We are so proud of everybody here. In each of you, we see the true spirit of America. And we see a bit of ourselves too, because most of our stories trace back to moments just like this one. To an ancestor who, just like the men and women here today, raised their right hand and recited that sacred oath.

And the point is that unless you are one of the first Americans, unless you are a Native American, you came from someplace else. That's why we've always defined ourselves as a nation of immigrants. And we've always been better off for it. The promise we see in those who come from all over the world is one of our greatest strengths. It's kept our workforce young. It keeps our businesses on the cutting edge. It's helped to build the greatest economic engine that the world has ever known. And you think about the drive and the determination that it took for each of these 28 men and women to reach this moment. Imagine how far they'll go from here, the kind of difference that they'll be making on behalf of this country.

Immigration makes us a stronger. It keeps us vibrant. It keeps us hungry. It keeps us prosperous. It is part of what makes this such a dynamic country. And if we want to keep attracting the best and the brightest that the world has to offer, then we need to do a better job of welcoming them. We've known for years that our immigration system is broken, that we're not doing enough to harness the talent and ingenuity of all those who want to work hard and find a place here in America. And after avoiding the problem for years, the time has come to fix it once and for all. The time has come for a comprehensive, sensible immigration reform.

Now, a couple months ago in Nevada, and then last month again in my State of the Union Address, I talked about how Republicans and Democrats were ready to tackle this problem together. And the good news is that since then, we've seen some real action in Congress. There are bipartisan groups in both the House and the Senate working to tackle this challenge, and I applaud them for that. We are making progress, but we've got to finish the job, because this issue is not new.

Everyone pretty much knows what's broken. Everybody knows how to fix it. We've all proposed solutions and we've got a lot of white papers and studies. And we've just got, at this point, to work up the political courage to do what's required to be done. So I expect a bill to be put forward. I expect the debate to begin next month. I want to sign that bill into law as soon as possible.

We know that real reform means continuing to strengthen our border security and holding employers accountable. We know that real reform means providing a responsible pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants who are currently living in the shadows, a pathway that includes passing a background check and paying taxes and a penalty and learning English, and then going to the back of the line behind everyone else who is trying to come here legally.

We know that real reform requires modernizing the legal immigration system so that our citizens don't have to wait years before their loved ones are able to join them in America,

and so that we're attracting the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers that are going to help create good paying jobs and grow our economy.

So let's get this done, and let's do it in a way that keeps faith with our history and our values. And no other country on Earth welcomes as many new arrivals as us. And as long as the promise of America endures, as long as we continue to stand tall as a beacon of hope and opportunity, then the world's hardest workers, the hungriest entrepreneurs, the men and women who are willing to make enormous sacrifices to get a better life, not just for themselves but for their children and their grandchildren, they're going to keep on coming.

And like the millions who came before—and like the 28 Americans who are here today—they will bring with them new hopes and new dreams, new ideas and new optimism about our future. That will make us stronger. That's how we'll make sure that our best days are ahead of us and not behind us.

So I want to thank each and every one of you for allowing me the opportunity to share in this incredible moment. One of the best things I get to do as President of the United States is to address all of you as fellow citizens. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

And we now have one last piece of business to conclude the ceremony. I'd like to ask one of our newest citizens, Julian de la Valle, from Colombia, to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Julian.

[*At this point, Julian de la Valle led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. The President then concluded as follows.*]

Congratulations. Congratulations all of you. Thank you.

And now, enjoy the White House, all right? [*Laughter*] Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Statement on the Observance of Passover
March 25, 2013

As we prepare for our fifth Seder in the White House, Michelle and I send our warmest wishes to all those celebrating Passover here in America, in the State of Israel, and around the world.

Tonight Jewish families will gather with family and friends to celebrate with songs, wine, and food. They will read from the *Haggadah* and retell the story that makes this holiday so powerful.

Last week, I visited the State of Israel for the third time, my first as President. I reaffirmed our countries' unbreakable bonds with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Peres. I had the chance to speak directly with young Israelis about the future they wanted for their country, their region, and the world. And I saw once again how the dream of true freedom found its full expression in those words of hope from *Hatikvah*: *'lihyot 'am chofshi be'artzeinu'*—"to be a free people in our land."

Passover is a celebration of the freedom our ancestors dreamed of, fought for, and ultimately won. But even as we give thanks, we are called to look to the future. We are reminded that responsibility does not end when we reach the Promised Land, it only begins. As my family and I prepare to once again take part in this ancient and powerful tradition, I am hopeful that we can draw upon the best in ourselves to find the promise in the days that lie ahead, meet the challenges that will come, and continuing the hard work of repairing the world. *Chag sameach*.

Remarks Honoring the 2012 Stanley Cup Champion Los Angeles Kings and the 2012 Major League Soccer Champion Los Angeles Galaxy
March 26, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Welcome to the White House. And welcome back to the back-to-back MLS champion, the L.A. Galaxy. I was telling these guys, they're starting to get a little comfortable around here, because they just keep on coming back. But this time, they brought some company: the Stanley Cup champion, L.A. Kings.

Now, it is great to have both teams here, not just because they share a hometown. I'm a little resentful, coming from Chicago, that L.A. seems to be getting all these championships. But they don't just share a hometown, they also share a pretty good comeback story.

When it comes to the Galaxy, a team with Landon Donovan on it is rarely the underdog. But when the Galaxy was here last year, their chances of repeating as champions didn't look all that good. The injury bug plagued the team. It seemed like it might be a rebuilding year. But right after that visit, they turned things around. And you can call it a coincidence, but I just want to point out that right after they visited with me, the Galaxy built the best record in the league. [*Laughter*]

In the MLS Cup Final, the Galaxy trailed at halftime, and it stayed that way until Omar Gonzalez, who is with the National Team today, scored the equalizer in the 60th minute. A few minutes after that, Landon did what he does best and scored the go-ahead goal. And pretty soon, they were up 3 to 1. And then midfielder Juninho was probably dancing the samba—[*laughter*]—the MLS Cup belonged to L.A. for the second-straight year, and that was the fourth in Galaxy history.

Now, the Kings' story is a little bit different. These guys were not defending champions. In fact, before last year, L.A. had never won the Stanley Cup. And after switching head coaches midseason—a coach, I should add, who got good training from the Chicago Blackhawks—[*laughter*]—squeaking into the playoffs as a number-eight seed, it looked like the streak of not winning was going to continue. No eight seed had ever won a championship in any of our professional sports.

But something happened during the playoffs. Timing is everything. And as center Jarret Stoll says, "We all came together at the right time, and we all peaked at the right time." With playoff MVP Jonathan Quick playing lights out in goal, these guys just kept winning game after game after game. And eventually, the rest of the league started to take notice.

Captain Dustin Brown put it best before the final game. He said, "I don't know what 45 years of energy sounds like, but if we play our game, maybe we'll find out." And that night at the Staples Center, they found out. And America found out that Southern California actually has some pretty intense hockey fans.

So I'm going to be a good sport: These guys pointed out that they beat my Blackhawks last night. I will also say that, given this season, how rare it is to beat the Blackhawks, I want to congratulate them for that as well. [*Laughter*]

We also found out that both these teams are full of some pretty stand-up players and coaches. They're out in the community year round. They're changing lives, they're making a difference. As Coach Arena of the Galaxy says: "The soccer is very much secondary. If we can have an impact on the lives of young kids, we want to be a part of that."

And that's something we all appreciate, especially those of us who are parents. And we are thrilled that you guys are sticking around to host a "Let's Move!" question-and-answer session with kids from all across the country.

So I want to give a hearty congratulations to both the Kings and the Galaxy one more time for bringing two championships to L.A. and for doing so much for your fans back in California.

And we also know that there are a couple of Galaxy players who couldn't be here because of World Cup qualifying, so I want to wish Team U.S.A. the very best of luck as they take on Mexico tonight. I hope both these teams have a great rest of the season.

So everybody give them a big round of applause. Congratulations. Congratulations.

All right, we've got some—are we going to do the jerseys at the podium? All right, so Landon, what do we got here?

L.A. Galaxy forward Landon Donovan. We have a ball for you, and then we've got a——

[*At this point, the President tossed the soccer ball upward, bounced it off his forehead, and caught it.*]

Mr. Donovan. That was pretty good. [*Laughter*] And then, we've got a jersey for you.

The President. I hope you guys caught that. That doesn't happen very often. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Donovan. And a jersey.

The President. That is a nice-looking jersey. All right, let's—thank you.

So am I going to stand over here? Okay. And what do we got here?

L.A. Kings right wing Dustin Brown. Just a jersey here.

The President. That's a good-looking jersey. Forty-four, it's a lucky number. All right, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Omar Gonzalez, defender, Juninho Pernambucano, midfielder, and Bruce Arena, head coach, Los Angeles Galaxy; and Terry Murray, former head coach, Darryl Sutter, head coach, Jarret Stoll, center, and Jonathan Quick, goaltender, Los Angeles Kings.

Statement on Senator Timothy P. Johnson's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
March 26, 2013

For more than three decades, Tim Johnson has dedicated himself to improving the lives of South Dakota's working families. From his early days in the State legislature to his distinguished career in the Senate, Tim has worked tirelessly to protect our environment, empower rural and Native American communities, and build a financial system that is better able to serve the American people. Always a fighter, Tim's return to the Senate floor after a life-threatening brain injury was a powerful moment, and his recovery continues to inspire us all. I look forward to working with Senator Johnson as he finishes his third term, and Michelle and I join the people of South Dakota in wishing Tim, Barbara, and their entire family all the best.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Regarding Designation of Funds for Global Counterterrorism and Overseas Contingency Operations
March 26, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 5 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013, I hereby designate for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism all funding (including the rescission of funds) so designated by the Congress in the Act pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, as outlined in the enclosed list of accounts.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed memorandum from the Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Julia A. Pierson as Director of the United States Secret Service and an Exchange With Reporters
March 27, 2013

The President. Okay, Joe. You got the floor.

[*At this point, Vice President Joe Biden administered the oath of office to Director Pierson.*]

Vice President Biden. Congratulations.

The President. Great job.

Director Pierson. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you so much. Well, listen, I have to say that Julia's reputation within the Service is extraordinary. She's come up through the ranks. She's done just about every job there is to do at the Secret Service.

Obviously, she's breaking the mold in terms of Directors of the agencies, and I think that people are all extraordinarily proud of her. And we have the greatest confidence in the wonderful task that lies ahead and very confident that she is going to do a great job. So we just want to say congratulations.

As Joe Biden pointed out, this person now probably has more control over our lives than anyone else—[*laughter*]—except for our spouses. And I couldn't be placing our lives in better hands than Julia's.

Vice President Biden. And my agents are excited that we picked her.

The President. Absolutely. You're going to do a great job.

Director Pierson's Qualifications

Q. How did you make your decision?

The President. She has extraordinary qualifications, and I think a lot of people who have worked with Julia know how dedicated, how professional, how committed she is, and, I think, are absolutely certain that she's going to thrive in this job. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NCAA Basketball Tournament

Q. How are you feeling about your bracket, sir?

The President. Busted. [*Laughter*] I think my women's bracket is doing much better than my men's bracket.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Biden.

Remarks on Gun Violence
March 28, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Katerina, for sharing your story. Reema was lucky to have you as a teacher, and all of us are fortunate to have you here today. And I'm glad we had a chance to remember her.

Katerina, as you just heard, lost one of her most promising students in Virginia Tech, the shootings there that took place 6 years ago. And she and dozens of other moms and dads, all victims of gun violence, have come here today from across the country, united not only in grief and loss, but also in resolve and in courage and in a deep determination to do whatever they can, as parents and as citizens, to protect other kids and spare other families from the awful pain that they have endured.

As any of the families and friends who are here today can tell you, the grief doesn't ever go away. That loss, that pain sticks with you. It lingers on in places like Blacksburg and Tucson and Aurora. That anguish is still fresh in Newtown. It's been barely 100 days since 20 innocent children and 6 brave educators were taken from us by gun violence, including Grace McDonnell and Lauren Rousseau and Jesse Lewis, whose families are here today.

That agony burns deep in the families of thousands—thousands—of Americans who have been stolen from our lives by a bullet from a gun over these last 100 days, including Hadiya Pendleton, who was killed on her way to school less than 2 months ago and whose mom is also here today. Everything they lived for and hoped for, taken away in an instant. We have moms on this stage whose children were killed as recently as 35 days ago.

I don't think any of us who are parents can hear their stories and not think about our own daughters and our own sons and our own grandchildren. We all feel that it is our first impulse as parents to do everything we can to protect our children from harm, to make any sacrifice to keep them safe, to do what we have to do to give them a future where they can grow up and learn and explore and become the amazing people they're destined to be.

That's why, in January, Joe Biden, leading a Task Force, came up with, and I put forward, a series of commonsense proposals to reduce the epidemic of gun violence and keep our kids safe. In my State of the Union Address, I called on Congress to give these proposals a vote. And in just a couple of weeks, they will.

Earlier this month, the Senate advanced some of the most important reforms designed to reduce gun violence. All of them are consistent with the Second Amendment. None of them will infringe on the rights of responsible gun owners. What they will do is keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people who put others at risk. And this is our best chance in more than a decade to take commonsense steps that will save lives.

As I said when I visited Newtown just over 3 months ago, if there is a step we can take that will save just one child, just one parent, just another town from experiencing the same grief that some of the moms and dads who are here have endured, then we should be doing it. We have an obligation to try.

Now, in the coming weeks, Members of Congress will vote on whether we should require universal background checks for anyone who wants to buy a gun so that criminals or people with severe mental illnesses can't get their hands on one. They'll vote on tough new penalties for anyone who buys guns only to turn around and sell them to criminals. They'll vote on a measure that would keep weapons of war and high-capacity ammunition magazines that facilitate these mass killings off our streets. They'll get to vote on legislation that would help schools become safer and help people struggling with mental health problems to get the treatment that they need.

None of these ideas should be controversial. Why wouldn't we want to make it more difficult for a dangerous person to get his or her hand on a gun? Why wouldn't we want to close the loophole that allows as many as 40 percent of all gun purchases to take place without a background check? Why wouldn't we do that?

And if you ask most Americans outside of Washington—including many gun owners—some of these ideas, they don't consider them controversial. Right now 90 percent of Americans—90 percent—support background checks that will keep criminals and people who have been found to be a danger to themselves or others from buying a gun. More than 80 percent of Republicans agree. More than 80 percent of gun owners agree. Think about that. How often do 90 percent of Americans agree on anything? [*Laughter*] It never happens.

Many other reforms are supported by clear majorities of Americans. And I ask every American to find out where your Member of Congress stands on these ideas. If they're not part of that 90 percent who agree that we should make it harder for a criminal or somebody with a severe mental illness to buy a gun, then you should ask them, why not? Why are you part of the 10 percent?

There's absolutely no reason why we can't get this done. But the reason we're talking about it here today is because it's not done until it's done. And there are some powerful voices on the other side that are interested in running out the clock or changing the subject or drowning out the majority of the American people to prevent any of these reforms from happening at all. They're doing everything they can to make all our progress collapse under the

weight of fear and frustration. Or their assumption is that people will just forget about it.

I read an article in the news just the other day wondering is Washington—has Washington missed its opportunity, because as time goes on after Newtown, somehow, people start moving on and forgetting. Let me tell you, the people here, they don't forget. Grace's dad is not forgetting. Hadiya's mom hasn't forgotten. The notion that 2 months or 3 months after something as horrific as what happened in Newtown happens and we've moved on to other things, that's not who we are. That's not who we are.

Now, I want to make sure every American is listening today. Less than 100 days ago that happened, and the entire country was shocked. And the entire country pledged we would do something about it and that this time would be different. Shame on us if we've forgotten. I haven't forgotten those kids. Shame on us if we've forgotten.

If there's one thing I've said consistently since I first ran for this office: Nothing is more powerful than millions of voices calling for change. And that's why it's so important that all these moms and dads are here today. But that's also why it's important that we've got grassroots groups out there that got started and are out there mobilizing and organizing and keeping up the fight. That's what it's going to take to make this country safer. It's going to take moms and dads, and hunters and sportsmen and clergy and local officials, like the mayors who are here today, standing up and saying, this time really is different: that we're not just going to sit back and wait until the next Newtown or the next Blacksburg or the next innocent, beautiful child is gunned down in a playground in Chicago or Philadelphia or Los Angeles before we summon the will to act.

Right now Members of Congress are back home in their districts, and many of them are holding events where they can hear from their constituents. So I want everybody who is listening to make yourself heard right now.

If you think that checking someone's criminal record before he can check out a gun show is common sense, you've got to make yourself heard. If you're a responsible, law-abiding gun owner who wants to keep irresponsible, lawbreaking individuals from abusing the right to bear arms by inflicting harm on a massive scale, speak up. We need your voices in this debate. If you're a mom like Katerina who wants to make this country safer, a stronger place for our children to learn and grow up, get together with other moms, like the ones here today, and raise your voices and make yourselves unmistakably heard.

We need everybody to remember how we felt 100 days ago and make sure that what we said at that time wasn't just a bunch of platitudes, that we meant it.

The desire to make a difference is what brought Corey Thornblad here today. Corey grew up in Oklahoma, where her dad sold firearms at gun shows. And today, she's a mom and a teacher. And Corey said that after Newtown, she cried for days: for the students who could have been her students; for the parents she could have known; for the teachers like her who go to work every single day and love their kids and want them to succeed. And Corey says: "My heart was broken. And I decided now was the time to act, to march, the time to petition, the time to make phone calls, because tears were no longer enough." And that's my attitude.

Tears aren't enough. Expressions of sympathy aren't enough. Speeches aren't enough. We've cried enough. We've known enough heartbreak. What we're proposing is not radical, it's not taking away anybody's gun rights. It's something that, if we are serious, we will do.

Now is the time to turn that heartbreak into something real. It won't solve every problem. There will still be gun deaths. There will still be tragedies. There will still be violence. There will still be evil. But we can make a difference if not just the activists here on this stage, but the general public—including responsible gun owners—say, you know what, we can do better than this. We can do better to make sure that fewer parents have to endure the pain of losing a child to an act of violence.

That's what this is about. And enough people like Katerina and Corey and the rest of the parents who are here today get involved, and if enough Members of Congress take a stand for cooperation and common sense and lead and don't get squishy because time has passed and maybe it's not on the news every single day, if that's who we are, if that's our character, that we're willing to follow through on commitments that we say are important—commitments to each other and to our kids—then I'm confident we can make this country a safer place for all of them.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Katerina Rodgaard, member, Mothers Demand Action for Gun Sense in America; Cleopatra Crowley-Pendleton, mother of Hadiya Z. Pendleton, who was killed in Chicago, IL, on January 29; Chris McDonnell, father of Grace McDonnell, who was killed in the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, on December 14, 2012; and Corey T. Thornblad, social studies teacher, Joyce Kilmer Middle School in Vienna, VA.

Remarks Following a Meeting With African Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

March 28, 2013

The President. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome four leaders from Africa, all of whom are doing extraordinary work: President Sall from Senegal, President Banda from Malawi, President Koroma from Sierra Leone, and Prime Minister Neves from Cape Verde.

The reason that I'm meeting with these four is, they exemplify the progress that we're seeing in Africa. All of them have had to deal with some extraordinary challenges. Sierra Leone, just 10 years ago, was in the midst of as brutal a civil war as we've ever seen. And yet now we've seen consecutive fair and free elections. And under President Koroma's leadership, we've seen not only good governance, but also significant economic growth.

When you talk about Malawi, there was a constitutional crisis just last year. And yet President Banda has not only been able to be in office and make sure that constitutional order was restored, but has also made significant progress on behalf of her people. And her personal story of overcoming a history of abuse and leading women throughout her country, I think, indicates the kinds of progress that can be made when you've got strong leadership.

The same is true for His Excellency President Sall. There were some bumps in the road in terms of transition from the previous President, and yet the Senegalese rose up at a grassroots level and sustained their democracy.

And Cape Verde is a real success story. We were hearing from Prime Minister Neves about the fact that just in a few decades, they've moved from a per capita income of maybe $200 a year to now $4,000 a year and are now moving into the middle of the pack in terms of development levels because of good governance and management.

So what our discussion has focused on is, number one, how do we continue to build on strong democracies, how do we continue to build on transparency and accountability. Because what we've learned over the last several decades is that when you've got good governance—when you have democracies that work, sound management of public funds, transparency and accountability to the citizens that put leaders in place—it turns out that that is not only good for the state and the functioning of government, it's also good for economic development, because it gives people confidence, it attracts business, it facilitates trade and commerce.

And all of these leaders have good stories to tell on that. They recognize that there's still

more work to be done, and so I'm very pleased that all of them are looking to move forward on the Open Government Partnership that we helped to organize through the United Nations several years ago and that we are now seeing countries from all across the world sign up for, setting up international norms for accountability and transparency that can lead to good governance.

We also talked about the economic situation. And all of us recognize that, although Africa has actually been growing faster than almost every other region of the world, it started from a low baseline, and it still has a lot of work to do. And that means building human capacity and improving education and job skills for rapidly growing and young populations. It means improving access to energy and transportation sectors. And so we discussed how the United States can continue to partner effectively with each of these countries.

And then, we finally talked about young people generally and how we can mobilize the next generation of African leadership. And individuals like President Koroma have taken great interest in finding additional ways that we can recruit and engage young people not only to get involved in public service, but also to get involved in entrepreneurship that helps build these countries.

And so my main message to each of these leaders is that the United States is going to be a strong partner, not based on the old model in which we are a donor and they are simply a recipient, but a new model that's based on partnership and recognizing that no continent has greater potential or greater upside than the continent of Africa if they in fact have the kind of strong leadership that these four individuals represent.

And we intend to continue to engage with them through a range of programs—through the Millennium Challenge, through the USAID, through the PEPFAR programs—but we're also looking for new models that can potentially improve our bilateral relations even more.

The last point I'd make: We all discussed some of the regional challenges involved. Obviously, economic development, prosperity doesn't happen if you have constant conflict. And nobody knows that more than these individuals. Some, like President Koroma, has seen that firsthand.

Now many of the threats are transnational. You've seen terrorism infiltrate into the region. We've seen drug cartels that are using West Africa in particular as a transit point. All of this undermines some of the progress that's been made, and so the United States will continue to cooperate with each of these countries to try to find smart solutions so that they can build additional capacity and make sure that these cancers don't grow in their region. And the United States intends to be a strong partner for that.

So I just want to say to each of them, thank you for your extraordinary work. You should know that you have a great friend in the United States, in the people of the United States, and in the President of the United States, because we believe that if you're successful, that ultimately will help us grow our economies and contribute to a more peaceful world as well. So thank you very much.

Thank you, guys.

Health of Former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa

Q. Mandela? You can be brief.

The President. Well, obviously, we're all deeply concerned with Nelson Mandela's health. He's a hero, I think, to all of us. I'm sure that I speak for the other leaders here. And we will be keeping him in our thoughts and prayers and his entire family. He is as strong physically as he's been in character and in leadership over so many decades, and hopefully, he will come out of this latest challenge.

But we all recognize that he has given everything to his people, the people of South Africa, to the people of the continent, and he's ended up being an inspiration to all of us. When you think of a single individual that embodies the kind of leadership qualities that I think we all aspire to, the first name that comes up is Nelson Mandela, and so we wish him all the very best.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal.

Statement on the Nomination of General Philip M. Breedlove To Be Supreme Allied Commander Europe
March 28, 2013

Today I am proud to announce my intention to nominate General Philip Breedlove as the next Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and Commander of U.S. European Command. For over three decades, General Breedlove has served with distinction in assignments at all levels of the U.S. Air Force and around the globe, from Washington to Germany, Italy, Spain, and South Korea. As Commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and the Commander of NATO's Allied Air Command, General Breedlove has established trust and deep relations with our NATO allies and partners, assets he will draw upon in taking on this important new role on behalf of the United States and the alliance.

If confirmed by the Senate, General Breedlove will replace Admiral Jim Stavridis as the Supreme Allied Commander in late Spring. Admiral Stavridis has played an absolutely essential role in strengthening the NATO alliance to meet the challenges of the 21st century, to include enhancing our collective capabilities and partnerships. I am grateful for his steadfast service on behalf of our country and NATO.

Statement on the Decision of Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston, Massachusetts, Not To Seek Reelection
March 28, 2013

Boston is the vibrant, welcoming, and world-class city it is today because of Tom Menino. For more than two decades, Mayor Menino has served the city and every one of its residents with extraordinary leadership, vision, and compassion. His efforts to revitalize neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, better integrate police officers into their communities and reduce gun violence, reach out to the homeless and marginalized, and engage young people in the life of their city has charted Boston on a course for a better future. No two people wear their hearts on their sleeve for the City of Boston and its people as openly as Tom and Angela Menino. And as they depart City Hall next year, Boston will be a better place to live, work, and raise a family because of the Meninos' proud service to the city they love.

Statement on the 15th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement
March 28, 2013

As Easter approaches, we mark the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday agreement. The people of Northern Ireland and their leaders have traveled a great distance over the past 15 years. Step by step, they have traded bullets for ballots, destruction and division for dialogue and institutions, and pointed the way toward a shared future for all. There is urgent work still to be done, and there will be more tests to come. There are still those few who prefer to look backward rather than forward, who prefer to inspire hate rather than hope. The many who have brought Northern Ireland this far must keep rejecting their call. From building cross-community trust to bringing opportunity to hard-to-reach communities in Belfast and beyond, every citizen and every political party needs to work together in service

of true and lasting peace and prosperity. And at every step of the way, the United States will be there as a friend and partner. That is the message I will carry with me when I visit Northern Ireland and attend the G–8 summit in June.

On behalf of the American people, I salute the people and leaders of Northern Ireland and the model they have given to others struggling toward peace and reconciliation around the world. I pledge our continued support for their efforts to build a strong society, a vibrant economy, and an enduring peace.

Remarks at PortMiami in Miami, Florida
March 29, 2013

The President. Hello, Miami! It is good to be back. You know, I've been waiting for spring. I realize I just had to come down to Miami. [*Laughter*] It is wonderful to be here.

We've got some outstanding Representatives in Congress from this area. Joe Garcia is in the house. Frederica Wilson is in the house. And we've got Debbie Wasserman Schultz here. I want to thank the mayor of Miami-Dade County, Carlos Gimenez. And of course, it's good to see all of you. And I want to thank the gentlemen who just gave me a amazing tour of the PortMiami Tunnel.

Audience member. Yay!

The President. What are you yelling about? Hey, sweetie.

Audience member. She came just to see you!

The President. Okay, well, hello. [*Laughter*] She's going to be a politician, because I could hear her without a mike from far away. [*Laughter*]

Now, before we get started, I've got to get into a sticky subject right off the bat. I know you guys aren't happy with my Chicago Bulls.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. But I just want you to know the Heat are going to be just fine. They're going to be okay. They are playing basketball the right way. The Hurricanes—they had a great season—no, no, they deserve a big round of applause. Tonight you've got Florida and Florida Gulf Coast going at it. One of them will go to the Elite Eight. So let's face it: Florida is the center of basketball right now.

But I'm not here to talk about hoops. I'm here to talk about one of the plans that I put forward in my State of the Union Address: a plan to put people to work rebuilding America.

I've come to PortMiami today because there are few more important things we can do to create jobs right now and strengthen our economy over the long haul than rebuilding the infrastructure that powers our businesses and our economy: our roads, our bridges, our schools, and our ports just like this one.

As President, my top priority is to make sure we are doing everything we can to reignite the true engine of our economic growth, and that is a rising, thriving middle class. A growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs. That's got to be our true north. That's what has to guide our efforts every single day. And to do that, we should be asking ourselves three questions every single day. Number one, how do we make America a magnet for good jobs? Number two, how do we equip our workers with the skills they need to do the jobs? Number three, how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

When it comes to good jobs, no workers were hammered harder by the recession than construction workers. Fortunately, the unemployment rate for construction has been cut nearly in half over the past 3 years, partly because the housing market is starting to bounce back. But construction still has the highest unemployment rate of any industry. Breaking ground on more projects like this tunnel that I just saw means more good construction jobs that can't be outsourced. They have to be done right here in America. And they end up giving people good pay and good opportunities to raise their families.

Projects like this create a lot of other good jobs too. You ask any CEO where would they rather locate their business and hire new work-

ers. Are you going to set up shop in a country that's got raggedy roads, runways that are potholed; backed up supply chains? Or are you going to seek out high-speed rail, Internet, high-tech schools, new state-of-the-art power grids, new bridges, new tunnels, new ports that help you ship products made in America to the rest of the world as fast as possible? That's what people are looking for. That's what CEOs are looking for.

When you ask companies who brought jobs back to America in the last few years, they'll say, if we upgrade our infrastructure, we'll bring even more. So what are we waiting for? There's work to be done, there are workers who are ready to do it. Let's prove to the world there's no better place to do business than right here in the United States of America, and let's get started rebuilding America.

Now, over the last 4 years, we've done some good work. Construction crews have built or improved more than 350,000 miles of road. That's enough to circle the globe 14 times. We've upgraded more than 6,000 miles of rail, enough to go coast to coast and back. We've repaired or replaced more than 20,000 bridges. We've helped get tens of thousands of construction workers back on the job.

Because of these efforts, when the American Society of Engineers [American Society of Civil Engineers]* put out their 2013 report card on our national infrastructure, they gave it the best overall grade in 12 years. That's the good news. The bad news is we went from a D to a D-plus. We still have all kinds of deferred maintenance. We still have too many ports that aren't equipped for today's world commerce. We've still got too many rail lines that are too slow and clogged up. We've still got too many roads that are in disrepair, too many bridges that aren't safe.

We don't have to accept that for America. We can do better. We can build better. And in a time of tight budgets, we've got to do it in a way that makes sure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Now what these outstanding folks here in Miami have been doing is a good example of how my plan would work. Port of Miami is a busy place. Hundreds of cargo containers pass through every day. Nearly one in five cruise ship passengers in North America sets sail from this port. All that commerce helps support a whole lot of high-paying jobs not just in Miami-Dade, but throughout the region.

But it also, let's face it, creates some congestion. Right now 16,000 cars and trucks travel to and from PortMiami every day, and they're stuck going through downtown. And those traffic jams are bad for business. Whether you're a small-business owner in South Beach or a manufacturer in Atlanta trying to get your goods overseas, that congestion wastes time and money.

Now some smart folks decided we could solve this problem by digging under the bay, linking the port directly to the highway. State, county, and local governments got together and agreed to jointly fund PortMiami Tunnel. Everybody had some skin in the game. They did something else; they partnered with a group of private sector companies to finance the design and construction of the project. They made it clear that the payments to these companies would be linked to their performance so if there were big cost overruns, the private companies would have to eat those extra costs. Because of those efforts, construction workers are on the job digging this tunnel, doing great jobs, getting good pay, boosting the economy, strengthening it for the long run. The port is in better shape, which means it's going to be able to get all the containers that are coming in from all around the world, matched up with the improvements that are being done on the Panama Canal, which means we're not going to be losing jobs to other countries.

We can do this not just here in Miami-Dade, but we can do this all across the country. So today I'm expanding on a proposal I made in the State of the Union. I'm calling it a Partnership to Rebuild America. It's a partnership with the

* White House correction.

private sector that creates jobs upgrading what our businesses need most: modern ports to move our goods, modern pipelines to withstand a storm, modern schools worthy of our children.

And my plan does three things. First, we'll set up an independent fund that will attract private investment to build projects like this one and make sure companies share in the risk and returns. Instead of picking projects based on pork barrel politics, we'll pick them based on how much good they'll actually do for the economy, how much the projects make sense. And we'll better finance projects that involve more than one mode of transportation or more than one town or State, with less redtape to gum up the works. So all of this will make the process more efficient. It will help us break ground on some of the projects that our cities and States need most, and they can do it faster and better.

Second, we're going to fund more projects at less cost, by establishing a new infrastructure initiative called America Fast Forward bonds. It's going to give mayors and Governors more flexibility and power to attract private investment for public projects.

Number three, we'll strengthen a loan program that in recent years has helped Governors and mayors leverage four times the money Washington put into it and that means we're helping construction workers get on the job quicker, repaying taxpayers their hard-earned money faster. That's the kind of approach we used to help PortMiami Tunnel get off the ground—or I guess underground. [*Laughter*]

That's the Partnership to Rebuild America. That's how we'll create good jobs, doing the work America needs done. That's how we'll encourage more businesses to start here and grow here and hire workers here.

And by the way, this should not be a partisan idea. I know in Washington, people just like to argue. I guess it gets them on TV. But the fact is you've got the Chamber of Commerce and the AFL–CIO agreeing to better infrastructure, knowing that it will help both businesses and workers. So if you're got the Chamber and the unions agreeing, then the politicians should be able to agree too. Building better roads and bridges and schools, that's not a partisan idea. And in fact, that's where you can get mayors and Governors from both parties to find some common ground.

I know that Members of Congress are happy to welcome projects like this in their districts. I know because I've seen them at the ribbon cuttings. [*Laughter*] They'll all say how, no, we don't want to do it. And then, they're all writing me letters saying, we really need this port. Cut somebody else's port out. That's what they'll say. Cut somebody else's road. Cut somebody else's—well, no, we're all in this together. So if you think it's good for your district, then it's probably good for other districts too.

We can't afford Washington politics to stand in the way of America's progress. So I've put forward some ideas to get the private sector involved to protect taxpayer dollars. But ultimately, Congress has to fund these projects. And by the way, the three Members of Congress who are here, they all believe in this, they all support it. It will put people back to work and it will grow our economy in the process.

So, Miami-Dade, my main message is: Let's get this done. Let's rebuild this country we love. Let's make sure we're staying on the cutting edge. Let's make sure we've always got the best ports. Let's make sure we've got the best airports. Let's make sure we've got the best rail lines. Let's make sure we've got the best roads. Let's make sure we've got the best schools.

We're going to push on this issue each and every day, and make sure we get the middle class going again. We're going to fix our economy. We're going to fix our immigration system. We are going to make sure that our young people are getting a great education. We're going to prevent them from being victims of gun violence. We are going to make sure that everybody in this country has a fair shot and is doing their fair share so that when we pass on this country to the next generation and the generation after that, we'll be able to

once again say that here in the United States of America, it doesn't matter what you look like or where you come from, if you work hard, you can make it.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m.

Statement on the Observance of Easter
March 29, 2013

This weekend, Michelle and I join our fellow Christians here at home and around the world in marking Good Friday and celebrating Easter. These holy days are a time to reflect on the momentous sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for each of us and to celebrate the triumph of the resurrection and His gift of grace. It is a time for renewed hope amidst continued challenges. It's also a time to ponder the common values that unite us: to have compassion for all and to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves. As we embrace our loved ones and give thanks for our blessings, we wish all who celebrate with us a blessed Easter.

The President's Weekly Address
March 30, 2013

Hi, everybody. For millions of Americans, this is a special and sacred time of year.

This week, Jewish families gathered around the Seder table, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and the triumph of faith over oppression. And this weekend, Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and I will join Christians around the world to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hopeful promise of Easter.

In the midst of all of our busy and noisy lives, these holy days afford us the precious opportunity to slow down and spend some quiet moments in prayer and reflection. As Christians, my family and I remember the incredible sacrifice Jesus made for each and every one of us, how He took on the sins of the world and extended the gift of salvation. And we recommit ourselves to following His example here on Earth, to loving our Lord and Savior, to loving our neighbors, and to seeing everyone, especially "the least of these," as a child of God.

Of course, those values are at the heart not just of the Christian faith, but of all faiths. From Judaism to Islam, Hinduism to Sikhism, there echoes a powerful call to serve our brothers and sisters, to keep in our hearts a deep and abiding compassion for all, and to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves.

That's the common humanity that binds us together. And as Americans, we're united by something else too: faith in the ideals that lie at the heart of our founding and the belief that, as part of something bigger than ourselves, we have a shared responsibility to look out for our fellow citizens.

So this weekend, I hope we're all able to take a moment and pause and reflect, to embrace our loved ones, to give thanks for our blessings, to rededicate ourselves to interests larger than our own. And to all the Christian families who are celebrating the resurrection, Michelle and I wish you a blessed and joyful Easter.

God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 6:15 p.m. on March 29 in the Grand Foyer at the White House for broadcast on March 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 29, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 30.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll
April 1, 2013

The President. Miss Jessica Sanchez, everybody! Give her a big round of applause. Kid President—give Kid President a big round of applause. The Easter Bunny is here. Give Easter Bunny a big round of applause.

It is wonderful to see all of you. And I just want to say welcome. You guys brought the great weather. It was a little shaky this morning, but all of you did a great job sending a message upstairs, and now we've got beautiful weather.

And I now want to introduce the star of the Obama family, my wife, the First Lady, Michelle Obama.

The First Lady. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Kid President, Robbie Novak. Isn't he wonderful? Robbie, we're so proud to have you here. You have been so inspiring. I can't imagine that there's anyone who hasn't seen your video, right? You make us all want to work hard and be better. That's right. So you're going to spend a little time in the Oval Office just fixing things up for this President, aren't you? All right, well, it's good to have you here.

And it's great to have everyone here this morning. We are so excited. The Easter egg roll is the biggest event that we have here on the South Lawn of the White House each year. Today we're going to have more than 30,000 people who will pass through this yard in celebration of nutrition and health and activity. And we could not do this if it were not for all of our wonderful volunteers, our staff, all of the terrific performers and athletes who have taken time out of their lives and their busy days to make this important. So we need to give all of them a round of applause for all their hard work. Yes, indeed!

So today we want you to have a great time. We want you to run around. We want you to go over and see the White House Garden. We want you to learn about making tasty, healthy food. We're going to come down and do some Easter egg roll. We're going to read some stories. But overall, we want you guys to have a good time and keep moving and be healthy. And, kids, eat your vegetables, okay?

All right, you all, take care. We'll see you down there. Bye-bye. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. from the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musician Jessica Sanchez, who sang the national anthem.

Remarks on Science and Technology
April 2, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, first of all, let me thank Dr. Collins not just for the introduction, but for his incredible leadership at NIH. Those of you who know Francis also know that he's quite a gifted singer and musician. So I was asking whether he was going to be willing to sing the introduction—[*laughter*]—and he declined.

But his leadership has been extraordinary. And I'm glad I've been promoted Scientist in Chief. [*Laughter*] Given my grades in physics, I'm not sure it's deserving, but I hold science in proper esteem, so maybe that gives me a little credit.

Today I've invited some of the smartest people in the country, some of the most imaginative and effective researchers in the country—some very smart people—to talk about the challenge that I issued in my State of the Union Address: to grow our economy, to create new jobs, to reignite a rising, thriving middle class by investing in one of our core strengths, and that's American innovation.

Ideas are what power our economy. It's what sets us apart. It's what America has been all about. We have been a nation of dreamers

and risk takers, people who see what nobody else sees, sooner than anybody else sees it. We do innovation better than anybody else, and that makes our economy stronger. When we invest in the best ideas before anybody else does, our businesses and our workers can make the best products and deliver the best services before anybody else.

And because of that incredible dynamism, we don't just attract the best scientists or the best entrepreneurs, we also continually invest in their success. We support labs and universities to help them learn and explore. And we fund grants to help them turn a dream into a reality. And we have a patent system to protect their inventions. And we offer loans to help them turn those inventions into successful businesses.

And the investments don't always pay off. But when they do, they change our lives in ways that we could never have imagined. Computer chips and GPS technology, the Internet—all these things grew out of Government investments in basic research. And sometimes, in fact, some of the best products and services spin off completely from unintended research that nobody expected to have certain applications. Businesses then use that technology to create countless new jobs.

So the founders of Google got their early support from the National Science Foundation. The Apollo project that put a man on the Moon also gave us, eventually, CAT scans. And every dollar we spent to map the human genome has returned $140 to our economy—$1 of investment, $140 in return. Dr. Collins helped lead that genome effort, and that's why we thought it was appropriate to have him here to announce the next great American project, and that's what we're calling the BRAIN Initiative.

As humans, we can identify galaxies light years away, we can study particles smaller than an atom. But we still haven't unlocked the mystery of the three pounds of matter that sits between our ears. [*Laughter*] But today, scientists possess the capability to study individual neurons and figure out the main functions of certain areas of the brain. But a human brain contains almost 100 billion neurons making trillions of connections. So Dr. Collins says it's like listening to the string section and trying to figure out what the whole orchestra sounds like. So, as a result, we're still unable to cure diseases like Alzheimer's or autism or fully reverse the effects of a stroke. And the most powerful computer in the world isn't nearly as intuitive as the one we're born with.

So there is this enormous mystery waiting to be unlocked, and the BRAIN Initiative will change that by giving scientists the tools they need to get a dynamic picture of the brain in action and better understand how we think and how we learn and how we remember. And that knowledge could be—will be—transformative.

In the budget I will send to Congress next week, I will propose a significant investment by the National Institutes of Health, DARPA, and the National Science Foundation to help get this project off the ground. I'm directing my bioethics commission to make sure all of the research is being done in a responsible way. And we're also partnering with the private sector, including leading companies and foundations and research institutions, to tap the Nation's brightest minds to help us reach our goal.

And of course, none of this will be easy. If it was, we would already know everything there was about how the brain works, and presumably my life would be simpler here. [*Laughter*] It would—could explain all kinds of things that go on in Washington. [*Laughter*] We could prescribe something. [*Laughter*]

So it won't be easy. But think about what we could do once we do crack this code. Imagine if no family had to feel helpless watching a loved one disappear behind the mask of Parkinson's or struggle in the grip of epilepsy. Imagine if we could reverse traumatic brain injury or PTSD for our veterans who are coming home. Imagine if someone with a prosthetic limb can now play the piano or throw a baseball as well as anybody else because the wiring from the brain to that prosthetic is direct and triggered by what's already happening in the patient's mind. What if computers could respond to our thoughts or our language barriers

could come tumbling down. Or if millions of Americans were suddenly finding new jobs in these fields—jobs we haven't even dreamt up yet—because we chose to invest in this project.

That's the future we're imagining. That's what we're hoping for. That's why the BRAIN Initiative is so absolutely important. And that's why it's so important that we think about basic research generally as a driver of growth and that we replace the across-the-board budget cuts that are threatening to set us back before we even get started. A few weeks ago, the directors of some of our national laboratories said that the sequester—these arbitrary, across-the-board cuts that have gone into place—are so severe, so poorly designed, that they will hold back a generation of young scientists.

When our leading thinkers wonder if it still makes sense to encourage young people to get involved in science in the first place because they're not sure whether the research funding and the grants will be there to cultivate an entire new generation of scientists, that's something we should worry about. We can't afford to miss these opportunities while the rest of the world races ahead. We have to seize them. I don't want the next job-creating discoveries to happen in China or India or Germany, I want them to happen right here, in the United States of America.

And that's part of what this BRAIN Initiative is about. That's why we're pursuing other grand challenges like making solar energy as cheap as coal or making electric vehicles as affordable as the ones that run on gas. They're ambitious goals, but they're achievable. And we're encouraging companies and research universities and other organizations to get involved and help us make progress.

We have a chance to improve the lives of not just millions, but billions of people on this planet through the research that's done in this BRAIN Initiative alone. But it's going to require a serious effort, a sustained effort. And it's going to require us as a country to embody and embrace that spirit of discovery that is what made America America.

The year before I was born, an American company came out with one of the earliest minicomputers. It was a revolutionary machine, didn't require its own air conditioning system. That was a big deal. It took only one person to operate, but each computer was 8 feet tall, weighed 1,200 pounds, and cost more than $100,000. And today, most of the people in this room, including the person whose cell phone just rang—[*laughter*]—have a far more powerful computer in their pocket. Computers have become so small, so universal, so ubiquitous, most of us can't imagine life without them; certainly, my kids can't.

And as a consequence, millions of Americans work in fields that didn't exist before their parents were born. Watson—the computer that won "Jeopardy!"—is now being used in hospitals across the country to diagnose diseases like cancer. That's how much progress has been made in my lifetime and in many of yours. That's how fast we can move when we make the investments.

But we can't predict what that next big thing will be. We don't know what life will be like 20 years from now or 50 years or 100 years down the road. What we do know is if we keep investing in the most prominent, promising solutions to our toughest problems, then things will get better.

I don't want our children or grandchildren to look back on this day and wish we had done more to keep America at the cutting edge. I want them to look back and be proud that we took some risks, that we seized this opportunity. That's what the American story is about. That's who we are. That's why this BRAIN Initiative is so important. And if we keep taking bold steps like the one we're talking about to learn about the brain, then I'm confident America will continue to lead the world in the next frontiers of human understanding. And all of you are going to help us get there.

So I'm very excited about this project. Francis, let's get to work. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:04 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his re-

marks, he referred to Larry Page and Sergey M. Brin, cofounders, Google Inc.; Eric D. Isaacs, Director, Argonne National Laboratory; Thom Mason, Director, Oak Ridge National Laboratory; and A. Paul Alivisatos, Director, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore
April 2, 2013

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure for me to welcome my good friend, Prime Minister Lee, to the Oval Office. He and I have had interacted in a whole range of international fora, and not surprisingly, he has proven to be an outstanding partner for us on the international stage, not surprising because Singapore and the United States have historically had an extraordinary relationship. Singapore is one of the most successful countries in the world.

I think their progress and their development over the last several decades has been an example for many countries around the world. We have extremely close military cooperation. And I want to thank Singapore for all the facilities that they provide that allow us to maintain our effective Pacific presence.

They are an outstanding economic partner. Over the last decade, since we signed our free trade agreement, we have seen a doubling of trade between our countries, and that creates jobs here in the United States as well as in Singapore. As a leader in ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, they've provided, I think, a steady vision of how countries in the Pacific region can cooperate effectively for the prosperity and security of all and are strong promoters of rules of the road and international norms that the United States strongly supports.

And so, across the board, we have very much appreciated the extraordinary relationship between our two countries. And personally, I can tell you that there are very few world leaders who I am more appreciative of, in terms of their advice and counsel and thoughtful analysis, than Prime Minister Lee.

And as we continue the process that we called rebalancing when I first came into office, we've continued to seek out the advice and good counsel of Singapore in how to effect that in a way that creates not only strong security, but also increase prosperity for both the United States and the countries of the region.

So I'm very thankful for Singapore and its partnership. I'm thankful for Prime Minister Lee for his outstanding work. I'm grateful for the people of Singapore. As many of you know, I spent some time in my youth in this part of the world and have a great fondness and affection for the people of Singapore. I'm extraordinarily pleased to see their great success, and I'm looking forward to a very productive discussion about how we can continue to improve prospects for people not just in the Asia-Pacific region, but around the world.

So thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Lee. Well, thank you, Mr. President. I'm very happy to be here in Washington during cherry blossom season and very honored to be calling on the President so early in his second term.

We have very good relations between Singapore and the United States, grown in deep cooperation. We work together in education, research and development. We work together in economic areas and trade. We work together in counterterrorism and defense. And it's a comprehensive relationship, and we look forward particularly in the next few weeks to welcoming the first littoral combat ship, which will be arriving in Singapore, and we will be playing host to it for a few months.

But more broadly, Singapore is very happy that the U.S. and the Obama administration has been putting greater emphasis on its relations with Asia, that it's rebalancing towards Asia, and that it's engaging Asia across many fronts, not just security, but also economics,

also cultural and educational. And Singapore would like to be of help in furthering this process in deepening the relationship.

The TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, is a very important part of it, and we're working on that agenda now. There's also work going on deepening ASEAN's relations with the United States, which the President initiated when we last met in November back then.

And there are other important bilateral relationships in Asia, including what is perhaps the most important bilateral relationship in the world, which is between the U.S. and China. And we are happy that the administration's attention is focused on this, and Singapore will do our part what we can to help America engage the region constructively, productively, and in a way which fosters stability and prosperity for all other countries.

So I'm very happy to be here, to be calling on this President, and I hope I'll have the opportunity to invite him to come and visit Singapore before too long and for me to reciprocate his wonderful hospitality.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Gun Violence in Denver, Colorado
April 3, 2013

Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you. Well, it is wonderful to be back in Colorado. It is wonderful to be back in Denver. I want to thank Chief White for that introduction. You've got some outstanding elected officials who are here today, and I want to acknowledge them. First of all, a wonderful Governor, John Hickenlooper is here. He's here somewhere. I know, because I just talked to him. [*Laughter*] There he is. Next to him, an outstanding Lieutenant Governor, Joe Garcia. One of the finest young Senators in the country, Michael Bennet is here. Terrific Members of the House of Representatives: Ed Perlmutter and Diana DeGette. And your own mayor, Michael Hancock, is here.

I want to say thank you to the Denver Police for having me here, more importantly, for the outstanding work that all of you do each and every day to serve your communities and protect your citizens.

Before I came out here, I had a chance to sit down with some local law enforcement, Attorney General Holder, and some of the leaders I just mentioned, the wonderful mayor of Aurora who's here, and sportsmen, parents, loved ones of the victims of the shootings in Columbine and Aurora. And we talked about what we can do to protect more of our citizens from gun violence.

And from the beginning of this effort, we've wanted law enforcement front and center in shaping this discussion and the reforms that emerge from it, because law enforcement lives this every day. Law enforcement are the first to see the terrible consequences of any kind of violence, certainly gun violence: lives lost, families broken, communities that are changed forever. They're very often in the line of fire. The law enforcement knows what works and what doesn't, and so we wanted that experience and that advice.

And it was also important for us to hear from mayors like Steve Hogan, because he's been on the frontlines having to deal with these issues, under incredibly sad circumstances. And I've come to Denver today in particular because Colorado is proving a model of what's possible.

It's now been just over 100 days since the murder of 20 innocent children and 6 brave educators in Newtown, Connecticut, an event that shocked this country and, I think, galvanized parents all across the country to say, we've got to do something more to protect our kids. But consider this: Over those 100 days or so, more than 100 times as many Americans have fallen victim to gun violence. More than 2,000 of our fellow citizens, struck down, often because they were just going about their daily round. They weren't doing anything special.

Just doing what folks do every day: shopping, going to school. Every day that we wait to do something about it, even more of our fellow citizens are stolen from our lives by a bullet from a gun.

Now, the good news is, Colorado has already chosen to do something about it. Look, this is a State that has suffered the tragedy of two of the worst mass shootings in our history: 14 years ago this month in Columbine and just last year in Aurora. But this is also a State that treasures its Second Amendment rights, the State of proud hunters and sportsmen. And by the way, the Governor wanted me to remind everybody that there is outstanding elk hunting here in Colorado. [*Laughter*] There's a strong tradition of gun ownership that's handed down from generation to generation, and it's part of the fabric of people's lives. And they treat gun ownership with reverence and respect.

And so I'm here because I believe there doesn't have to be a conflict in reconciling these realities. There doesn't have to be a conflict between protecting our citizens and protecting our Second Amendment rights. I've got stacks of letters in my office from proud gun owners, whether they're for sport or protection or collection, who tell me how deeply they cherish their rights, don't want them infringed upon, but they still want us to do something to stop the epidemic of gun violence. And I appreciate every one of those letters. And I've learned from them.

And I think that Colorado has shown that practical progress is possible thanks to the leadership of wonderful Governor Hickenlooper and some of the State legislators who are here today. When I was talking to Steve, he mentioned that Aurora is very much a purple city. It's got a majority Republican city council; a majority of the State legislators are Democrat. But they came together understanding that out of this tragedy, there had to be something that made sense. And so we've seen enacted tougher background checks that won't infringe on the rights of responsible gun owners, but will help keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

Now, in January, just a few weeks after Newtown, I put forward a series of commonsense proposals along the same lines as what's passed here in Colorado to reduce gun violence and keep our kids safe. In my State of the Union Address, I urged Congress to give these proposals a vote. And by the way, before we even asked for a vote, I had already signed numerous Executive orders doing what we could administratively to make sure that guns don't fall into the hands of the wrong people.

But what I said then is still true: If we're really going to tackle this problem seriously, then we've got to get Congress to take the next step. And as soon as next week, they will be voting. As soon as next week, every Senator will get to vote on whether or not we should require background checks for anyone who wants to purchase a gun.

Now, some say, well, we already have background checks. And they're right. Over the past 20 years, those background checks have kept more than 2 million dangerous people from buying a gun. But the loopholes that currently exist in the law have allowed way too many criminals and folks who shouldn't be getting guns, it's allowed them to avoid background checks entirely. That makes it harder for law enforcement to do its job. It's not safe. It's not smart. And by the way, it's not fair to responsible gun owners who are playing by the rules.

Now, understand, nobody is talking about creating an entirely new system. We are simply talking about plugging holes, sealing a porous system that isn't working as well as it should. If you want to buy a gun, whether it's from a licensed dealer or a private seller, you should at least have to pass a background check to show you're not a criminal or someone legally prohibited from buying one. And that's just common sense.

During our roundtable discussion, Governor Hickenlooper, I know, was in the midst of this passionate debate about the legislation here in Colorado, and some people said, well, background checks aren't going to stop everybody. And the Governor was the first one to acknowledge, yes, they won't stop everybody, but as he

pointed out, statistically, there are a whole bunch of folks who have been stopped.

As a consequence of background checks, law enforcement has been able to stop people who had been convicted of murder from getting a gun, people who are under restraining orders for having committed violent domestic abuse from getting a gun. In a couple of cases—the Governor mentioned to me—law enforcement has actually been able to arrest people who came to pick up their gun—[*laughter*]—because they were criminals, wanted.

So this does work. And by the way, if you're selling a gun, wouldn't you want to know who you're selling it to? Wouldn't you want to know? Wouldn't you want in your conscience to know that the person you're selling to isn't going to commit a crime?

So these enhanced background checks won't stop all gun crimes, but they will certainly help prevent some. This is common sense. And by the way, most gun owners—more than 80 percent—agree this makes sense. More than 70 percent of NRA members agree. Ninety percent of the American people agree. So there's no reason we can't do this unless politics is getting in the way. There's no reason we can't do this.

As soon as next week, every Senator will get a chance to vote on a proposal to help strengthen school safety and help people struggling with mental health problems get the treatment that they need.

As soon as next week, every Senator will get to vote on whether or not we should crack down on folks who buy guns as part of a scheme to arm criminals. That would keep more guns off the streets and out of the hands of people who are intent on doing harm. And it would make life a whole lot easier and safer for the people behind me, police officers.

Every Senator will get a say on whether or not we should keep weapons of war and high-capacity ammunition magazines that facilitate mass killings off our streets. The type of assault rifle used in Aurora, for example, when paired with a high-capacity magazine, has one purpose: to pump out as many bullets as possible, as fast as possible. It's what allowed that gunman to shoot 70 people and kill 12 in a matter of a few minutes. I don't believe that weapons designed for theaters of war have a place in movie theaters. Most Americans agree with that.

Most of these ideas are not controversial. Right now 90 percent of Americans—90 percent—support background checks that will keep criminals and people who have been found to be a danger to themselves or others from buying a gun. More than 80 percent of Republicans agree. Most gun owners agree. Think about it: How often do 90 percent of Americans agree on anything? [*Laughter*]

And yet there are already some Senators back in Washington floating the idea that they might use obscure procedural stunts to prevent or delay any of these votes on reform. Think about that. They're not just saying they'll vote no on the proposal that most Americans support. They're saying they'll do everything they can to avoid even allowing a vote on a proposal that the overwhelming majority of the American people support. They're saying your opinion doesn't matter.

Now, we knew from the beginning that change wouldn't be easy. And we knew that there would be powerful voices that would do everything they could to run out the clock, change the subject, ignore the majority of the American people. We knew they'd try to make any progress collapse under the weight of fear and frustration, or maybe people would just stop paying attention.

The only way this time will be different is if the American people demand that this time it must be different, that this time we must do something to protect our communities and our kids. We need parents, we need teachers, we need police officers, we need pastors, we need hunters and sportsmen—Americans of every background—to say, we've suffered too much pain and care too much about our children to allow this continue. We're not going to just wait for the next Newtown or the next Aurora before we act. And I genuinely believe that's what the overwhelming majority of Americans—I don't care what party they belong to—that's

what they want. They just want to see some progress.

It was interesting, during the conversation, a number of people had talked about the trust issue. Part of the reason it's so hard to get this done is because both sides of the debate sometimes don't listen to each other. The people who take absolute positions on these issues, on both sides, sometimes aren't willing to concede even an inch of ground.

And so one of the questions we talked about was, how do you build trust? How do you rebuild some trust? And I told the story about two conversations I had. The first conversation was when Michelle came back from doing some campaigning out in rural Iowa. And we were sitting at dinner, and she had been to a big county, a lot of driving out there, a lot of farmland. And she said, you know, if I was living out in a farm in Iowa, I'd probably want a gun too. If somebody just drives up into your driveway, and you're not home, you don't know who these people are, and you don't know how long it's going to take for the sheriffs to respond. I can see why you'd want some guns for protection. That's one conversation.

I had another conversation just a couple of months ago with a mom from Chicago—actually, Evanston, Illinois—whose son had been killed in a random shooting. And she said, you know, I hate it when people tell me that my son was shot because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was in the right place. He was on his way to school. He wasn't in the wrong place. He was exactly where he was supposed to be.

Now, both those things are true. And sometimes, we're so divided between rural and urban, and folks whose hunting is part of their lives and folks whose only experience with guns is street crime. And the two sides just talk past one another. And more than anything, what I want to just emphasize is, there are good people on both sides of this thing, but we have to be able to put ourselves in the other person's shoes. If you're a hunter, if you're a sportsman, if you have a gun in your house for protection, you've got to understand what it feels like for that mom whose son was randomly shot.

And if you live in an urban area and you're worried about street crime, you've got to understand what it might be like if you grew out on a ranch and your dad had been taking you hunting all your life. And we had a couple of sportsmen in our conversation today, and I thought one of them said something very important. He said, all my experiences with guns have been positive, but I realize that for others, all their experiences about guns have been negative. Well, that's a start, right? If we start listening to each other, then we should be able to get something done that's constructive. We should be able to get that done.

Now, one last thing I'm going to mention is that during this conversation—I hope you don't mind me quoting you, Joe. Joe Garcia, I thought, also made an important point, and that is that the opponents of some of these commonsense laws have ginned up fears among responsible gun owners that have nothing to do with what's being proposed, nothing to do with the facts, but feeds into this suspicion about government.

You hear some of these quotes: I need a gun to protect myself from the government. We can't do background checks because the government is going to come take my guns away.

Well, the government is us. These officials are elected by you. They are elected by you. I am elected by you. I am constrained, as they are constrained, by a system that our Founders put in place. It's a government of and by and for the people.

And so, surely, we can have a debate that's not based on the notion somehow that your elected representatives are trying to do something to you other than potentially prevent another group of families from grieving the way the families of Aurora or Newtown or Columbine have grieved. So we've got to get past some of the rhetoric that gets perpetuated that breaks down trust and is so over the top that it just shuts down all discussion. And it's important for all of us when we hear that kind of talk to say, hold on a second. If there are any folks who are out there right now who are gun

owners, and you've been hearing that somehow somebody is taking away your guns, get the facts. We're not proposing a gun registration system, we're proposing background checks for criminals.

Don't just listen to what some advocates or folks who have an interest in this thing are saying. Look at the actual legislation. That's what happened here in Colorado. And hopefully, if we know the facts and we're listening to each other, then we can actually move forward.

And that's what Members of Congress need to hear from you. Right now Members of Congress are home in their districts. Many of them are holding events where they can hear from their constituents. So I'm asking anyone out there who is listening today, find out where your Member of Congress stands on these issues. If they're not part of the 90 percent of Americans who agree on background checks, then ask them why not. Why wouldn't you want to make it more difficult for a dangerous criminal to get his or her hands on a gun? Why wouldn't you want to close the loophole that allows too many criminals to buy a gun without even the simplest of background checks? Why on Earth wouldn't you want to make it easier rather than harder for law enforcement to do their job?

I know that some of the officers here today know what it's like to look into the eyes of a parent or a grandparent, a brother or a sister, or a spouse who has just lost a loved one to an act of violence. Some of those families, by the way, are here today. And as police officers, you know as well as anybody, there is no magic solution to prevent every bad thing from happening in the world. You still suit up, you put on your badge, put yourself at risk every single day. Every single day, you go to work, and you try to do the best you can to protect the people you're sworn to protect and serve. Well, how can the rest of us as citizens do anything less?

If there is just one step we can take to prevent more Americans from knowing the pain that some of the families who are here have known, don't we have an obligation to try? Don't we have an obligation to try? If these reforms keep one person from murdering dozens of innocent children or worshippers or moviegoers in a span of minutes, isn't it worth fighting for? I believe it is. That's why I'm going to keep on working. I'm going to keep on giving it my best efforts. But I'm going to need your help.

This is not easy. And I'll be blunt: A lot of Members of Congress, this is tough for them. Because those who are opposed to any form of legislation affecting guns, they're very well organized; they're very well financed. But it can be done if enough voices are heard.

So I want to thank all the police officers who are here for giving their best efforts every single day. I want to thank Governor Hickenlooper for his outstanding leadership. I want to thank all the families who are here for your courage in being willing to take out of this tragedy something positive. I want to thank the people of Colorado for coming together in sensible ways. Let's see if we can get the whole country to do so.

Thank you, Denver. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:19 p.m. at the Denver Police Academy. In his remarks, he referred to Robert C. White, chief of police, Denver, CO; Mayor Steven Hogan of Aurora, CO; and James E. Holmes, accused gunman in the July 20, 2012, shootings at the Century 16 multiplex in Aurora, CO. The related memorandums of January 16 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco, California

April 3, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Well, first of all, I want to thank Tom and Kat for opening up this spectacular home. They were bragging about the view—[*laughter*]—but Se-

cret Service wasn't going to let me look at the view. But I'm now in my second term, so I can—[*laughter*]—so I called an audible, and I went out there, and it is spectacular. And they were all apologetic. They said, well, you can't see the bridge. [*Laughter*] I said, it's okay, I can see the Pacific Ocean; that's pretty good. [*Laughter*] So I was perfectly satisfied with the view, and I could not be more grateful and thankful to them for hosting us here tonight. So give them a big round of applause.

I want to thank Brandi Carlile for singing the—there she is. Now, I just—the reason I know Brandi is because the White House Photographer, Pete Souza, was a fan of Brandi's before the rest of the world knew Brandi and followed her around everywhere. He didn't stalk her, he was just—[*laughter*]—he was a fan. And so Pete Souza gets credit, before Jimmy Fallon or anybody else, for Brandi Carlile being discovered, at least by me. [*Laughter*] But we're so grateful for her participating here tonight.

The main reason we're here is actually not me. The main reason we're here is because we have got a fearless leader who happens to be your neighbor, who day in, day out is fighting the good fight on every single issue that matters in terms of making this a more equitable, more prosperous, more generous, more competitive nation. And she has been an extraordinary friend of mine, but more importantly, she's a friend to working families all across the country each and every day. I could not be prouder of her, and I expect that she is going to be once again the Speaker of the House—Nancy Pelosi. Love Nancy.

And Nancy wouldn't be—I think would be the first to say that she could not do what she does if it weren't for her extraordinary Members. Right now her chief rebounder, assist person, handyman—[*laughter*]—the guy who is making this enormous effort work is Steve Israel. So we want to thank Congressman Steve Israel. And we've got three other Members here today. Mike Honda—where's Mike? There he is in the back. Jared Huffman. Jared is right there. And Eric Swalwell. There he is.

All right, now, first of all, Tom used that analogy, I think, 2 days after I went 2 for 20 at—[*laughter*]—at the Easter egg roll, guarded by a number of 6-year-olds. [*Laughter*] So, clearly, I have not been playing enough basketball for anybody to want to use that analogy. But what I think is absolutely true is that the way I have always thought about politics, I know the way Nancy thinks about politics, is that we are a team. And when I say we, I'm not simply referring to the people in Washington.

If you noticed, during my Inauguration Address and my State of the Union, I talked about citizenship; I talked about what it means to be a citizen. And the notion of citizenship is not simply a matter of voting, it's not simply a matter of writing a check to a candidate who you like. The notion of citizenship is that all of us have obligations to this Nation, to our fellow citizens, and to future generations, and that each and every day, we are tested and asked to participate in ways large and small to push that boulder up the hill a little bit and to make sure that when our time here has passed, we can say, America is stronger, it's more prosperous, and opportunity is available to every single American.

That's not just my job, it's not just Nancy's job, it's your job as well. And the fact that all of you are here is an indicator that you take this notion of citizenship seriously. And because you do, Nancy and I, and Steve and others, we've had an opportunity over these last 4 years and a couple of months to make some extraordinary changes in this country.

We were able to yank an economy that was on the verge of a depression out of depression. And although we're not all the way back, the economy has stabilized, our financial markets have stabilized, housing is beginning to come back, and families are starting to feel a little more hopeful about their prospects for the future.

Because of you, because of our team, we have been able to assure that people who already have health insurance have better health insurance: that they've got preventive care; they've got contraceptive care; that insurance companies can't drop them for no good reason;

that young people can stay on their parent's plan until they're 26. And by next year, we'll know that 35 million people, most of whom work, are never again going to have to say to themselves that because of a preexisting condition or simply a lack of money, that they end up bankrupt or end up in an emergency room when they or their family members get sick. That happened because of all of you.

Because of you, we were able to make sure that serving your country didn't depend on who you loved, and as a consequence of some of those changes, we're now starting to see a extraordinary transformation in our culture that assures that the LGBT community has full and equal citizenship in this country. That happened because of you.

Because of you, roads have been built that needed repair, and people were put back to work. Because of you, research has happened that is looking to cure everything from Alzheimer's to Parkinson's to juvenile diabetes. Because of you, we're actually seeing genuine improvement in our schools, and States all across the country—including very red States—have embarked on a reform agenda that makes certain that our kids can compete in this new global economy.

Because of you, millions of young people have health insurance—they have health insurance, but are also able to afford college and couldn't afford it before. And because of you, despite a very aggressive agenda on the other side to block action, we've been able to double fuel efficiency standards on cars. We've been able to take mercury out of our air. We have been able to reduce carbon emissions in this country and have made not only this a healthier place to live, but have also begun to address in a serious way one of the biggest challenges of our time, and that is the challenge of climate change. That all happened because of you.

But here is the thing: We've got a lot more work to do. That's why I ran for a second term. The plane is nice—[*laughter*]—but the truth is, is that being in the bubble drives me crazy. So if I didn't think I was actually going to get something done, I wouldn't have run.

Nancy has gorgeous grandchildren. And if it weren't for the fact that we have more work to do, I'm sure that she wouldn't be going after the Speakership again. The reason we do so, and the reason you're here, is because we know we can do so much more to make this country what it can be.

Now, over the next couple of months, we've got a couple of issues. Gun control. I just came from Denver, where the issue of gun violence is something that has haunted families for way too long, and it is possible for us to create commonsense gun safety measures that respect the traditions of gun ownership in this country and hunters and sportsmen, but also make sure that we don't have another 20 children in a classroom gunned down by a semiautomatic weapon, by a fully automatic weapon in that case, sadly.

Immigration reform is something that I believe that we can get done over the next couple of months. It's interesting how clarifying to the mind Democrats getting 70 percent of the Latino vote was in suggesting that maybe we needed to get—finally fix a broken immigration system and making sure that we're both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

But even if we're able to get those two things done—and I'm hopeful that we do over the next couple of months—we're going to have some big challenges. We still have to rebuild this country. We've got about $2 trillion worth of deferred maintenance. We could be putting back to work Americans all across this country not just rebuilding roads and bridges, but building state-of-the-art schools and a smart grid that would make sure that we're wasting less energy and link cities that are using energy with wind farms in the Dakotas and in the plains of Colorado.

We've got still more work to do to make college more affordable. We're going to have a lot more work to do to make sure that hard work pays off, which is why passing a minimum wage increase is so important, because there are a lot of families out there, even who have jobs, who are having a tough time each and every day.

And something that I know is near and dear to Tom and Kat's hearts and to Nancy's, we've got more work to do in terms of dealing with climate change and making sure that we've got an economy that is energy efficient, that is productive, that is cutting edge, and thinks about not just the energy sources of the past, but also the energy promise of the future.

And the thing that I'm going to have to try to work to persuade the American people a little more convincingly on is this notion that there's a contradiction between our economy and our environment is just a false choice, that if we invest now, we will create jobs, we will create entire new industries. Other countries will be looking to catch up; they will be looking to import what we do. We will set the standard, and everybody else will have to adapt.

But—and I mentioned this to Tom and Kat and a few folks right before I came out here—the politics of this are tough. Because if you haven't seen a raise in a decade; if your house is still $25,000, $30,000 underwater; if you're just happy that you've still got that factor job that is powered by cheap energy; if every time you go to fill up your old car because you can't afford to buy a new one and you certainly can't afford to buy a Prius, you're spending 40 bucks that you don't have, which means that you may not be able to save for retirement—you may be concerned about the temperature of the planet, but it's probably not rising to your number-one concern. And if people think, well, that's shortsighted, that's what happens when you're struggling to get by. You're thinking about what's right in front of you, which is, how do I fill up my gas tank and how do I feed my family?

And so part of what we're going to have to do is to marry a genuine, passionate concern about middle class families and everybody who is trying to get into the middle class to show them that we're working just as hard for them as we are for our environmental agenda, and that we can bridge these things in a way that advances the causes of both. And that's going to take some work.

But the most important thing that it's going to take is people in Washington who are willing to speak truth to power, are willing to take some risks politically, are willing to get a little bit out ahead of the curve—not 2 miles ahead of the curve, but just a little bit ahead of it. And that's why your presence here is so important.

Look, my intention here is to try to get as much done with the Republican Party over the next 2 years as I can, because we can't have perpetual campaigns. And so I mean what I say: I am looking to find areas of common ground with Republicans every single day. I want to make sure that we're working together to stabilize our finances. And I think actually that we can come up with a fiscal deal that instead of lurching from crisis to crisis every 3 months, we lay the groundwork for long-term growth, controlling our deficits, controlling our debt, but also making sure we can invest in our future. I want to get an immigration deal done. I want to find some commonsense gun safety legislation that we can get done. And I do believe that there are well-meaning Republicans out there who care about their kids just as passionately as we do.

Despite all the rhetoric on television, I actually believe that Americans have a lot more in common than our political rhetoric would give us credit for. But having said all that, I know Nancy Pelosi. I've seen her courage. I know that she is willing to do the right thing, even when it's not politically popular. And I want her once again as a fully empowered partner for us to be able to move our agenda forward.

And so I'm going to expect that you guys are fighting for issues, helping to move public opinion, engaging in organizing and engaging in advocacy and public policy work, all the stuff that—and I'm looking around this room, it's full of do-gooders here—all the stuff you do. But I also want to make sure that you are paying attention to what can we do to support the prospect of Nancy Pelosi being Speaker once again.

If we do that, then I'm confident that not only can we deliver on this profound issue of climate change, not only can we make sure that clean energy is the norm here in America, but I also think that we can give America that sense of confidence and forward movement that's

always been our hallmark that characterizes who we are. To do that, I'm going to need you, and Nancy is going to need you.

And so I hope that this is not the end of your involvement. I hope it is the beginning. If, in fact, all the energy that's represented in this room is fully deployed, then I feel pretty good about Malia and Sasha, I feel pretty good about these young people right here. They're smarter than we are. If we hand off the kind of America that we should be handing off to them, I promise you they will take it to ever greater heights.

All right, thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at the residence of Thomas Steyer and Kathryn Taylor. In his remarks, he referred to James T. Fallon, Jr., host, NBC's "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon" program; and Rep. Steven J. Israel, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco

April 3, 2013

The President. Thank you. Well, first of all, let me thank Ann and Gordon for once again extending such gracious hospitality to all of us. I was reminded that I was first here in 2008, when I was running the first time, and I had much less gray hair. [*Laughter*] But they were kind to me then and have been kind to me since, and I appreciate very much their friendship and support.

I want to acknowledge Steve Israel, who is here and has an often thankless, extraordinarily difficult, but critically important job, and he's done so with good humor and boundless energy. And so please give Congressman Steve Israel a big round of applause.

And of course, I'm here because your neighbor told me I needed to be here. [*Laughter*] And I am here because there are very few people in public office who I am more fond of and respectful than the person who just introduced me, Nancy Pelosi. She is thoughtful, she's visionary, she's as tough as nails. [*Laughter*] She is practical. She never lets ideology cloud her judgment. She's constantly motivated by how do we create a country that is more just, more fair, more dynamic. She knows why she's in public life. It's connected to her values: the values that she grew up with, the values that she's raised her kids and now spoils her grandkids with. [*Laughter*] And I'm just so proud to call her a friend.

And I am here because I won my last election. But I'm here because my job is not simply to occupy the Oval Office. My job is to make sure we move the country forward, and I think we can best do that if Nancy Pelosi is Speaker of the House once again.

Nancy used a word that I've spent a lot of time thinking about these days. And that's the word "citizenship." I talked about it at the Inauguration speech. I talked about it at the State of the Union speech. I actually talked about it at the convention, my acceptance speech. And the reason I care about the word so much is because there are times in today's busy world, the media chatter, where there's a government over here somewhere, and then there's people and ordinary life and the private sector, and all that stuff is over there. And somehow, the notion is that these two things are separate.

And some of the folks who most adamantly insist that government is something alien and distant are the same folks who claim the mantle of the Founders and believe that their views best represent the original intentions of those who fought for and formed this country.

And yet, when I read the Declaration of Independence, when I read the Constitution, when I look at all the great documents and laws that have been passed that built this country up, what I see is this central idea that citi-

zenship means we are the government—the government of and by and for the people—which means we have responsibilities that extend beyond voting or even writing a check.

It speaks to rights, but it also speaks to responsibilities and obligations. It suggests that we are responsible for ourselves and our families and our neighborhoods and our cities and our farmlands and our neighbors and our Nation and future generations. And so we don't just think about us, we think about "we the people." That's the idea that motivated me to get into public service in the first place. That's what, I think, has always been at the heart of America.

And the reason that we've been able to make significant progress over the last 4 years and couple months is because a lot of you have believed it too. That's how I got elected in 2008. That's how Nancy Pelosi became Speaker in 2006. That's the reason that we were able to yank an economy on the verge of depression and get it back on track to growth and job creation. That's the reason that we were able to pass a health care law that is already helping millions of people and will help millions more when it is fully implemented next year.

That's the reason we've been able to put people back to work building roads and bridges and water systems and new park trails all across this country. That's the reason that we were able to double fuel efficiency standards on cars, begin the process of reducing carbons and making our economy more energy efficient, and doubling the amount of clean energy that we're producing through wind and solar and other renewables.

It's the reason that we've been able slowly to nurse the housing market back to health. That is the reason that we've been able to keep this country safe while still being true to our values and principles of rule of law.

That is the reason why we've been able to help millions of kids all across this country go to college who couldn't otherwise afford it. We've started to reform schools at the K–12 level.

We were able to do all this because you believed in citizenship. And the reason I ran for another term was because I think we've got more work to do. And the reason that Nancy wants to be Speaker again is because she thinks we have more work to do. I assure you that she does not like being away from her grandkids. [*Laughter*] She could be doing a lot of other stuff. Steve makes enormous sacrifices. He's got to travel all across the country raising money constantly and recruiting candidates. He'd love to be home. But we think we've got more work to do.

Now, this year, we have a window. Just completed one election. We would like to see some governing done in Washington before the next election starts. [*Laughter*] And so we've got this opportunity that we need to seize to initiate serious gun safety legislation, reduce gun violence, to make sure that we finally get a comprehensive immigration reform done, because we are a nation of laws, but we are also a nation of immigrants, and those two things are not incompatible.

We have more work to do to make sure that we stabilize our finances in a way that still allows us to make investments in critical infrastructure and basic research. Somebody mentioned to me, they heard my speech about the new BRAIN Initiative that we've put forward, just an entire sweeping horizon of possibilities when it comes to curing Alzheimer's and curing Parkinson's and so many diseases, but also just allowing us to do things that we couldn't even imagine a year ago, 2 years ago. Now we're on the threshold of cracking a code that could open up endless possibilities.

Now, in order to do that, we've got to be able to pass laws. There are some things I can do administratively, a lot of stuff that we can do administratively, but a lot of stuff we've got to do legislatively. Right now we're constrained by what we get done. And I have said publicly, and I will say it to this room once again, that I believe that Republicans love their kids and their country as much as we do and there are a whole bunch of folks out there who I believe actually want to cooperate with us, but feel constrained right now because of their own politics.

I'm looking and probing for every crack and possible opportunity to join in a bipartisan fashion to solve these problems, because I think most of the problems out there are ones that, at least historically, have garnered support from Democrats and Republicans, and that's—there is nothing inherently Democratic about building roads or funding research or looking out for the environment. It used to be a great bipartisan set of ideas.

And so my hope is, is that we can get some governing done this year, and I know that Nancy feels the same way. By the way, she's already worked with her caucus to deliver votes on things that aren't necessarily politically advantageous, but are the right thing to do. She did it as Speaker, and she's done it as Democratic Leader in the House. So we want to get this—we just want to get stuff done.

And I won't say—I won't speak for Nancy here. I will speak for myself. I would love nothing better than an effective, loyal opposition that is willing to meet us halfway and move the country forward, because that's what the American people are looking for. The economy is growing, but there is still a lot of folks out there who are struggling: still way too many people who are unemployed; people who haven't seen a raise in a decade; people whose homes are still underwater; people who when they see 4-dollar-a-gallon gas know that that is money that's coming straight out of their pockets or their retirement funds and is going to be very hard to make up. And they're hoping that we can do some governing. And that's what I intend to do this year and the year after that and the year after that.

But I would be dishonest if I didn't say that it would be a whole lot easier to govern if I had Nancy Pelosi as Speaker. [*Laughter*] Because here are the stakes: I actually think we've got a great chance of getting immigration reform done. I think we have a good chance of getting serious gun safety legislation done. But if we're going to move forward on some of the other things I talked about in the State of the Union—making sure that we've got early childhood education for every child in America so that they can—[*inaudible*].

If we're going to deal with the $2 trillion of deferred maintenance we've got in terms of infrastructure—not just roads and bridges, but a smart grid that can connect up clean energy to our cities and make sure that we continue to reduce not only existing loads of renewable energy, but also discovering those breakthroughs that are going to make all the difference down the future—then I'm going to need some more help in Congress.

If we're going to deal with climate change in a serious way, then we've got to have folks in Congress—even when it's not politically convenient—to talk about it and advocate for it and break out of this notion that somehow there's a contradiction between us being good stewards of the environment and us growing this economy. They are not a contradiction. We can grow this economy fast and faster if we are seizing the opportunities of the future and not just looking at the energy sources of the past. We're going to need some help.

I'm going to need some help if we are going to continue to make progress in assuring that every young person in this country has a chance to go to college and that they can afford it. I'm going to need some help if we're going to make sure that simple stuff—what should be simple—that everybody in America right now can refinance their homes. We could put $3,000 a year into the pockets of every single American just by passing a law in Congress that, by the way, Mitt Romney's key economic adviser, chief economic adviser says was a good idea. For some reason, we still can't get it through the Congress—3,000 bucks. It's like free money for families who right now are struggling. Think about what they could do with it and what that will do in terms of boosting our growth. I need some help.

And my hope is, is that we're going to see more and more Republicans who say, you know what, I didn't come here just to fight the President or demonize Nancy Pelosi, I came here to get some stuff done. And they will be greeted with great enthusiasm by me and, I think, by Nancy if we could get some more stuff done right now. But realistically, I could

get a whole lot more done if Nancy Pelosi is Speaker of the House.

So let me just close by saying this. And I know that Nancy's people will have a chance to answer some more specific questions about their game plan, all the great candidates they've recruited, the significant financial burden that will have to be bent in order to help elect these candidates.

But let me close by saying this, go back to where I started this notion of citizenship. People ask me, does it feel different now in your second term than it did in your first? It does. Look, I would hope, I'm better at my job now than I was when I first came in. I've got some nicks, bruises to prove that I've been to this rodeo before. Hopefully, I'm making better decisions, and our team is better organized, and we know what works and what doesn't, what some of the pitfalls are.

But the main difference really is a sense of perspective and realization that nothing worthwhile happens in 6 months or a year. It happens over decades. It happens over generations, that the story of America has been us steadily, through fits and starts, expanding opportunity, creating a more perfect Union, seizing the promise of the future, fighting off some of our own worst impulses. And that any one of us, our job is not to do it by ourselves or get it all done in one year or one term or even necessarily in our lifetimes, but our job is to make sure that we're pressing and pushing so that the whole country, over time, is moving in the right direction.

We did a screening of the Jackie—there's a new movie about Jackie Robinson called "42," which I usually don't plug movies, but I strongly recommend people take their kids and their grandkids to see this. A lot of people don't necessarily remember the story of Jackie Robinson, or if they, it's sort of vague. His widow, Rachel Robinson, was there. She's 90 years old and gorgeous. And in the theater at the White House, I thanked her. I thanked the people who made the film, just for reminding me in very visceral terms that in her lifetime, she saw her husband being the first African American to play in Major League Baseball, and now she's sitting there with me in the White House. That's a long time, 70 years. On the other hand, that's a blink of an eye in terms of human history. And that required Branch Rickey, it required Jackie Robinson, and then it required——

Audience member. Chandler. The commissioner, Happy Chandler.

The President. ——and it just—it required a succession of people making tough choices, but the right choice. And then slowly, things changed. A culture transformed itself.

I was just in another house here in—very close by. A wonderful young woman, singer-songwriter Brandi Carlile, was performing. And she was with her wife. Just got married, I guess, the day that I announced that I supported same-sex marriage. And she's a young woman, and I'm assuming she's thinking about all the people who were fighting the good fight not just in Stonewall, but well before that.

And so, generation after generation, we just plug away, and sometimes, we make progress, and sometimes, it feels like we're not making progress. We just stay at it and stay at it. And then suddenly, there's a breakthrough, and the entire culture shifts.

And that's what citizenship means. That's why it's so important, because it's not going to happen all at once. And all of us have to carry the burden of moving things forward.

So I hope that when you hear from Nancy and Steve, I hope that all of you understand this is not just a one-off, this is not just checking this off the list. You've got to stay with them. And it'll be frustrating, it'll be slow, and there will be times where you lose hope, and there will be times where you won't be mad at Nancy, but there will certainly be times where you're mad at me. [*Laughter*]

But if you stay with it, if you and your neighbors and your friends and your children and your grandchildren, if they maintain that sense that this is our Government, not somebody else's, and we can change it, then I've got great optimism for the future of this country and for the future of citizens in America.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:24 p.m. at the residence of Gordon and Ann Getty. In his remarks, he referred to Steven J. Israel, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and R. Glenn Hubbard, dean, Columbia University Business School, in his former capacity as chief economic adviser to Mr. Romney. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Atherton, California

April 4, 2013

Thank you so much. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. This is an intimate group. What I want to do is mostly have a conversation. But first of all, obviously, I want to thank Liz and Mark for their incredible hospitality. We couldn't be more appreciative. And I want to thank all of you for being here today.

A lot of you—in fact, almost everybody here I've known, have supported me. Some of you were involved in my first campaign when nobody could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And you stuck with me through thick and thin, and I just want to say how much I appreciate all of you for taking the time.

Some people have been asking me, "Well, what's different about the second term?" And I say, well, for one thing, I'm not raising money for myself, and that's good. [*Laughter*] For another thing, the girls are getting old enough now where they don't want to spend time with us on the weekends. [*Laughter*] They have sleepovers and parties and sports and all that stuff. I don't know if you guys are doing the same thing to your parents, but it's starting to happen.

But I think the most important thing is that when you don't have another race to run, all you're really thinking about it is how do I leave a legacy, not simply for the next President, but for the next generation, that makes America stronger: that helps assure our children can compete with an ever-changing world; that we are solving what I think is one of the core challenges we face as a generation; and that is making sure that we have a strong, growing middle class and ladders of opportunity for everybody who is willing to work to get into that middle class; that we continue to be innovative; that we address some of our core environmental challenges, particularly climate change, to make sure that the planet we leave behind is one that our children can thrive in.

So you end up taking the long view on things. And you also feel a great urgency because you know you don't have a lot of time. And so the main message I want to deliver here today is that I could not be prouder of the track record that we've put together over the last 4 years and 2 months, whether it was saving an economy from a great depression; doubling fuel efficiency standards on cars; expanding access to college for the millions of young people; making sure that nobody in this country has to go bankrupt because they get sick; reupping the law preventing violence against women; making sure that we have the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which I think has laid the groundwork for further progress when it comes to LGBT rights.

On so many issues, we've made progress. But we've got so much more work to do. And I laid out what that vision might look like during both the Inauguration speech and in the State of the Union. I want to make sure that we've got the best education system in the world and that starts young. And so we've given all the research that we have. Expanding our investment in childhood education can make all the difference in the world and will pay enormous dividends for a very, very long time.

I want to make sure that we're rebuilding this country, our infrastructure. We've got $2 trillion in deferred maintenance. We could be putting people back to work right now, and not

only improving our current economic growth, but laying the foundation for economic growth for many years to come. Many of you are aware that I am a big proponent of investments in science and research, and obviously, this entire region has thrived precisely because it has been the epicenter of innovation. And that requires us putting money into research in biomedicine, in nanoscience. Our recent initiative around the brain and being able to map that and crack the code potentially not only can help us cure things like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, but can generate entire new industries and put people back to work and be the next great challenge for the American economy.

And I believe that we've got to get a handle on our energy policy so that we are growing and we are productive, but we are not simply investing in the energy sources of the past, we're also investing in the energy sources of the future. We've doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars, but we've also had a chance to double our production in solar and wind and biofuels. We can continue to make progress on that front. We can continue to make sure that electric cars and other new technologies for transportation are built here in the United States of America and not someplace else.

We can make sure that our buildings, our schools, our hospitals are more efficient. If we were able to achieve the same efficiencies that Japan already has achieved using existing technologies, we'd cut our power utilization by 15, 20 percent, which would have enormous ramifications in bringing down our carbon footprint.

And we can do all this without spending massive amounts of money. The truth is, is that our fiscal situation has improved significantly since I first came into office, but we still have a long way to go. The way for us to do it intelligently is the kind of balanced approach I've talked about in the past: making sure that everybody is doing their fair share; making sure that those of us in this room and, frankly, in this whole town probably—[*laughter*]—recognizes the incredible blessings that we've been given and make sure that we're willing to invest back in the next generation and also making sure that our money is wisely spent.

We still waste money in all kinds of things that don't work, and we have the capacity to shift those dollars into things that do work and that will grow our economy. And we can reduce our deficit, stabilize our debt, and do so without sacrificing the kinds of investments that are going to be required to grow.

Now, the last point I'll make is just politics. Our policies, the ones that we prevented—or the ones that we've presented, traditionally, would be considered pretty bipartisan. There's nothing particularly Democratic about road building or basic science or environmental protection. Teddy Roosevelt started the conservation movement. Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican President, was pretty big on building infrastructure and investing in things like science and research.

Unfortunately, we continue to still have some of that gridlock in Washington. Part of it is fed by changes in information and communications that amplify conflict and extremes as opposed to trying to bring people together. I know it's a great source of frustration for the American people. I assure you it's a source of frustration for me as well. [*Laughter*]

But what I believed when I was running for this office back in 2007, 2008, what I believed when I was running for a second term is what I still believe now, and that is, this country is not as divided as our politics would suggest. And the only way we break through this gridlock is when people's voices are heard and people are engaged and involved. I am very optimistic that we get immigration reform done in the next few months. And the reason I'm optimistic is because people spoke out through the ballot box, and that's breaking gridlock.

It's going to be tougher to get better gun legislation to reduce gun violence through the Senate and the House that so many of us, I think, want to see, particularly after the tragedy in Newtown. But I still think it can get done if people are activated and involved.

And so on every front, on every issue that all of you care about, making sure that we can provide good information to the American

people, engage them, inform them, make sure that they are embracing a form of citizenship that goes beyond just voting, but involves understanding what's at stake and talking to their neighbors, talking to their coworkers, talking to their friends, writing to their Members of Congress, getting organized, getting mobilized—all that ends up being really the critical ingredient and the constant dynamic change and improvement that has characterized this country for so long.

And your involvement with the DNC helps us do that. It will help us register voters. It will help us make sure that they understand what's at stake in all of these issues. It's hugely important. It's not always glamorous. It's not always sexy. But it's really what ends up driving our ability to make policy and to deliver for the young people who are here today.

So again, I want to thank Liz and Mark for making this spectacular home available to us. And I want to thank all of you for not only what you've done in the past on my behalf, but more importantly, what you're continuing to do on behalf of this country as a whole.

Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:28 a.m. at the residence of Elizabeth Simons and Mark W. Heising. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Atherton
April 4, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! It is good to be back in California.

Audience members. It's good to have you! [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. Somebody said—somebody told me, they were in the photo line, they said, we're glad you could join our State. [*Laughter*] They made it sound like a health club or something. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate that you allowed me to join—[*laughter*]—because it is obviously a spectacular place, and we've got so many good friends here, and some of you I see out there worked tirelessly dating back to when people could not pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And so I'm grateful to all of you.

First of all, though, I want to give a special acknowledgement to John and Marcia for the incredible job they've done and their great hospitality. Thank you so much. And I must say that if you had a cute baby competition, their granddaughter would have to be an entry. [*Laughter*] And I've got to say, I might have to pick her, because she is adorable and did not drool on my suit when I grabbed her. [*Laughter*] So I'm grateful. I'm grateful to her for that.

We've got some elected officials who are doing incredible work, great friends. First of all, somebody who works tirelessly on behalf of California every day, but also works on behalf of working people and makes sure that we've got a more inclusive America, a good friend of mine, somebody who you guys should be very proud of, Congressman Mike Honda is here. Where is Mike? He is around here somewhere. There he is. Yes, I mean, he's not like a real tall guy, but he's a great guy. [*Laughter*]

Second of all, you have to be careful to, first of all, say she is brilliant and she is dedicated and she is tough, and she is exactly what you'd want in anybody who is administering the law, and making sure that everybody is getting a fair shake. She also happens to be by far the best looking attorney general in the country; Kamala Harris is here. It's true. Come on. [*Laughter*] And she is a great friend and has just been a great supporter for many, many years.

And finally, somebody who is not yet probably as well known on the national scene, but is certainly well known in all of us who worked on my campaign this last time out. He did incredible work, could not have been more effective, and has now taken on what can sometimes be a thankless job of being the DNC finance chair, Henry Muñoz is here. Can everybody please give Henry Muñoz a big round of applause.

So my election is over and you thought you wouldn't have to see me again at these fund-

raisers. [*Laughter*] And a close friend of mine, Abner Mikva, who was White House Counsel—he was a longtime Congressman from the Chicago area—he used to say that being friends with a politician is like perpetually having a child in college. [*Laughter*] It's like every few months you have to write this check, and you're thinking when is it going to be over. With elected officials, it's never over.

But the reason I'm here is not for me. The reason I'm here is because the country still needs you. We have, as John indicated, done some work that I'm very, very proud of over the last 4 years. We took an economy that was about to go into a great depression, and we were able to yank it out and put us back on a path towards growth and putting people back to work. We were able to make sure that in the process we rebuilt roads and bridges and a smarter infrastructure all across the country and invested in clean energy and made sure that schools got the kinds of Internet connections that they needed and invested in basic science and research—all of which will pay dividends for years and years to come.

We said that in a country as wealthy as ours, nobody should go bankrupt just because they got sick. And already, millions of people are benefiting from the Affordable Care Act. And by next year, we will know that millions of people all across the country who previously did not have health insurance will have it, including folks with preexisting conditions, which will make everybody a little bit more secure.

We expanded access to college by expanding our student loan programs. We are in the process of reforming our schools to make sure that every child gets a fair shot in life. We ended "don't ask, don't tell," laying the groundwork to make sure that this was a country where you were treated fairly and equally no matter who you love.

We expanded national service. We doubled fuel efficiency on cars. We doubled the production of wind and solar energy. We made sure that the Violence Against Women Act was resigned and that it provided even greater protection for women all across this country. We ended one war, as promised. We're in the process of ending another, and at the same time have been able to keep the American people safe.

And so I'm very proud of the work that we've done. But we've got a lot more work to do. We all know that. This country is the greatest nation on Earth, but it can be even greater. And my main message here today is that America's greatness will not result simply from who you elect to office, it's going to depend on you, as citizens, and how badly you want it.

During the State of the Union speech, as well as my Inauguration speech, I talked about citizenship. And this is a word that I spend a lot of time thinking about these days, partly because my background, my orientation, I came into politics believing that politics works best when people are involved. I've never believed that more than I do now, in my second term as President, that the idea of citizenship is not just that you vote, it's not just that you write a check where you can to support a candidate. It's this notion, fundamental to who we are, that we have responsibilities to ourselves and our families, but we also have obligations to our neighborhood, our community, our cities, our States, and ultimately, the Nation and the next generation.

And the only way that this country moves forward is when we, the people, collectively, make it our business to meet the challenges of our time. And we know what those challenges are. And we know we've got to do better.

Now, in the next couple of months, we've got the opportunity to make some very significant changes. Number one, I believe that we can get comprehensive immigration reform passed and that is going to mean that America can continue to be a nation of laws, but also a nation of immigrants, and attract the best and the brightest from all around the world. And if we push hard and we stay focused, we've got the opportunity to get this done over the next couple of months.

I believe that we have a chance to, after 30 years, frankly, of doing almost nothing, to reduce gun violence in our society. And it's going to be hard, it's going to be tough, but I think

we've got a chance to get some stuff done on that.

Now, one of the things that I want to be very clear on is that this year, next year, and for the next 4 years that I'm in office, I am always going to be seeking, wherever I can, bipartisan solutions. And I intend to continue to reach out to Republicans because I genuinely believe that the politics that you see in Washington isn't representative of America; that most people actually have common sense, and most folks think cooperation and occasional compromise is part of life. And I also think that we have to govern, not simply politick.

And so, whether it's on immigration reform or the budget or any of these issues, I will continue to do everything I can to reach out to my friends on the other side of the aisle. And look, I believe that they love their kids and this country just as much as we do, and although we may have some very fundamental disagreements about how to get there, I don't think we've got a disagreement about what we need to be as a nation.

Having said that, though, there are still some really big arguments that we're having in Washington, and I believe that Democrats represent those values that will best advance the interests of middle class families and everybody who is willing to work hard to get into the middle class, that will grow this economy in a broad-based way, and that will lay the foundation for prosperity for generations to come.

And you believe that too. That's why you're here. In order for us to do that, you're going to have to stay involved. Think about some of the things I spoke about during the State of the Union Address: making sure that every child in America has outstanding, high quality, early childhood education. We know that there's nothing more important to a child's success than those early years. And if we do that right, not only are we going to see better performance in our schools, we're going to see better performance in our economy. And we can do it. We can afford to do it.

But in order for us to make that happen, we're going to have to have an active, motivated, Democratic national party. People here in this area care deeply about issues of energy and climate change. And I think that the science is indisputable, and this is an obligation we owe to future generations. And as I said, we've already done a lot to reduce our carbon footprint and to make our economy more energy efficient. But if we're going to do more, then we've got to make sure that we're active and involved and helping to educate our friends and our neighbors and our coworkers about why this is important and why there's no contradiction between a sound environment and strong economic growth; that, in fact, if we do this right, the energy sources of the future, the clean energy sources of the future can be an engine for economic growth for decades and decades to come.

When it comes to our economy, making sure that we're investing in basic research and science. This is the epicenter of innovation in this Nation. Some of you saw, a couple of days ago, I announced a new BRAIN Initiative that will allow us to crack the code and map what this incredible gray matter between our ears, one of the greatest mysteries there is, what's causing things like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, and to not just provide cures, but also to help generate entire new industries that can put people to work in this region and around the country.

In order for us to make sure that we're investing sufficiently in basic science and research, you're going to have to be involved. You have to push. You can't just wait for it to happen, because there are going to be competing interests and folks who want to spend those resources in a different way.

When it comes to our budget, I actually think that we can stabilize our finances, reduce our debt, reduce our deficit in a prudent, balanced way. But we've got the other side insisting that somehow we can cut our way to prosperity. I disagree with that. I will take that case to the American people. But for me to be successful in resolving that argument in a way that allows us to keep growing and keep investing, I'm going to need your help.

Making sure that we're providing ladders of opportunity in communities all across the

country that have been left behind—and in some cases, have been behind for decades—so that we're not just investing in education, but also making sure that we're providing transportation assistance and tax credits so that impoverished communities can be part of this global economy. That will make us all stronger. I can't do that unless I have your help.

And for us to continue to make progress so that this is a society that is more just and more equal and more inclusive, we've made remarkable progress over these last few years, but that's not because of what started in Washington, it's because of what happened in communities all across the country.

I was mentioning to people I had a chance to see an early screening of this new movie called "42." It's about Jackie Robinson. And I look around the room—young people—[*laughter*]—kind of vaguely know, yes, Jackie Robinson—[*laughter*]—first African American baseball player. His widow was there, Rachel Robinson, who's gorgeous and 90, but looks better than I do—[*laughter*]—and could not be more gracious.

And to sit there in a movie theater watching what happened in her lifetime and to know that because of the decisions and courage of Jackie Robison and Branch Rickey and all the other pathbreakers, that we now have a country that is fairer and better, for it is a reminder of how change happens in this country. It doesn't happen all at once. It doesn't happen in one fell swoop. It doesn't happen because a President gives a speech. It happens because a whole bunch of people out there, day in and day out, are making choices and decisions about whether we're going to be fair or less fair, whether we're going to be generous or less generous, whether we are going to be inclusive or less inclusive. And that changing of our hearts and our minds ultimately translates itself into politics, but it begins with citizens. It begins with you.

And if the Democratic Party stands for anything, then it has to stand for that basic proposition that not only do we want an economy where if you work hard, you can make it if you try—no matter where you come from, what you look like, who you love—but also that the way to get there is by giving everybody a voice and making sure everybody is involved and everybody is included. If we stand for anything as Democrats, that's got to be what we stand for.

And so the DNC is an important part of that overall process. And the fact that you are here, the fact that John and Marcia were willing to open up their home like this gives me confidence that, in fact, we will be able to sustain these efforts. And it has to be sustained beyond elections. You can't just wait until a Presidential election to do this. It's all those days in between that are going to determine whether or not we bring about the changes that we so desperately believe in.

So to all of you, I want to say thank you. But understand this is just a beginning, it's not an end. You are going to be called on to do more work. You are going to be called on to get more engaged and more involved. And if you ever have any doubts as to why you're doing it, then you have to look at John and Marcia's grandbaby or that young man who's falling asleep because I've been talking too long. [*Laughter*] And you will remember that ultimately, the only thing that matters is whether or not we're leaving behind a country that's a little bit better than the one we founded for them. That's why we do what we do. That's why I do what I do, for Malia and Sasha, and all the Malias and Sashas out there, I want to make sure we're doing right by them.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m. at the residence of John D. and Marcia L. Goldman. In his remarks, he referred to Henry R. Muñoz III, national finance committee chair, Democratic National Committee. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Roger Ebert
April 4, 2013

Michelle and I are saddened to hear about the passing of Roger Ebert. For a generation of Americans, and especially Chicagoans, Roger was the movies. When he didn't like a film, he was honest; when he did, he was effusive, capturing the unique power of the movies to take us somewhere magical. Even amidst his own battles with cancer, Roger was as productive as he was resilient, continuing to share his passion and perspective with the world. The movies won't be the same without Roger, and our thoughts and prayers are with Chaz and the rest of the Ebert family.

NOTE: The statement referred to Chaz Ebert, wife of Mr. Ebert.

Letter on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Somalia
April 4, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13536 of April 12, 2010, with respect to Somalia is to continue in effect beyond April 12, 2013.

On January 17, 2013, the United States Government announced its formal recognition of the Government of Somalia. The United States had not recognized a government in Somalia for the previous 22 years. Although the U.S. recognition underscores a strong commitment to Somalia's stabilization, it does not remove the importance of U.S. sanctions, especially against persons undermining the stability of Somalia. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Somalia and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at an Easter Prayer Breakfast
April 5, 2013

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you.

Well, good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Welcome, once again, to the White House. It is always wonderful to see so many friends from all across the country. I want to thank you for joining us today. I want to thank everybody for their prayers, but most importantly, I want to thank everybody for their good works through your ministries. It's making a difference in communities all across this Nation, and we could not be more proud to often have a chance to work with you.

To all the pastors in the house, I hope you've enjoyed some well-deserved rest after a very

busy Holy Week. I see some chuckles, so maybe not. [*Laughter*] Here at the White House, I'm pleased to say that we survived yet another Easter egg roll. [*Laughter*]

Now, if you've been to this breakfast before, you know that I always try to avoid preaching in front of people who do it for a living. That's sound advice. So this morning I'm just going to leave the sermon to others and offer maybe a few remarks as we mark this—the end of this Easter season.

In these sacred days, those of us as Christians remember the tremendous sacrifice Jesus made for each of us, how, in all His humility and His grace, He took on the sins of the world and extended the gift of salvation. And we recommit ourselves to following His example, to loving the Lord our God with all our hearts and all our souls and with all our minds, and to loving our neighbors as ourselves.

That's the eternal spirit of Easter. And this year, I had—I think was particularly special for me because right before Easter, I had a chance to feel that spirit during my trip to the Holy Land. And I think so many of you here know there are few experiences more powerful or more humbling than visiting that sacred earth.

It brings Scripture to life. It brings us closer to Christ. It reminds us that our Savior, who suffered and died, was resurrected, both fully God and also a man: a human being who lived and walked and felt joy and sorrow just like us.

And so for Christians to walk where He walked and see what He saw are blessed moments. And while I had been to Jerusalem before, where Jesus healed the sick and cured the blind and embraced the least of these, I also had a chance to go to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. And those of you who have been there know that entering the church is a remarkable experience, although it is a useful instruction to see how managing different sections of the church and different clergy—it feels familiar. [*Laughter*] Let's just put it that way. [*Laughter*]

And as I approached the Altar of the Nativity, as I neared the 14-pointed Silver Star that marks the spot where Christ was born, the Patriarch of Jerusalem welcomed me to, in his words, "the place where heaven and Earth met."

And there, I had a chance to pray and reflect on Christ's birth and His life, His sacrifice, His resurrection. I thought about all the faithful pilgrims, who for 2,000 years have done the same thing: giving thanks for the fact that, as the Book of Romans tells us, "just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

I thought of the poor and the sick who seek comfort and the marginalized and the forsaken who seek solace and the grateful who merely seek to offer thanks for the simple blessings of this life and the awesome glory of the next. I thought of all who would travel to this place for centuries to come and the lives they might know.

And I was reminded that while our time on Earth is fleeting, He is eternal. His life, His lessons live on in our hearts and, most importantly, in our actions. When we tend to the sick, when we console those in pain, when we sacrifice for those in need, wherever and whenever we are there to give comfort and to guide and to love, then Christ is with us.

So this morning let us pray that we're worthy of His many blessings, that this Nation is worthy of His many blessings. Let us promise to keep in our hearts, in our souls, in our minds, on this day and on every day, the life and lessons of Christ, our Lord.

And with that, I'd like to ask Father Larry Snyder to deliver our opening prayer.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:28 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem; and Rev. Larry Snyder, president, Catholic Charities U.S.A. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

The President's Weekly Address
April 6, 2013

Hi, everybody. Our top priority as a nation, and my top priority as President, must be doing everything we can to reignite the engine of America's growth: a rising, thriving middle class. That's our north star. That must drive every decision that we make.

Now, yesterday we learned that our businesses created 95,000 new jobs last month. That's about 500,000 new jobs this year and nearly 6.5 million new jobs over the past 3 years.

But we've got more to do to get the economy growing faster so that everybody who wants a job can find one. And that means we need fewer self-inflicted wounds from Washington, like the across-the-board spending cuts that are already hurting many communities, cuts that economists predict will cost our economy hundreds of thousands of jobs this year.

If we want to keep rebuilding this economy on a stronger, sturdier foundation for growth—growth that creates good, middle class jobs—we have to make smarter choices.

This week, I'll send a budget to Congress that will help do just that, a fiscally responsible blueprint for middle class jobs and growth.

For years, an argument in Washington has raged between reducing our deficits at all costs and making the investments we need to grow the economy. My budget puts that argument to rest. Because we don't have to choose between these goals, we can do both. After all, as we saw in the 1990s, nothing reduces deficits faster than a growing economy.

My budget will reduce our deficits not with aimless, reckless spending cuts that hurt students and seniors and middle class families, but through the balanced approach that the American people prefer and the investments that a growing economy demands.

Now, the truth is, our deficits are already shrinking. That's a fact. I've already signed more than $2.5 trillion in deficit reduction into law, and my budget will reduce our deficits by nearly $2 trillion more, without harming the recovery. That surpasses the goal of $4 trillion in deficit reduction that many economists believe will stabilize our finances.

We'll make the tough reforms required to strengthen Medicare for the future, without undermining the rock-solid guarantee at its core. And we'll enact commonsense tax reform that includes closing wasteful tax loopholes for the wealthy and well connected, loopholes like the ones that can allow a billionaire to pay a lower tax rate than his or her secretary.

This is the compromise I offered the Speaker of the House at the end of last year. While it's not my ideal plan to further reduce the deficit, it's a compromise I'm willing to accept in order to move beyond a cycle of short-term, crisis-driven decisionmaking and so that we can focus on growing our economy and our middle class for the long run. It includes ideas many Republicans have said they could accept as well. It's a way we can make progress together.

But deficit reduction cannot come at the cost of economic growth or middle class security. And it doesn't have to. My budget will make critical investments to grow the economy, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, every day, we should ask ourselves three questions: How do we make America a magnet for good jobs? How do we give our workers the skills they need to do those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

To make America a magnet for good jobs, we'll invest in high-tech manufacturing and homegrown American energy, put people to work building new roads and bridges and schools and cut redtape to help businesses grow.

To give workers the skills they need to do those jobs, we'll invest in education that begins in the earliest years and job training that better equips workers to compete in the 21st-century economy.

To make sure hard work is rewarded, we'll build new ladders of opportunity into the middle class and focus on revitalizing some of our communities hardest hit by recession and job loss.

All of these investments will help grow the economy and create jobs. None of them will add to the deficit. And I will lay out these priorities in greater detail in the days ahead.

It's a budget that doesn't spend beyond our means. And it's a budget that doesn't make harsh and unnecessary cuts that only serve to slow our economy. We'll keep our promise to an aging generation by shoring up Medicare. And we'll keep our promise to the next generation by investing in the fundamentals that have always made America strong: manufacturing, innovation, energy, and education.

Because that's what it'll take to make sure America remains strong in the years ahead and to leave behind something better for our kids.

Thanks so much. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on April 5 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on April 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 6.

Statement on the 19th Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda
April 7, 2013

Nineteen years ago, Rwanda was torn apart by a great evil. Today we stand with the people of Rwanda to commemorate the Rwandan genocide. We honor the victims, and we express our solidarity with the survivors. More than 800,000 men, women, and children were killed in a wave of brutal violence, and countless others continue to live with the pain and trauma of their loss. Today, as the United States grieves with the Rwandan people at this moment of remembrance, we are inspired by their spirit as they build a more peaceful and prosperous tomorrow. We look with you to the future and renew our commitment to human rights and the rule of law, to the protection of the vulnerable, and to the prevention of atrocities so that such evil is never repeated.

Remarks at the University of Hartford in Hartford, Connecticut
April 8, 2013

The President. Hello, Connecticut. Thank you. Well, thank you so much, everybody. Let me begin by thanking Nicole and Ian for your brave words. I want to thank them and all the Newtown families who have come here today, including your first selectman, Pat Llodra. Nobody could be more eloquent than Nicole and the other families on this issue. And we are so grateful for their courage and willingness to share their stories again and again, understanding that nothing is going to be more important in making sure the Congress moves forward this week than hearing from them.

I want to thank all the educators from Sandy Hook Elementary who have come here as well, the survivors——

Audience members. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. I do—[*applause*]—the survivors who still mourn and grieve, but are still going to work every day to love and raise those precious children in their care as fiercely as ever.

I want to thank Governor Malloy for his leadership. Very proud of him. I want to thank the University of Hartford for hosting us this afternoon. Thank you, Hawks. And I want to thank the people of Connecticut for everything you've done to honor the memories of the victims, because you're part of their family as well.

One of your recent alumni, Rachel D'Avino, was a behavioral therapist at Sandy Hook. Two

alumni of your performing arts school, Jimmy Greene and Nelba Marquez-Greene, lost their daughter Ana, an incredible, vibrant young girl, who looked up to them and learned from them and inherited their talents by singing before she could talk.

So every family in this State was shaken by the tragedy of that morning. Every family in this country was shaken. We hugged our kids more tightly. We asked what could we do, as a society, to help prevent a tragedy like that from happening again.

And as a society, we decided that we have to change. We must. [*Applause*] We must change.

I noticed that Nicole and others refer to that day as 12/14. For these families, it was a day that changed everything. And I know many of you in Newtown wondered if the rest of us would live up to the promise we made in those dark days; if we'd change too; or if, once the television trucks left, once the candles flickered out, once the teddy bears were carefully gathered up together, that the country would somehow move on to other things.

Over the weekend, I heard Francine Wheeler, who lost her son Ben that day, say that the 4 months since the tragedy might feel like a brief moment for some, but for her, it feels like it's been years since she saw Ben. And she's determined not to let what happened that day just fade away. "We're not going anywhere," she said. "We are here. We are going to be here." And I know that she speaks for everybody in Newtown, everybody who was impacted.

And, Newtown, we want you to know that we're here with you. We will not walk away from the promises we've made. We are as determined as ever to do what must be done. In fact, I'm here to ask you to help me show that we can get it done. We're not forgetting.

We can't forget. Your families still grieve in ways most of us can't comprehend. But so many of you have used that grief to make a difference, not just to honor your own children, but to protect the lives of all of our children. So many of you have mobilized and organized and petitioned your elected officials "with love and logic," as Nicole put it, as citizens determined to right something gone wrong.

And last week, here in Connecticut, your elected leaders responded. The Connecticut legislature, led by many of the legislators here today, passed new measures to protect more of our children and our communities from gun violence. And Governor Malloy signed that legislation into law.

So I want to be clear: You, the families of Newtown, people across Connecticut, you helped make that happen. Your voices, your determination made that happen. Obviously, the elected leaders did an extraordinary job moving it forward, but it couldn't have happened if they weren't hearing from people in their respective districts, people all across the State. That's the power of your voice.

And by the way, Connecticut is not alone. In the past few months, New York, Colorado, Maryland have all passed new, commonsense gun safety reforms as well.

These are all States that share an awful familiarity with gun violence, whether it's the horror of mass killings or street crime that's too common in too many neighborhoods. All of these States also share a strong tradition of hunting and sport shooting and gun ownership. It's been a part of the fabric of people's lives for generations. And every single one of those States—including here in Connecticut—decided that, yes, we can protect more of our citizens from gun violence while still protecting our Second Amendment rights. Those two things don't contradict each other. We can pass commonsense laws that protect our kids and protect our rights.

So Connecticut has shown the way. And now is the time for Congress to do the same. [*Applause*] Now is the time for Congress to do the same. This week is the time for Congress to do the same.

Now, back in January, just a few months after the tragedy in Newtown, I announced a series of executive actions to reduce gun violence and keep our kids safe. And I put forward commonsense proposals—much like those that passed here in Connecticut—for Congress to consider. And you'll remember in my State of

the Union Address, I urged Congress to give those proposals a vote. And that moment is now.

As soon as this week, Congress will begin debating these commonsense proposals to reduce gun violence. Your Senators, Dick Blumenthal and Chris Murphy—they're here—your Representatives, John Larson, Rosa DeLauro, Elizabeth Esty, Jim Himes, Joe Courtney, they are all pushing to pass this legislation. But much of Congress is going to only act if they hear from you, the American people. So here's what we have to do.

Audience member. I love you, Mr. President.

The President. I appreciate that. [*Laughter*] Here's what we've got to do. We have to tell Congress it's time to require a background check for anyone who wants to buy a gun so that people who are dangerous to themselves and others cannot get their hands on a gun. Let's make that happen.

We have to tell Congress it's time to crack down on gun trafficking so that folks will think twice before buying a gun as part of a scheme to arm someone who won't pass a background check. Let's get that done.

We have to tell Congress it's time to restore the ban on military-style assault weapons and a 10-round limit for magazines to make it harder for a gunman to fire 154 bullets into his victims in less than 5 minutes. Let's put that to a vote.

We have to tell Congress it's time to strengthen school safety and help people struggling with mental health problems get the treatment they need before it's too late. Let's do that for our kids and for our communities.

Now, I know that some of these proposals inspire more debate than others, but each of them has the support of the majority of the American people. All of them are common sense. All of them deserve a vote. [*Applause*] All of them deserve a vote.

Consider background checks. Over the past 20 years, background checks have kept more than 2 million dangerous people from getting their hands on a gun. A group of police officers in Colorado told me last week that, thanks to background checks, they've been able to stop convicted murderers, folks under restraining orders for committing violent domestic abuse from buying a gun. In some cases, they've actually arrested the person as they were coming to purchase the gun.

So we know that background checks can work. But the problem is, loopholes in the current law let so many people avoid background checks altogether. That's not safe. It doesn't make sense. If you're a law-abiding citizen and you go through a background check to buy a gun, wouldn't you expect other people to play by the same rules?

If you're a law-abiding gun seller, wouldn't you want to know you're not selling your gun to someone who's likely to commit a crime? Shouldn't we make it harder, not easier for somebody who is convicted of domestic abuse to get his hands on a gun?

It turns out 90 percent of Americans think so. Ninety percent of Americans support universal background checks. Think about that. How often do 90 percent of Americans agree on anything? [*Laughter*] And yet 90 percent agree on this: Republicans, Democrats, folks who own guns, folks who don't own guns, 80 percent of Republicans, more than 80 percent of gun owners, more than 70 percent of NRA households. It is common sense.

And yet there is only one thing that can stand in the way of change that just about everybody agrees on, and that's politics in Washington. You would think that with those numbers, Congress would rush to make this happen. That's what you would think. If our democracy is working the way it's supposed to and 90 percent of the American people agree on something, in the wake of a tragedy, you'd think this would not be a heavy lift.

And yet some folks back in Washington are already floating the idea that they may use political stunts to prevent votes on any of these reforms. Think about that. They're not just saying they'll vote no on ideas that almost all Americans support, they're saying they'll do everything they can to even prevent any votes on these provisions. They're saying your opinion doesn't matter. And that's not right.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That is not right.

Audience members. We want a vote!

The President. We need a vote.

Audience members. We want a vote! We want a vote! We want a vote!

The President. We need a vote.

Audience members. We want a vote! We want a vote! We want a vote!

The President. Now, I've also heard some in the Washington press suggest that what happens to gun violence legislation in Congress this week will either be a political victory or defeat for me. Connecticut, this is not about me. This is not about politics. This is about doing the right thing for all the families who are here that have been torn apart by gun violence. It's about them and all the families going forward, so we can prevent this from happening again. That's what it's about. It's about the law enforcement officials putting their lives at risk. That's what this is about. This is not about politics. This is not about politics.

This is about these families and families all across the country who are saying let's make it a little harder for our kids to get gunned down.

When I said in my State of the Union Address that these proposals deserve a vote—that families of Newtown and Aurora and Tucson and a former Member of Congress, Gabby Giffords, that they all deserved a vote—virtually every Member of that Chamber stood up and applauded. And now they're going to start denying your families a vote when the cameras are off and when the lobbyists have worked what they do? You deserve better than that. You deserve a vote.

Now, look, we knew from the beginning of this debate that change would not be easy. We knew that there would be powerful interests that are very good at confusing the subject, that are good at amplifying conflict and extremes, that are good at drowning out rational debate, good at ginning up irrational fears, all of which stands in the way of progress.

But if our history teaches us anything, then it's up to us—the people—to stand up to those who say we can't or we won't, stand up for the change that we need. And I believe that that's what the American people are looking for.

When I first ran for this office, I said that I did not believe the country was as divided as our politics would suggest, and I still believe that. I know sometimes, when you watch cable news or talk radio or you browse the Internet, you'd think, man, everybody just hates each other, everybody is just at each other's throats. But that's not how most Americans think about these issues. There are good people on both sides of every issue.

So if we're going to move forward, we can't just talk past one another. We've got to listen to one another. That's what Governor Malloy and all these legislative leaders did. That's why they were able to pass bipartisan legislation. All right?

I've got stacks of letters from gun owners who want me to know that they care passionately about their right to bear arms, don't want them infringed upon, and I appreciate every one of those letters. I've learned from them. But a lot of those letters, what they've also said is—they're not just gun owners, they're also parents or police officers or veterans, and they agree that we can't stand by and keep letting these tragedies happen, that with our rights come some responsibilities and obligations to our communities and ourselves and most of all to our children. We can't just think about "us," we've got to think about "we the people."

I was in Colorado. I told a story about Michelle. She came back from a trip to rural Iowa; we were out there campaigning. Sometimes it would be miles between farms, let alone towns. And she said, you know, coming back, I can understand why somebody would want a gun for protection. If somebody drove up into the driveway and, Barack, you weren't home, the sheriff lived miles away, I might want that security. So she can understand what it might be like in terms of somebody wanting that kind of security.

On the other hand, I also talked to a hunter last week who said, "All my experiences with guns have been positive, but I also realize that for others, all their experiences with guns have been negative."

And when he said that, I thought about the mom I met from suburban Chicago whose son

was killed in a random shooting. And this mom told me: "I hate it when people tell me that my son was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was on his way to school. He was exactly where he was supposed to be. He was in the right place at the right time, and he still got shot."

The kids at Sandy Hook were where they were supposed to be. So were those moviegoers in Aurora. So were those worshippers in Oak Creek. So was Gabby Giffords. She was at a supermarket, listening to the concerns of her constituents. They were exactly where they were supposed to be. They were also exercising their rights: to assemble peaceably, to worship freely and safely. They were exercising the rights of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness. So, surely, we can reconcile those two things. Surely, America doesn't have to be divided between rural and urban and Democrat and Republican when it comes to something like this.

If you're an American who wants to do something to prevent more families from knowing the immeasurable anguish that these families here have known, then we have to act. Now is the time to get engaged. Now is the time to get involved. Now is the time to push back on fear and frustration and misinformation. Now is the time for everybody to make their voices heard from every State house to the corridors of Congress.

And I'm asking everyone listening today, find out where your Member of Congress stands on this. If they're not part of the 90 percent of Americans who agree on background checks, then ask them, why not? Why wouldn't you want to make it easier for law enforcement to do their job? Why wouldn't you want to make it harder for a dangerous person to get his or her hands on a gun? What's more important to you, our children or an A-grade from the gun lobby?

I've heard Nicole talk about what her life has been like since Dylan was taken from her in December. And one thing she said struck me. She said: "Every night, I beg for him to come to me in my dreams so that I can see him again. And during the day, I just focus on what I need to do to honor him and make change." Now, if Nicole can summon the courage to do that, how can the rest of us do any less? [*Applause*] How can we do any less?

If there is even one thing we can do to protect our kids, don't we have an obligation to try? If there is even one step we can take to keep somebody from murdering dozens of innocents in the span of minutes, shouldn't we be taking that step? If there is just one thing we can do to keep one father from having to bury his child, isn't that worth fighting for?

I've got to tell you, the—I've had tough days in the Presidency—I've said this before: The day Newtown happened was the toughest day of my Presidency. But I've got to tell you, if we don't respond to this, that will be a tough day for me too. Because we've got to expect more from ourselves, and we've got to expect more from Congress. We've got to believe that every once in a while, we set politics aside, and we just do what's right. We've got to believe that.

And if you believe that, I'm asking you to stand up. If you believe in the right to bear arms, like I do, but think we should prevent an irresponsible few from inflicting harm, stand up. [*Applause*] Stand up.

If you believe that the families of Newtown and Aurora and Tucson and Virginia Tech and the thousands of Americans who have been gunned down in the last 4 months deserve a vote, we all have to stand up.

If you want the people you send to Washington to have just an iota of the courage that the educators at Sandy Hook showed when danger arrived on their doorstep, then we're all going to have to stand up.

And if we do, if we come together and raise our voices together and demand this change together, I'm convinced cooperation and common sense will prevail. We will find sensible, intelligent ways to make this country stronger and safer for our children.

So let's do the right thing. Let's do right by our kids. Let's do right by these families. Let's get this done. Connecticut, thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. in the Chase Family Arena of the Sports Center. In his remarks, he referred to Nicole and Ian Hockley, parents of Dylan Hockley, who was killed in the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, on December 14, 2012; and First Selectman E. Patricia Llodra of Newtown, CT.

Statement on the Death of Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom
April 8, 2013

With the passing of Baroness Margaret Thatcher, the world has lost one of the great champions of freedom and liberty, and America has lost a true friend. As a grocer's daughter who rose to become Britain's first female Prime Minister, she stands as an example to our daughters that there is no glass ceiling that can't be shattered. As Prime Minister, she helped restore the confidence and pride that has always been the hallmark of Britain at its best. And as an unapologetic supporter of our transatlantic alliance, she knew that with strength and resolve, we could win the cold war and extend freedom's promise.

Here in America, many of us will never forget her standing shoulder to shoulder with President Reagan, reminding the world that we are not simply carried along by the currents of history, we can shape them with moral conviction, unyielding courage, and iron will. Michelle and I send our thoughts to the Thatcher family and all the British people, as we carry on the work to which she dedicated her life: free peoples standing together, determined to write our own destiny.

Statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day
April 8, 2013

I join people here in the United States, in Israel, and around the world in observing Holocaust Remembrance Day. Today we honor the memories of the 6 million Jewish victims and millions of others who perished in the darkness of the Shoah. As we reflect on the beautiful lives lost and their great potential that would never be fulfilled, we also pay tribute to all those who resisted the Nazis' heinous acts and all those who survived.

On my recent trip to Israel, I had the opportunity to visit Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust memorial, and reaffirm our collective responsibility to confront anti-Semitism, prejudice, and intolerance across the world. On this *Yom Hashoah*, we must accept the full responsibility of remembrance—as nations and as individuals—not simply to pledge "never again," but to commit ourselves to the understanding, empathy and compassion that is the foundation of peace and human dignity.

Remarks at PBS's "In Performance at the White House: Memphis Soul"
April 9, 2013

Everybody, please have a seat. And give it up for our musical director, Booker T. and the Memphis Soul all-stars. I just want everybody to know that it is now my second term, so rather than "Hail to the Chief," we're going with that from here on out. [*Laughter*] Little change in tradition.

Now, before we get started, I am going to exercise some Presidential prerogative to say a few words about two very special people who are here tonight. This will humiliate them, but I'm going to go ahead and do it anyway. Jess Wright and Kenny Thompson both work on

my staff, crucial members of my team since way back in Iowa in 2007.

Over the weekend, Kenny popped the question, and Jess said yes. So I want to congratulate—publicly—Kenny Thompson, Jess Wright. Beautiful couple. We love them. They are wonderful. They've been loyal, shown such great friendship to me, and I'm so glad that they have gone ahead and taken the plunge.

By the way, guys, Justin Timberlake just got married to this lovely young lady right here, Jessica Biel. So Justin can probably offer you a few pointers. And, Justin, they are looking for a wedding singer. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying.

Tonight I am speaking not just as a President, but as one of America's best known Al Green impersonators. [*Laughter*] So I have a new appreciation for what Al once said about the Memphis soul sound that he helped create: "We don't even know ourselves how that music has endured for so long and how that came out of us."

All I know is I've been looking forward to tonight because, let's face it, who does not love this music? These songs get us on the dance floor. Even the Governor of Tennessee said he's going to dance tonight. [*Laughter*] They get stuck in our heads. We go back over them again and again. And they've played an important part in our history.

In the sixties and seventies, Memphis knew its share of division and discord and injustice. But in that turbulent time, the sound of Hi and Duke and Sun and Stax records tried to bridge those divides, to create a little harmony with harmony. The great Memphis musician Don Nix went to an all-White school, and he described what it was like. He said: "If you could imagine, nobody's ever heard R&B music before. White kids had never heard it. And you can imagine what that did to us."

So he and others kept playing music that everybody could get in to. They created a whole new sound, and as they did, they broke down barriers. On McLemore Avenue, in the heart of a segregated city, Stax Records was integrated from the studio musicians all the way to upper management. Booker T. Jones and Steve Cropper, who are both here tonight, helped form one of the city's first integrated bands. They weren't allowed to go to school together. They weren't always allowed to travel or eat together. But no one could stop them from playing music together.

And that was the spirit of their music—the sound of "Soulsville, U.S.A."—a music that, at its core, is about the pain of being alone, the power of human connection, and the importance of treating each other right. After all, this is the music that asked us to "Try a Little Tenderness." It's the music that put "Mr. Big Stuff" in his place. [*Laughter*] And it's the music that challenged us to accept new ways of thinking with four timeless words: "Can you dig it?" [*Laughter*]

So it's really no surprise that Memphis soul swept the Nation, and it has stood the test of time. Tonight we bring it to the White House.

We've got folks here who were there at the beginning, legends like Mavis Staples, Charlie Musselwhite, William Bell, and Eddie Floyd. We've got artists like Cyndi Lauper and Ben Harper and Queen Latifah, who still turn to Memphis for inspiration. We've got Justin Timberlake, a proud son of Memphis who's never forgotten his roots, and the Alabama Shakes, who are bringing the Muscle Shoals sound to a new generation.

So to all of you, even more than for the music you've created, I want to say a special thank you for the difference that you've made in our lives. More than half a century after Soulsville, U.S.A., first opened its doors, you still bring us together. You still remind us how much we have in common. You still help us imagine a better place. And you promise, through your beautiful music, that you can take us there.

So tonight we're going to start things off with two extraordinary artists who span the generations. One's a Memphis legend who's been around just about forever, the other an "American Idol" who's turning 21 today. In the heyday of soul music, no band had more hits than the group known simply as Sam and Dave. Here to perform his classic "Soul Man" along with Joshua Ledet, please welcome the great Sam Moore.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kenneth D. Thompson, Director of Messaging, Office of the Vice President; actor Jessica C. Biel; Gov. William E. Haslam of Tennessee; and musicians Al Green and Dana E. "Queen Latifah" Owens.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
April 10, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Please, please have a seat. Well, as President, my top priority is to do everything I can to reignite what I consider to be the true engine of the American economy: a rising, thriving middle class. That's what I think about every day. That's the driving force behind every decision that I make.

And over the past 3 years, our businesses have created nearly 6.5 million new jobs. But we know we can help them create more. Corporate profits are at an alltime high. But we have to get wages and incomes rising as well. Our deficits are falling at the fastest pace in years. But we can do more to bring them down in a balanced and responsible way.

The point is, our economy is poised for progress, as long as Washington doesn't get in the way. Frankly, the American people deserve better than what we've been seeing: a shortsighted, crisis-driven decisionmaking, like the reckless, across-the-board spending cuts that are already hurting a lot of communities out there, cuts that economists predict will cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs during the course of this year.

If we want to keep rebuilding our economy on a stronger, more stable foundation, then we've got to get smarter about our priorities as a nation. And that's what the budget I'm sending to Congress today represents: a fiscally responsible blueprint for middle class jobs and growth.

For years, the debate in this town has raged between reducing our deficits at all costs and making the investments necessary to grow our economy. And this budget answers that argument, because we can do both. We can grow our economy and shrink our deficits. In fact, as we saw in the 1990s, nothing shrinks deficits faster than a growing economy. That's been my goal since I took office. And that should be our goal going forward.

At a time when too many Americans are still looking for work, my budget begins by making targeted investments in areas that will create jobs right now and prime our economy to keep generating good jobs down the road. As I said in my State of the Union Address, we should ask ourselves three questions every day: How do we make America a magnet for new jobs? How do we give our workers the skills they need to do those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

To make America a magnet for good jobs, this budget invests in new manufacturing hubs to help turn regions left behind by globalization into global centers of high-tech jobs. We'll spark new American innovation and industry with cutting-edge research, like the initiative I announced to map the human brain and cure disease. We'll continue our march towards energy independence and address the threat of climate change. And our Rebuild America Partnership will attract private investment to put construction workers back on the job rebuilding our roads, our bridges, and our schools, in turn attracting even more new business to communities across the country.

To help workers earn the skills they need to fill those jobs, we'll work with States to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America. And we're going to pay for it by raising taxes on tobacco products that harm our young people. It's the right thing to do.

We'll reform our high schools and job training programs to equip more Americans with the skills they need to compete in the 21st-century economy. And we'll help more middle class families afford the rising cost of college.

To make sure hard work is rewarded, we'll build new ladders of opportunity into the mid-

dle class for anybody who is willing to work hard to climb them. So we'll partner with 20 of our communities hit hardest by the recession to help them improve housing and education and business investment. And we should make the minimum wage a wage you can live on, because no one who works full time should have to raise his or her family in poverty.

My budget also replaces the foolish, across-the-board spending cuts that are already hurting our economy. And I have to point out that many of the same Members of Congress who supported deep cuts are now the ones complaining about them the loudest as they hit their own communities. Of course, the people I feel for are the people who are directly feeling the pain of these cuts, the people who can least afford it. They're hurting military communities that have already sacrificed enough. They're hurting middle class families. There are children who have had to enter a lottery to determine which of them get to stay in their Head Start program with their friends. There are seniors who depend on programs like Meals on Wheels so they can live independently, but who are seeing their services cut.

That's what this so-called sequester means. Some people may not have been impacted, but there are a lot of folks who are being increasingly impacted all across this country. And that's why my budget replaces these cuts with smarter ones, making long-term reforms, eliminating actual waste and programs we don't need anymore.

So building new roads and bridges, educating our children from the youngest age, helping more families afford college, making sure that hard work pays—these are things that should not be partisan. They should not be controversial. We need to make them happen. My budget makes these investments to grow our economy and create jobs, and it does so without adding a dime to our deficits.

Now, on the topic of deficits, despite all the noise in Washington, here's a clear and unassailable fact: Our deficits are already falling. Over the past 2 years, I've signed legislation that will reduce our deficits by more than $2.5 trillion, more than two-thirds of it through spending cuts and the rest through asking the wealthiest Americans to begin paying their fair share.

That doesn't mean we don't have more work to do. But here's how we finish the job. My budget will reduce our deficits by nearly another $2 trillion so that all told we will have surpassed the goal of $4 trillion in deficit reduction that independent economists believe we need to stabilize our finances. But it does so in a balanced and responsible way, a way that most Americans prefer.

Both parties, for example, agree that the rising cost of caring for an aging generation is the single biggest driver of our long-term deficits. And the truth is, for those like me who deeply believe in our social insurance programs, think it's one of the core things that our Government needs to do, if we want to keep Medicare working as well as it has, if we want to preserve the ironclad guarantee that Medicare represents, then we're going to have to make some changes. But they don't have to be drastic ones. And instead of making drastic ones later, what we should be doing is making some manageable ones now.

The reforms I'm proposing will strengthen Medicare for future generations without undermining that ironclad guarantee that Medicare represents. We'll reduce our Government's Medicare bills by finding new ways to reduce the cost of health care, not by shifting the costs to seniors or the poor or families with disabilities. They are reforms that keep the promise we've made to our seniors: basic security that is rock solid and dependable and there for you when you need it. That's what my budget represents.

My budget does also contain the compromise I offered Speaker Boehner at the end of last year, including reforms championed by Republican leaders in Congress. And I don't believe that all these ideas are optimal, but I'm willing to accept them as part of a compromise, if—and only if—they contain protections for the most vulnerable Americans.

But if we're serious about deficit reduction, then these reforms have to go hand in hand with reforming our Tax Code to make it more

simple and more fair so that the wealthiest individuals and biggest corporations cannot keep taking advantage of loopholes and deductions that most Americans don't get. That's the bottom line.

If you're serious about deficit reduction, then there's no excuse to keep these loopholes open. They don't serve an economic purpose. They don't grow our economy. They don't put people back to work. All they do is to allow folks, who are already well off and well connected, game the system. If anyone thinks I'll finish the job of deficit reduction on the backs of middle class families or through spending cuts alone that actually hurt our economy short-term, they should think again.

When it comes to deficit reduction, I've already met Republicans more than halfway. So in the coming days and weeks, I hope that Republicans will come forward and demonstrate that they're really as serious about the deficits and debt as they claim to be.

So, growing our economy, creating jobs, shrinking our deficits, keeping our promise to the generation that made us great, but also investing in the next generation, the next generation that will make us even greater. These are not conflicting goals. We can do them in concert. That's what my budget does. That's why I'm so grateful for the great work that Jeff Zients and his team have done in shaping this budget. The numbers work. There's not a lot of smoke and mirrors in here.

And if we can come together, have a serious, reasoned debate—not driven by politics—and come together around common sense and compromise, then I'm confident we'll move this country forward and leave behind something better for our children. That's our task.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on Senate Action on Gun Control Legislation
April 10, 2013

I applaud Senators Joe Manchin and Pat Toomey for their leadership on forging a bipartisan agreement around commonsense background checks that will make it harder for dangerous people to get their hands on a gun.

This is not my bill, and there are aspects of the agreement that I might prefer to be stronger. But the agreement does represent welcome and significant bipartisan progress. It recognizes that there are good people on both sides of this issue, and we don't have to agree on everything to know that we've got to do something to stem the tide of gun violence.

Of course, a lot of work remains. Congress needs to finish the job. The Senate must overcome obstruction by defeating a threatened filibuster and allow a vote on this and other commonsense reforms to protect our kids and our communities. Any bill still has to clear the House. So I'm going to keep asking the American people to stand up and raise their voices, because these measures deserve a vote, and so do the families and communities they're designed to protect.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Sarah M.R. "Sally" Jewell as Secretary of the Interior
April 10, 2013

I am pleased that today the Senate took bipartisan action to confirm Sally Jewell as our next Secretary of the Interior. With her extensive business experience, including her background in the energy sector, along with her lifelong commitment to conservation, Sally is the right person for this important job. She brings an important mix of strong management

skills, appreciation for our Nation's tradition of protecting our public lands and heritage, and a keen understanding of what it means to be good stewards of our natural resources.

Sally's commitment to energy and climate issues, her belief in our strong government-to-government relationship with Indian Country, and her understanding of the inherent link between conservation and good jobs ensure that she will be an exceptional Secretary of the Interior. I am very glad she is joining my team, and I look forward to her counsel on these important issues as we continue to leverage our natural resources responsibly while protecting our Nation's treasures for generations to come.

Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Medal of Honor to Captain Emil J. Kapaun

April 11, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. Thank you, Chaplain.

This year, we mark the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean war, a time when thousands of our prisoners of war finally came home after years of starvation and hardship and, in some cases, torture. And among the homecomings, one stood out.

A group of our POWs emerged carrying a large wooden crucifix, nearly 4 feet tall. They had spent months on it, secretly collecting firewood, carving it—the cross and the body—using radio wire for a crown of thorns. It was a tribute to their friend, their chaplain, their fellow prisoner, who had touched their souls and saved their lives: Father Emil Kapaun.

This is an amazing story. Father Kapaun has been called a shepherd in combat boots. His fellow soldiers who felt his grace and his mercy called him a saint, a blessing from God. Today we bestow another title on him—recipient of our Nation's highest military decoration—the Medal of Honor. After more than six decades of working to make this medal a reality, I know one of Father Kapaun's comrades spoke for a lot of folks here when he said, "It's about time."

Father, as they called him, was just 35 years old when he died in that hellish prison camp. His parents and his only sibling, his brother, are no longer with us. But we are extremely proud to welcome members of the Kapaun family—his nephews, his niece, their children—two of whom currently serve in this country's National Guard. And we are very proud of them.

We're also joined by Members of the Kansas congressional delegation, leaders from across our armed forces, and representatives from the Catholic Church, which recognizes Father Kapaun as a "Servant of God." And we are truly humbled to be joined by men who served alongside him: veterans and former POWs from the Korean war. Thank you.

Now, obviously, I never met Father Kapaun. But I have a sense of the man he was, because in his story, I see reflections of my own grandparents and their values, the people who helped to raise me. Emil and my grandfather were both born in Kansas about the same time, both were raised in small towns outside of Wichita. They were part of that greatest generation: surviving the Depression, joining the Army, serving in World War II. And they embodied those heartland values of honesty and hard work, decency and humility: quiet heroes determined to do their part.

For Father Kapaun, this meant becoming an Army chaplain: serving God and country. After the Communist invasion of South Korea, he was among the first American troops that hit the beaches and pushed their way north through hard mountains and bitter cold. In his understated, midwestern way, he wrote home, saying, "This outdoor life is quite a thing"—[*laughter*]—and "I'd prefer to live in a house once in a while." But he had hope, saying, "It looks like the war will end soon."

That's when Chinese forces entered the war with a massive surprise attack, perhaps 20,000 soldiers pouring down on a few thousand Americans. In the chaos, dodging bullets and explosions, Father Kapaun raced between foxholes, out past the front lines, and into no-man's land, dragging the wounded to safety.

When his commanders ordered an evacuation, he chose to stay, gathering the injured, tending to their wounds. When the enemy broke through and the combat was hand to hand, he carried on, comforting the injured and the dying, offering some measure of peace as they left this Earth.

When enemy forces bore down, it seemed like the end: that these wounded Americans, more than a dozen of them, would be gunned down. But Father Kapaun spotted a wounded Chinese officer. He pleaded with this Chinese officer and convinced him to call out to his fellow Chinese. The shooting stopped, and they negotiated a safe surrender, saving those American lives.

Then, as Father Kapaun was being led away, he saw another American: wounded, unable to walk, laying in a ditch, defenseless. An enemy soldier was standing over him, rifle aimed at his head, ready to shoot. And Father Kapaun marched over and pushed the enemy soldier aside. And then as the soldier watched, stunned, Father Kapaun carried that wounded American away.

This is the valor we honor today: an American soldier who didn't fire a gun, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all, a love for his brothers so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live. And yet the incredible story of Father Kapaun does not end there.

He carried that injured American for miles, as their captors forced them on a death march. When Father Kapaun grew tired, he'd help the wounded soldier hop on one leg. When other prisoners stumbled, he picked them up. When they wanted to quit—knowing that stragglers would be shot—he begged them to keep walking.

In the camps that winter, deep in a valley, men could freeze to death in their sleep. Father Kapaun offered them his own clothes. They starved on tiny rations of millet and corn and birdseed. He somehow snuck past the guards, foraged in nearby fields, and returned with rice and potatoes. In desperation, some men hoarded food. He convinced them to share. Their bodies were ravaged by dysentery. He grabbed some rocks, pounded metal into pots and boiled clean water. They lived in filth. He washed their clothes, and he cleansed their wounds.

The guards ridiculed his devotion to his Savior and the Almighty. They took his clothes and made him stand in the freezing cold for hours. Yet he never lost his faith. If anything, it only grew stronger. At night, he slipped into huts to lead prisoners in prayer, saying the rosary, administering the sacraments, offering three simple words: "God bless you." One of them later said that with his very presence, he could just for a moment turn a mud hut into a cathedral.

That spring, he went further; he held an Easter service. I just met with the Kapaun family. They showed me something extraordinary: the actual stole, the purple vestment, that Father Kapaun wore when he celebrated Mass inside that prison camp.

As the Sun rose that Easter Sunday, he put on that purple stole and led dozens of prisoners to the ruins of an old church in the camp. And he read from a prayer missal that they had kept hidden. He held up a small crucifix that he had made from sticks. And as the guards watched, Father Kapaun and all those prisoners—mens of different faith, perhaps some men of no faith—sang the Lord's Prayer and "America the Beautiful." They sang so loud that other prisoners across the camp not only heard them, they joined in too, filling that valley with song and with prayer.

That faith—that they might be delivered from evil, that they could make it home—was perhaps the greatest gift to those men: that even amidst such hardship and despair, there could be hope; amid their misery in the temporal, they could see those truths that are eternal; that even in such hell, there could be a touch of the divine. Looking back, one of them said that that is what "kept a lot of us alive."

Yet, for Father Kapaun, the horrific conditions took their toll. Thin, frail, he began to limp, with a blood clot in his leg. And then came dysentery, then pneumonia. That's when the guards saw their chance to finally rid themselves of this priest and the hope he inspired. They came for him. And over the protests and tears of the men who loved him, the guards sent him to a death house—a hellhole with no food or water—to be left to die.

And yet, even then, his faith held firm. "I'm going to where I've always wanted to go," he told his brothers. "And when I get up there, I'll say a prayer for all of you." And then, as he was taken away, he did something remarkable; he blessed the guards. "Forgive them," he said, "for they know not what they do." Two days later, in that house of death, Father Kapaun breathed his last breath. His body was taken away, his grave unmarked, his remains unrecovered to this day.

The war and the awful captivity would drag on for another 2 years, but these men held on, steeled by the memory and moral example of the man they called Father. And on their first day of freedom, in his honor, they carried that beautiful wooden crucifix with them.

Some of these men are here today, including Herb Miller, the soldier that Father Kapaun saved in that ditch and then carried all those miles. Many are now in their eighties, but make no mistake, they are among the strongest men that America has ever produced. And I would ask all of our courageous POWs from the Korean war to stand if they're able and accept the gratitude of a grateful nation.

I'm told that in their darkest hours in the camp in that valley, these men turned to a Psalm. As we prepare for the presentation of the Medal of Honor to Father Kapaun's nephew, Ray, I want to leave you with the words of that Psalm, which sustained these men all those years ago:

> Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
> I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
> Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
> You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.
> You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
> Surely, your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.
> And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Ray, would you please join me on stage for the reading of the citation?

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Tiffany Hill, USN, Navy Aide to the President, read the citation. The President then presented the medal, assisted by Lt. Col. Owen G. Ray, USA, Army Aide to the President. Following the presentation, Maj. Gen. Donald L. Rutherford, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains, said a prayer.*]

Well, I can't imagine a better example for all of us—whether in uniform or not in uniform—a better example to follow. Father Kapaun's life, I think, is a testimony to the human spirit, the power of faith, and reminds us of the good that we can do each and every day regardless of the most difficult of circumstances. We can always be an instrument of his will.

So I hope all of you have enjoyed this ceremony. I certainly have been extremely touched by it. To the Kapaun family, God bless you. To all our veterans, we're so proud of you.

And my understanding is, is that the White House has pretty decent food—[*laughter*]—so I hope all of you enjoy the reception. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Korean war veteran and prisoner of war Mike Dowe, who wrote the initial recommendation for Capt. Kapaun to receive the Medal of Honor; Sfc. Herbert A. Miller, USA; and Ray Kapaun, nephew of Capt. Kapaun. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citation and the prayer said by Maj. Gen. Rutherford.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations

April 11, 2013

President Obama. Well, it is wonderful to have the opportunity to welcome my good friend, Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon, to the Oval Office. He and I consult quite frequently and in various multilateral settings, but this has been a useful opportunity for us to talk more specifically about how the United States and the United Nations can work together.

Let me first of all say that I think I speak for world leaders in a wide variety of countries when I say that the Secretary-General has shown outstanding leadership during what has been one of the most challenging and turbulent times in international affairs. I think he's fairminded. I think he has shown a willingness to tackle tough issues and to speak hard truths, and I very much appreciate personally the work that he's done.

Sometimes, people ask why the United States is so devoted to the United Nations, and obviously, beyond the fact that we helped set up the United Nations, what was true 60, 70 years ago is still true today. And that is that without a forum for discussion, negotiation, and diplomacy, the world is a worse place, and it is very much in the United States interests to ensure that international norms, rules of the road, and humanitarian norms are observed. And the United Nations gives us a critical opportunity to try to prevent conflict, create peace, maintain stability—all of which ultimately is good for America's security and America's prosperity.

We discussed a wide range of issues during this meeting. We started with Syria, where obviously the humanitarian crisis has gotten worse. And Secretary-General Ban and I shared the view that we are at a critical juncture, that it is important for us to bring about an effective political transition that would respect the rights of all Syrians, and that in the interim, it's important for us to try to eliminate some of the carnage that's been taking place directed at civilians and noncombatants.

And so we'll be strategizing about how the United Nations—or the United States, which is the largest donor to the humanitarian assistance in Syria and is also a strong supporter of the more moderate elements of the Syrian opposition, can work together with the United Nations to bring about if not a full resolution to the crisis, at least an improvement for the people of Syria and lay the foundation for a kind of political transition that is necessary.

We had an opportunity to discuss North Korea, where the Secretary-General obviously has an important political interest, but also a personal interest as a native of the Republic of Korea. And we both agree that now is the time for North Korea to end the kind of belligerent approach that they've been taking and to try to lower temperatures. Nobody wants to see a conflict on the Korean Peninsula. But it's important for North Korea, like every other country in the world, to observe the basic rules and norms that are set forth, including a wide variety of U.N. resolutions that have passed. And we will continue to try to work to resolve some of those issues diplomatically, even as I indicated to the Secretary-General that the United States will take all necessary steps to protect its people and to meet our obligations under our alliances in the region.

We talked about Middle East peace, where there is at least a window of opportunity for both Israelis and Palestinians to get back to the peace table. And we explored how the United States, as a strong friend of Israel and a supporter of a Palestinian state, can work with the United Nations and other multilateral bodies to try to move that process forward.

And we also had an opportunity to talk more broadly about an issue that affects every country, and that is climate change. And I appreciate very much the Secretary-General's leadership on that front.

The last point I'd make is that the Secretary-General has actually shown significant progress in U.N. reform, making the institution more

efficient, more effective. I think the Secretary-General would be the first to acknowledge that there is more work to do on that front, but he is making an earnest effort in making progress. And we very much appreciate that and encourage that to continue, because we think we need a strong, healthy United Nations, but at a time when all the member countries are under severe fiscal constraints, we want to make sure obviously that the United Nations is operating as efficiently as possible.

So, overall, I found it to be a very useful conversation, and I want to thank, once again, the Secretary-General for his leadership. The Secretary-General has been quoted as saying that there is no opt-out clause to the great challenges that we face around the world, and I assured him that the United States of America, as the largest economy and the most powerful military in the world, has no intention of opting out any time soon.

We have a deep interest in making sure that the United Nations and the various international institutions that we have are functioning effectively, because when they do, the United States does well and all its partner countries do well. And so I'm looking forward to continuing to support his efforts in any way that I can.

Thank you very much.

Secretary-General Ban. Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. President. I really appreciate President Obama for inviting me to the Oval Office, and I really appreciate your global leadership to make this world more peaceful, more prosperous, and where all human rights are protected and respected.

The United Nations and the United States share common goals in peace and security, human rights, and development. In that regard, I really appreciate such a strong leadership and cooperation and support of the U.S. Government and President Obama. You and the American people care about the world of justice, freedom, and opportunity for all. I am very confident that the partnership between the United Nations and the United States is now making very solid foundation and strong and stronger, and I count on your continuing support on that.

As President Obama has just explained in detailed manner, I do not have much to add to all the subjects, but if I may just say a few words from my own perspective as the Secretary-General. On Syria, this is the most troubling situation, where all the leaders of the world should really take much more strengthened leadership on. I have asked President Obama to demonstrate and exercise his stronger leadership in working together with the key partners of the Security Council.

As the Secretary-General, I have been working very closely with Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, and I will continue to do that. Unfortunately, this crisis, having entered a third year, in the absence of a political solution, we have seen well over 70,000 people be killed and more than 50 percent of schools, hospitals, and all infrastructures have been destroyed. More than 6 million people have been internally displaced, and we have 1.3 million refugees around the neighboring countries of Syria. This continuing military struggle as well as intensifying this sectarian war make us really worried that unless we stop this violence, this whole Syrian society may be destroyed. We have been mobilizing all possible humanitarian assistance, and I really appreciate President Obama and his Government's very generous support on this humanitarian assistance.

On chemical weapons investigation, it's regrettable that the Syrian Government has rejected my offer to engage in an investigation. This is my authority in accordance with the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. I sincerely hope that the Syrian Government will allow so that this investigation team will be able to conduct investigation, as requested by them. And I have received requests from other member states. That's why I have already assembled very experienced experts as a team. They are now ready. They can be deployed any time soon. So this is my original plan.

On the situation in and around the Korean Peninsula, I am deeply concerned, and we share such a grave concern together on these continuing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. I urge the D.P.R.K. authorities to refrain from

making any further provocative—[*inaudible*]—and rhetoric. This is not helpful. And I really highly commended President Obama's firm, principled, but measured response in close consultation with the Republic of Korea Government and with strong engagement with neighboring countries like China.

We hope that more of the countries, including China, who may have influence over North Korea, can exercise their leadership and influence so that this situation will be resolved peacefully. First and foremost, tension levels must come down. North Korea should not confront the international community as they are now doing. I hope that concerned parties, including the United States, China, the Republic of Korea, and Russia, and Japan will continue to work together on this matter.

On Middle East, I really appreciate President Obama's initiative to visit the region. We need to do more of our efforts to fully utilize the generated momentum by President Obama's visit so that a two-state solution can be successfully implemented as soon as possible.

On climate change, I intend to work very closely with the member states so that the legally binding global treaty can be achieved by the end of 2015. And for that possible—to facilitate this process, I intend to convene a leaders meeting sometime next year. I have invited President Obama. I invited him to play a very important leadership role for humanity.

As far as the United Nations reform is concerned, we will continue to make this organization more effective, efficient, accountable, and more trustworthy. I thank you for your leadership.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Naval Academy Midshipmen
April 12, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody. Hello. Please, everybody have a seat. Well, good afternoon. Welcome to the White House.

I want to start by recognizing Coach Ken Niumatalolo, my fellow Hawaiian, for being here once again. Where is he? There he is right here. [*Laughter*] Hard to miss him. Give him a big round of applause. I also want to recognize Vice Admiral Mike Miller, the Superintendent of the Naval Academy, for his outstanding service to our country and for keeping all of you guys in line. [*Laughter*]

Now, it is my pleasure to welcome the Navy Midshipmen back to the White House to receive the Commander in Chief's Trophy again. They have now won 19 of their last 21 games against the other service academies, making this their eighth trip here in 10 years. And so Michelle and I were thinking about just leaving the key under the rug. [*Laughter*]

This season, you finished 8 and 5, earned your ninth bowl appearance in the last 10 years. But perhaps most importantly, after a 2-year break, you achieved that very first goal you set at the start of every season: You beat Air Force, you beat Army, and lugged this 170-pound trophy back to Annapolis.

Against Air Force, you lost your quarterback to an injury in the middle of the game. You trailed by eight points in the fourth quarter. But freshman quarterback Keenan Reynolds took over and led you back in overtime. That's when an unlikely hero, offensive lineman Jake Zuzek, gave you a——

Team members. Zu!

The President. Zu!

——gave you a 28–21 win when he recovered a fumbled snap in the end zone for his first-ever touchdown. [*Laughter*] I'm not sure Coach called the fumblerooski, but I bet that Jake will take it anyway.

That set up a winner-take-all game with Army to end the season. Down three entering the fourth quarter, Keenan again led the come-

back, driving the team down the field for 80 yards and the winning score, and showing why he was only the third Navy freshman ever to start at quarterback. The win gave the Midshipmen their 11th straight victory over Army, which is a series record.

But at Navy, obviously, it's not just about the wins. It's about how you win. This year, your team motto was INAM, which is short for "It's Not About Me." And that ethic of teamwork and discipline and unselfishness was led by your captains, Bo Snelson and Brye French, and it ran through your entire season.

All season long you kept your priorities in line, your mission in focus. Your work in the classroom helped keep the Naval Academy's graduation rate in the top 10 of the NCAA for the eighth straight year, including linebacker Keegan Wetzel, a first-team Academic All-American with a 3.89 GPA in system engineering. So give Keegan a big round of applause. I like that.

And when you faced adversity, you pulled together. Over Thanksgiving break, freshman Rafi Montalvo was in a serious car accident, and doctors pulled him into a coma. And even though the Army game was next on the schedule, Coach was one of his first visitors at the hospital down in Florida. And then pretty soon, his teammates started showing up. When it came time to take the field against your biggest rival, you all put "Rafi" stickers on your helmets and gave him the game ball after your victory.

So, gentlemen, that's why I have no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief. You're there for each other, and you are there for our country. In just a few weeks when I visit you all for commencement—and I always have to get ready, because Midshipmen, they've got strong handshakes, some of them give me chest bumps, I've got to just make sure I don't tip over—18 of you will be commissioned as ensigns in the Navy and 10 more as second lieutenants in the Marine Corps.

And in the years to come, you will all follow their footsteps. You'll be leading your peers in some of the most complex, dangerous missions on the planet. You'll be teaching them to pull together, to keep their mission in focus, to always remember that "It's Not About Me." And together, your victories will not simply be about football trophies—as impressive as that trophy is—but it will be about our security and our values and protecting our freedom.

So I want you to know that I could not be prouder to have each of you representing this great country of ours. Americans all across the country feel the very same way. And every single day, we will stand behind you and support you and do the very best that we can in our own lives to reflect the courage and the honor and the character of the men and women of the United States Naval Academy. So God bless you.

And with that, let's—I understand I've got a little something waiting for me. All right, that's the official Navy helmet, fitted for me. [*Laughter*] Pretty sharp.

Audience member. Put it on.

The President. All right. [*Laughter*] Here's a general rule: You don't put stuff on your head if you're President. [*Laughter*] So yes, that's Politics 101. [*Laughter*] You never look good wearing something on your head. Are we going to—we're going to have the coach up here. Come on.

Coach, great to see you again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Trey Miller and Ralph "Rafi" Motalvo, quarterbacks, U.S. Naval Academy football team.

Statement on the Resignation of M. John Berry as Director of the Office of Personnel Management
April 12, 2013

John Berry has served the American people well as Director of the Office of Personnel Management. He's streamlined the way Federal employees are hired, modernized the workplace, made the Federal workforce more diverse, and increased the number of returning servicemembers hired by the Government. John has been a champion for Federal workers: men and women who devote their lives to vital tasks like securing our borders, curing disease, and keeping the American people safe. This country is better off because of John's talent and dedication, and I'm grateful to him for his service.

Remarks Honoring the 2012 NCAA Football Champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide
April 15, 2013

The President. Roll Tide!

Audience members. Roll Tide!

The President. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat here. It is a great pleasure to welcome the Alabama Crimson Tide to the White House again. I want to congratulate them on winning their 15th national championship and their third in 4 years. They are starting to learn their way around the White House. [*Laughter*] I was thinking about just having some cots for them here, they're here so often, except we couldn't find any that were big enough. [*Laughter*]

Now, before I begin, I want to extend sympathies to the family of Mal Moore, who passed away last month, after a career that spanned six decades as a player, a coach, and athletic director at Alabama. Mal did more than just about anybody to make this program what it is today. Our prayers go out to all the members of the Alabama community who knew him and loved him.

Now, last year obviously also had a lot of bright spots for the Crimson Tide. From the beginning of spring practice, the best teams in the country had one goal, and that was to try to at least be as good, if not better, than Alabama. But the Tide kept on rising to the occasion, and they never let up.

Back in January, with the whole country watching, this team lined up against the number-one ranked, undefeated Fighting Irish of Notre Dame and dominated from the first possession. At halftime it was 28 to 0. That's when I stopped watching. [*Laughter*] When the clock ran out, it was 42 to 14. And they left no doubt who was the best team in the country. And after the game, the Notre Dame athletic director said: "They're not just better than us. They're better than everyone."

And that was no accident. A few days after winning the title last year, Coach Saban was already back to work. And even after losing some pretty big names in the draft last year, he and his terrific coaching team made sure that they did not lose a step.

A.J. McCarron showed the kind of poise that very few 22-year-olds possess, passing for more than 2,900 yards and 30 touchdowns on the season. I hear he's coming back for 1 more year, because apparently the rest of the SEC defenses haven't suffered enough. [*Laughter*] So he's going to subject them to a little more pain.

Then there were the seniors, who finished their 4 years with a combined record of 49 and 5, which I think is pretty good. Barrett Jones ended his career as one of the most decorated football players in Alabama history, even playing in the national championship game with torn ligaments in his foot. After the game, he said, "It was painful, but you couldn't have pulled me off the field with a tractor." And I

don't think he was joking. I think that's true. [*Laughter*]

This title also belongs to everyone who helped these young men get to where they are today: family and friends, high school coaches and loved ones, trainers, staff, grocers. [*Laughter*] These guys eat a lot. It belongs to every student who came to every game, all the fans who yelled "Roll Tide" at kickoff and cheered on the Million Dollar Band.

In Miami, on the night the Tide won the championship, one Notre Dame fan apparently asked if "Roll Tide" is a noun or a verb, to which another fan dressed head to toe in crimson replied, "It's a way of life." [*Laughter*]

And that way of life has created legends like Bear Bryant and Joe Namath. It's also a legacy carried on by this team and generations of fans who will fill Bryant-Denny Stadium to the rafters on Saturday afternoons.

So, obviously, everybody here has a lot to be proud of. I want to congratulate Alabama one more time on a great season. I want to wish the players luck who will be taking part in the NFL draft next year. And since I'll be around for 4 more football seasons, I expect I just might see these guys again before I leave.

So roll Tide! Thank you.

Coach.

Head Coach Nicholas L. Saban. Mr. President, we certainly appreciate what you do for our country. It's certainly special for you to take the time to honor out team, which we're very proud of their accomplishments relative to all of our fans, all of our supporters, all of our coaches and players. And this is really a special occasion and something you never really get used to. So we really appreciate it.

And we do have something that we want to present you with today.

[*At this point, the President was presented with a jersey.*]

Coach Saban. And I might say, we're kind of keeping inventory of what we've been giving you, and now you have a full uniform. You're an official member of the team. [*Laughter*] And I will have a meeting later with you to decide how much playing time you're going to get. [*Laughter*]

The President. I think we should keep me on the bench. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John B. Swarbrick, Jr., vice president and director of athletics, University of Notre Dame; and Raymond Anthony "A.J." McCarron, Jr., quarterback, and Barrett Jones, offensive lineman, University of Alabama football team.

Remarks on the Terrorist Attack in Boston, Massachusetts
April 15, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Earlier today I was briefed by my homeland security team on the events in Boston. We're continuing to monitor and respond to the situation as it unfolds. And I've directed the full resources of the Federal Government to help State and local authorities protect our people, increase security around the United States as necessary, and investigate what happened.

The American people will say a prayer for Boston tonight, and Michelle and I send our deepest thoughts and prayers to the families of the victims in the wake of this senseless loss.

We don't yet have all the answers. But we do know that multiple people have been wounded, some gravely, in explosions at the Boston Marathon.

I've spoken to FBI Director Mueller and Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano, and they're mobilizing the appropriate resources to investigate and to respond.

I've updated leaders of Congress in both parties, and we reaffirmed that on days like this, there are no Republicans or Democrats; we are Americans, united in concern for our fellow citizens.

I've also spoken with Governor Patrick and Mayor Menino and made it clear that they have every single Federal resource necessary to care for the victims and counsel the families. And above all, I made clear to them that all Americans stand with the people of Boston.

Boston police, firefighters, and first responders, as well as the National Guard, responded heroically and continue to do so as we speak. It's a reminder that so many Americans serve and sacrifice on our behalf every single day, without regard to their own safety, in dangerous and difficult circumstances. And we salute all those who assisted in responding so quickly and professionally to this tragedy.

We still do not know who did this or why. And people shouldn't jump to conclusions before we have all the facts. But make no mistake, we will get to the bottom of this. And we will find out who did this; we'll find out why they did this. Any responsible individuals, any responsible groups will feel the full weight of justice.

Today is a holiday in Massachusetts, Patriots' Day. It's a day that celebrates the free and fiercely independent spirit that this great American city of Boston has reflected from the earliest days of our Nation. And it's a day that draws the world to Boston's streets in a spirit of friendly competition. Boston is a tough and resilient town. So are its people. I'm supremely confident that Bostonians will pull together, take care of each other, and move forward as one proud city. And as they do, the American people will be with them every single step of the way.

You should anticipate that as we get more information, our teams will provide you briefings. We're still in the investigation stage at this point. But I just want to reiterate, we will find out who did this, and we will hold them accountable.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:11 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Remarks on the Terrorist Attack in Boston, Massachusetts
April 16, 2013

Good morning, everybody. I've just been briefed by my national security team, including FBI Director Mueller, Attorney General Holder, Secretary Napolitano, and my Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Adviser Lisa Monaco, on the attacks in Boston. We continue to mobilize and deploy all appropriate law enforcement resources to protect our citizens and to investigate and to respond to this attack.

Obviously, our first thoughts this morning are with the victims, their families, and the city of Boston. We know that two explosions gravely wounded dozens of Americans and took the lives of others, including a 8-year-old boy.

This was a heinous and cowardly act. And given what we now know about what took place, the FBI is investigating it as an act of terrorism. Any time bombs are used to target innocent civilians, it is an act of terror. What we don't yet know, however, is who carried out this attack, or why, whether it was planned and executed by a terrorist organization, foreign or domestic, or was the act of a malevolent individual. That's what we don't yet know. And clearly, we're at the beginning of our investigation.

It will take time to follow every lead and determine what happened. But we will find out. We will find whoever harmed our citizens, and we will bring them to justice.

We also know this: The American people refuse to be terrorized. Because what the world saw yesterday in the aftermath of the explosions were stories of heroism and kindness and generosity and love: exhausted runners who kept running to the nearest hospital to give blood and those who stayed to tend to the wounded, some tearing off their own clothes to make tourniquets; the first responders who ran into the chaos to save lives; the men and women who are still treating the wounded at some

of the best hospitals in the world and the medical students who hurried to help, saying, "When we heard, we all came in"; the priests who opened their churches and ministered to the hurt and the fearful; and the good people of Boston who opened their homes to the victims of this attack and those shaken by it.

So if you want to know who we are, what America is, how we respond to evil, that's it: selflessly, compassionately unafraid.

In the coming days, we will pursue every effort to get to the bottom of what happened. And we will continue to remain vigilant. I've directed my administration to take appropriate security measures to protect the American people. And this is a good time for all of us to remember that we all have a part to play in alerting authorities: If you see something suspicious, speak up.

I have extraordinary confidence in the men and women of the FBI, the Boston Police Department, and the other agencies that responded so heroically and effectively in the aftermath of yesterday's events. I'm very grateful for the leadership of Governor Patrick and Mayor Menino. And I know that even as we protect our people and aggressively pursue this investigation, the people of Boston will continue to respond in the same proud and heroic way that they have thus far, and their fellow Americans will be right there with them.

Thank you very much. And you can expect further briefings from our law enforcement officials as the day goes on. When we have more details, they will be disclosed. What I've indicated to you is what we know now. We know it was bombs that were set off. We know that obviously they did some severe damage. We do not know who did them. We do not know whether this was an act of an organization or an individual or individuals. We don't have a sense of motive yet. So everything else at this point is speculation. But as we receive more information, as the FBI has more information, as our counterterrorism teams have more information, we will make sure to keep you and the American people posted. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dorchester, MA, resident Martin Richard, who was killed in the attack. The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Israeli Independence Day
April 16, 2013

On the 65th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, I join my fellow Americans in wishing the Israeli people a joyous Independence Day. On this date 65 years ago, the Jewish people realized their dream of the ages: to be masters of their fate in their own sovereign state. From that moment on, a free and independent Israel has had no greater friend and ally than the United States. As I said during my visit to Israel last month, our two nations stand together because it makes our countries safer, stronger, and more prosperous, and it makes the world a better place.

Among the many memories I will always cherish from my visit will be my time at Mount Herzl. There, I was honored to pay tribute to Theodor Herzl, who did so much to realize the dream of an independent Israel, to the Presidents and Prime Ministers who guided her, and to those in uniform who have laid down their lives to protect her. The strong and prosperous Israel we see today proves Herzl's vision: "If you will it, it is no dream." On this anniversary, we reaffirm the unbreakable alliance between our two nations and our shared determination to realize the dreams of our people to live in security and peace.

Statement on Immigration Reform
April 16, 2013

This afternoon Senators Schumer and McCain briefed me on the bipartisan immigration reform bill that they have drafted with their colleagues in the Senate. This bill is clearly a compromise, and no one will get everything they wanted, including me. But it is largely consistent with the principles that I have repeatedly laid out for comprehensive reform. This bill would continue to strengthen security at our borders and hold employers more accountable if they knowingly hire undocumented workers. It would provide a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million individuals who are already in this country illegally. And it would modernize our legal immigration system so that we're able to reunite families and attract the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers who will help create good paying jobs and grow our economy. These are all commonsense steps that the majority of Americans support. I urge the Senate to quickly move this bill forward, and as I told Senators Schumer and McCain, I stand willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that comprehensive immigration reform becomes a reality as soon as possible.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the United Arab Emirates
April 16, 2013

In their meeting today at the White House, President Obama and the UAE's Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan reaffirmed their commitment to the strong partnership and friendship between their two countries.

The Crown Prince expressed his condolences for those who were affected by yesterday's attack in Boston.

The two leaders highlighted the expanding ties between the United States and the UAE, reflecting common strategic interests. The Crown Prince thanked President Obama for the United States' leadership in the region, including the President's efforts to advance peace, security, and opportunity in the Middle East.

The President and Crown Prince pledged to sustain the expanding economic ties between the United States and the UAE, noting that the UAE remains the United States' largest export market in the Middle East and a significant investor in the United States. The President commended the UAE for hosting the successful Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Dubai last December, and both leaders highlighted the importance of fostering broad-based economic opportunity in the region, particularly for young people. They also discussed the relationships the UAE is building with leading U.S. institutions, including in education, health care, and the arts.

The President and Crown Prince also reaffirmed their shared commitment to close defense and security cooperation, including joint training exercises, counterterrorism cooperation and the deployment of interoperable U.S. defense systems. The President expressed appreciation for the UAE's contributions to NATO missions in Afghanistan and Libya. The President and the Crown Prince also discussed a range of regional challenges, including the need for Iran to meet its international obligations with respect to its nuclear program, the ongoing conflict in Syria, and countering the threat of violent extremism.

The President and Crown Prince pledged to continue to deepen the U.S.-UAE partnership through close and regular consultations between the two countries.

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

Remarks at the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride Opening Ceremony
April 17, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Well, welcome to the White House. Thank you, Ric, for your introduction and for your leadership at the VA. And I want to thank all of you for coming out today.

This is actually good, a little overcast, to keep you guys not too hot. This is one of my favorite events of the year.

Audience member. I love you, Mr. President!

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*]

We obviously meet at a time when our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Boston. Our hearts are with the families of the victims. And now we send our support and encouragement to people who never expected that they'd need it: the wounded civilians who are just beginning what will be, I'm sure for some of them, a long road to recovery.

It's a road that the remarkable warriors and athletes here know all too well. And as a consequence, they're going to serve for all of the families as well as all Americans a continued inspiration.

We do this every spring, and as all of you know, it started in a bar, where a lot of good ideas start. [*Laughter*]

Did you say "woo"?

Chris Carney and some of his buddies, who are here today, were talking about what they could do to support our wounded warriors, and Chris came up with the idea of biking coast-to-coast to raise money and awareness.

Now, even he has admitted in hindsight, "It may have been the beer muscles talking." But he followed through, and he started in Long Island, he ended in San Diego. Along the way, he inspired people all across the country. And since then, more than a thousand wounded warriors have joined soldier rides across America. This is the fourth time I've had the chance to welcome these rides here at the White House. And as always, we've got Army. We've got Navy. We've got Air Force. And we've got some marines in the house.

Together, with your outstanding families, you represent what's best in America. When we needed patriots to defend our freedom, you have answered the call. You've risked everything for our country and for each other. And you've made sacrifices most of us can barely imagine.

So thanks to your courage and your resolve, we've been able to end one war; we're beginning to wind down another. But for all of you, as is true for all of our wounded warriors, coming home doesn't mean that the fight is over. In some ways, it's just begun.

You think about folks like Sergeant Sean Karpf. I first met Sean last June at Walter Reed; he had just lost his left leg to an IED in Afghanistan, he knew that there was a long road ahead of him. But today Sean is here, he's ready to ride. He's trained to compete in swimming and track at the Wounded Warrior Games. He's lined up an internship in the physical therapy section at Walter Reed, where he's going to help fellow wounded warriors make the same journey that he did.

Then there's Staff Sergeant Erick Millette. During two tours in Iraq, Erick survived 17 IED attacks. They left him with the kinds of injuries that you can't always see: head trauma, brain injury, PTSD. Erick's military career was cut short, but he's taken on a new mission, and that's sharing his story with audiences across the country.

So he spread the message that it's okay to talk about these unseen wounds of war. It's okay to seek out help and to seek out support. Erick says that the Wounded Warrior Project literally saved his life, and now through his work, he's helping save even more lives. So, Erick, thank you so much. And obviously, to Sean and everybody who is participating, we could not be prouder of you.

I also want to thank folks like Captain Mary McGriff, First Lieutenant Jason Church for returning for another soldier ride as peer mentors for first-time riders. That's a big part of what the soldier rides are about: not just what

you can do for yourself, but what you can do as a team. As one rider put it: "It's just like in the military. You ride for the warrior next to you."

So 9 years ago, Chris Carney told a reporter that the most daunting part of that first ride was being alone. He said he had only played team sports in the past, that he wasn't used to a solo effort. But what Chris and others discovered is that when it comes to supporting our returning heroes, there's no such thing as going it alone. We do this as a team. We get each other's backs.

Those who have served under our proud flag never lose that sense of service to one another or to country, and we saw that on Monday. When that first explosion went off, National Guardsmen, servicemembers, veterans in the area all did what warriors do: They ran into harm's way to protect their fellow Americans. They applied tourniquets. They went to hospitals; they donated blood. Doctors used experience they acquired in part overseas to help save lives here at home.

That's the strong stuff that our warriors are made out of, and that's why we're so proud and so grateful to the men and women and veterans of our armed forces. And that's why, as Commander in Chief, I'll keep doing everything in my power to make sure we serve you as well as you've served us. And that means making sure you get the care and the benefits you need. It means making sure you don't have to fight for a job when you get home. It means recognizing our military families and giving them the support that they deserve. And right now it means saying a big thank you to all of our riders.

So I'm asking every American out there and everyone who is along the route to get out and show their support, wave a flag. Cheer for these outstanding men and women.

Good luck over the next 3 days. Have fun out there. And know that you've got a country and a Commander in Chief who appreciates you, who's proud of you and who will always have your back.

So thank you. God bless you. God bless America. And let's get this thing going. You can see that they're ready to go.

[*At this point, the President was given an air horn by a member of his staff.*]

The President. And this is my favorite part, using this little horn here. Are you ready?

Audience member. Oh, yeah.

The President. You guys, everybody ready here?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. All right. So you guys all ready?

Audience member. Ready.

The President. You sure?

Audience member. Positive!

The President. All right I just want to make sure. All right. So I'm going to say "on your mark, get set," and then I'm going to blow the horn. All right? On your mark. Get set.

[*The President blew the horn, and the ride began.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:54 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki; and Chris Carney, founder, Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride.

Remarks on Senate Action on Gun Control Legislation
April 17, 2013

A few months ago, in response to too many tragedies, including the shootings of a United States Congresswoman, Gabby Giffords, who's here today, and the murder of 20 innocent schoolchildren and their teachers, this country took up the cause of protecting more of our people from gun violence.

Families that know unspeakable grief summoned the courage to petition their elected leaders, not just to honor the memory of their children, but to protect the lives of all of our

children. A few minutes ago, a minority in the United States Senate decided it wasn't worth it. They blocked commonsense gun reforms even while these families looked on from the Senate gallery.

By now, it's well known that 90-percent of the American people support universal background checks that make it harder for a dangerous person to buy a gun. We're talking about convicted felons, people convicted of domestic violence, people with a severe mental illness. Ninety percent of Americans support that idea. Most Americans think that's already the law.

And a few minutes ago, 90 percent of Democrats in the Senate voted for that idea. But it's not going to happen, because 90 percent of Republicans in the Senate just voted against that idea. A majority of Senators voted yes to protecting more of our citizens with smarter background checks. But by this continuing distortion of Senate rules, a minority was able to block it from moving forward.

Now, I'm going to speak plainly and honestly about what's happened here, because the American people are trying to figure out: How can something have 90 percent support and yet not happen? We had a Democrat and a Republican—both gun owners, both fierce defenders of our Second Amendment, with A grades from the NRA—come together and work together to write a commonsense compromise on background checks. And I want to thank Joe Manchin and Pat Toomey for their courage in doing that. That was not easy given their traditional strong support for Second Amendment rights.

As they said, nobody could honestly claim that the package they put together infringed on our Second Amendment rights. All it did was extend the same background check rules that already apply to guns purchased from a dealer to guns purchased at gun shows or over the Internet. So 60 percent of guns are already purchased through a background check system; this would have covered a lot of the guns that are currently outside that system.

Their legislation showed respect for gun owners, and it showed respect for the victims of gun violence. And Gabby Giffords, by the way, is both; she's a gun owner and a victim of gun violence. She is a westerner and a moderate. And she supports these background checks.

In fact, even the NRA used to support expanded background checks. The current leader of the NRA used to support these background checks. So while this compromise didn't contain everything I wanted or everything that these families wanted, it did represent progress. It represented moderation and common sense. That's why 90 percent of the American people supported it.

But instead of supporting this compromise, the gun lobby and its allies willfully lied about the bill. They claimed that it would create some sort of Big Brother gun registry, even though the bill did the opposite. This legislation, in fact, outlawed any registry. Plain and simple, right there in the text. But that didn't matter.

And unfortunately, this pattern of spreading untruths about this legislation served a purpose, because those lies upset an intense minority of gun owners, and that in turn intimidated a lot of Senators. And I talked to several of these Senators over the past few weeks, and they're all good people. I know all of them were shocked by tragedies like Newtown. And I also understand that they come from States that are strongly pro-gun. And I have consistently said that there are regional differences when it comes to guns and that both sides have to listen to each other.

But the fact is, most of these Senators could not offer any good reason why we wouldn't want to make it harder for criminals and those with severe mental illnesses to buy a gun. There were no coherent arguments as to why we wouldn't do this. It came down to politics: the worry that that vocal minority of gun owners would come after them in future elections. They worried that the gun lobby would spend a lot of money and paint them as anti–Second Amendment.

And obviously, a lot of Republicans had that fear, but Democrats had that fear too. And so

they caved to the pressure, and they started looking for an excuse—any excuse—to vote no.

One common argument I heard was that this legislation wouldn't prevent all future massacres. And that's true. As I said from the start, no single piece of legislation can stop every act of violence and evil. We learned that tragically just 2 days ago. But if action by Congress could have saved one person, one child, a few hundred, a few thousand, if it could have prevented those people from losing their lives to gun violence in the future while preserving our Second Amendment rights, we had an obligation to try. And this legislation met that test. And too many Senators failed theirs.

I've heard some say that blocking this step would be a victory. And my question is, a victory for who? A victory for what? All that happened today was the preservation of the loophole that lets dangerous criminals buy guns without a background check. That didn't make our kids safer. Victory for not doing something that 90 percent of Americans, 80 percent of Republicans, the vast majority of your constituents wanted to get done? It begs the question, who are we here to represent?

I've heard folks say that having the families of victims lobby for this legislation was somehow misplaced. "A prop," somebody called them. "Emotional blackmail," some outlets said. Are they serious? Do we really think that thousands of families whose lives have been shattered by gun violence don't have a right to weigh in on this issue? Do we think their emotions, their loss is not relevant to this debate? So, all in all, this was a pretty shameful day for Washington.

But this effort is not over. I want to make it clear to the American people: We can still bring about meaningful changes that reduce gun violence, so long as the American people don't give up on it. Even without Congress, my administration will keep doing everything it can to protect more of our communities. We're going to address the barriers that prevent States from participating in the existing background check system. We're going to give law enforcement more information about lost and stolen guns so it can do its job. We're going to help to put in place emergency plans to protect our children in their schools.

But we can do more if Congress gets its act together. And if this Congress refuses to listen to the American people and pass commonsense gun legislation, then the real impact is going to have to come from the voters.

To all the people who supported this legislation—law enforcement and responsible gun owners, Democrats and Republicans, urban moms, rural hunters, whoever you are—you need to let your Representatives in Congress know that you are disappointed and that if they don't act this time, you will remember come election time.

To the wide majority of NRA households who supported this legislation, you need to let your leadership and lobbyists in Washington know they didn't represent your views on this one.

The point is, those who care deeply about preventing more and more gun violence will have to be as passionate and as organized and as vocal as those who blocked these commonsense steps to help keep our kids safe. Ultimately, you outnumber those who argued the other way. But they're better organized. They're better financed. They've been at it longer. And they make sure to stay focused on this one issue during election time. And that's the reason why you can have something that 90 percent of Americans support and you can't get it through the Senate or the House of Representatives.

So to change Washington, you, the American people, are going to have to sustain some passion about this. And when necessary, you've got to send the right people to Washington. And that requires strength, and it requires persistence.

And that's the one thing that these families should have inspired in all of us. I still don't know how they have been able to muster up the strength to do what they've doing over the last several weeks, last several months.

And I see this as just round one. When Newtown happened, I met with these families and I spoke to the community, and I said, something must be different right now. We're

going to have to change. That's what the whole country said. Everybody talked about how we were going to change something to make sure this didn't happen again, just like everybody talked about how we needed to do something after Aurora. Everybody talked about, we needed to change something after Tucson.

And I'm assuming that the emotions that we've all felt since Newtown, the emotions that we've all felt since Tucson and Aurora and Chicago—the pain we share with these families and families all across the country who've lost a loved one to gun violence—I'm assuming that's not a temporary thing. I'm assuming our expressions of grief and our commitment to do something different—to prevent these things from happening—are not empty words.

I believe we're going to be able to get this done. Sooner or later, we are going to get this right. The memories of these children demand it. And so do the American people.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president and chief executive officer, National Rifle Association. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Mark Barden, father of Daniel Barden, who was killed in the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, on December 14, 2012.

Remarks at an Interfaith Prayer Service for the Victims of the Terrorist Attack in Boston, Massachusetts

April 18, 2013

Thank you. Please. Hello, Boston.

Scripture tells us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us." Run with endurance the race that is set before us.

On Monday morning, the Sun rose over Boston. The sunlight glistened off the Statehouse dome. In the Common and the Public Garden, spring was in bloom. On this Patriot's Day, like so many before, fans jumped onto the "T" to see the Sox at Fenway. In Hopkinton, runners laced up their shoes and set out on a 26.2-mile test of dedication and grit and the human spirit. And across this city, hundreds of thousands of Bostonians lined the streets: to hand the runners cups of water and to cheer them on.

It was a beautiful day to be in Boston, a day that explains why a poet once wrote that this town is not just a capital, not just a place. Boston, he said, "is the perfect state of grace."

And then, in an instant, the day's beauty was shattered. A celebration became a tragedy. And so we come together to pray and mourn and measure our loss. But we also come together today to reclaim that state of grace: to reaffirm that the spirit of this city is undaunted and the spirit of this country shall remain undimmed.

To Governor Patrick; Mayor Menino; Cardinal O'Malley and all the faith leaders who are here; Governors Romney, Swift, Weld, and Dukakis; Members of Congress; and most of all, the people of Boston and the families who've lost a piece of your heart: We thank you for your leadership. We thank you for your courage. We thank you for your grace.

I'm here today on behalf of the American people with a simple message: Every one of us has been touched by this attack on your beloved city. Every one of us stands with you.

Because, after all, it's our beloved city too. Boston may be your hometown, but we claim it too. It's one of America's iconic cities. It's one of the world's great cities. And one of the reasons the world knows Boston so well is that Boston opens its heart to the world.

Over successive generations, you've welcomed again and again new arrivals to our shores, immigrants who constantly reinvigorated this city and this Commonwealth and our Nation. Every fall, you welcome students from all across America and all across the globe, and

every spring you graduate them back into the world, a Boston diaspora that excels in every field of human endeavor. Year after year, you welcome the greatest talents in the arts and science, research; you welcome them to your concert halls and your hospitals and your laboratories to exchange ideas and insights that draw this world together.

And every third Monday in April, you welcome people from all around the world to the "Hub" for friendship and fellowship and healthy competition: a gathering of men and women of every race and every religion, every shape and every size; a multitude represented by all those flags that flew over the finish line.

So whether folks come here to Boston for just a day or they stay here for years, they leave with a piece of this town tucked firmly into their hearts. So Boston is your hometown, but we claim it a little bit too.

I know this because there's a piece of Boston in me. You welcomed me as a young law student across the river, welcomed Michelle too. You welcomed me during a convention when I was still a State senator and very few people could pronounce my name right. [*Laughter*]

Like you, Michelle and I have walked these streets. Like you, we know these neighborhoods. And like you, in this moment of grief, we join you in saying, "Boston, you're my home." For millions of us, what happened on Monday is personal. It's personal.

Today our prayers are with the Campbell family of Medford. They're here today. Their daughter Krystle was always smiling. Those who knew her said that with her red hair and her freckles and her ever-eager willingness to speak her mind, she was beautiful, sometimes she could be a little noisy, and everybody loved her for it. She would have turned 30 next month. As her mother said through her tears, "This doesn't make any sense."

Our prayers are with the Lu family of China, who sent their daughter Lingzi to BU so that she could experience all this city has to offer. She was a 23-year-old student, far from home. And in the heartache of her family and friends on both sides of a great ocean, we're reminded of the humanity that we all share.

Our prayers are with the Richard family of Dorchester: to Denise and their young daughter Jane as they fight to recover. And our hearts are broken for 8-year-old Martin, with his big smile and bright eyes. His last hours were as perfect as an 8-year-old boy could hope for: with his family, eating ice cream at a sporting event. And we're left with two enduring images of this little boy, forever smiling for his beloved Bruins and forever expressing a wish he made on a blue poster board: "No more hurting people. Peace." No more hurting people. Peace.

Our prayers are with the injured, so many wounded, some gravely. From their beds, some are surely watching us gather here today. And if you are, know this: As you begin this long journey of recovery, your city is with you. Your Commonwealth is with you. Your country is with you. We will all be with you as you learn to stand and walk and, yes, run again. Of that I have no doubt. You will run again. [*Applause*] You will run again.

Because that's what the people of Boston are made of. Your resolve is the greatest rebuke to whoever committed this heinous act. If they sought to intimidate us, to terrorize us, to shake us from those values that Deval described, the values that make us who we are, as Americans, well, it should be pretty clear by now that they picked the wrong city to do it. Not here in Boston. [*Applause*] Not here in Boston.

You've shown us, Boston, that in the face of evil, Americans will lift up what's good. In the face of cruelty, we will choose compassion. In the face of those who would visit death upon innocents, we will choose to save and to comfort and to heal. We'll choose friendship. We'll choose love.

The Scripture teaches us, "God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." And that's the spirit you've displayed in recent days.

When doctors and nurses, police and firefighters, and EMTs and guardsmen run to-

wards explosions to treat the wounded, that's discipline.

When exhausted runners, including our troops and veterans, who never expected to see such carnage on the streets back home, become first responders themselves, tending to the injured, that's real power.

When Bostonians carry victims in their arms, deliver water and blankets, line up to give blood, open their homes to total strangers, give them rides back to reunite with their families, that's love.

That's the message we send to those who carried this out and anyone who would do harm to our people. Yes, we will find you. And yes, you will face justice. We will find you. We will hold you accountable. But more than that, our fidelity to our way of life—for a free and open society—will only grow stronger. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but one of power and love and self-discipline.

Like Bill Iffrig, 78 years old, the runner in the orange tank top who we all saw get knocked down by the blast, we may be momentarily knocked off our feet, but we'll pick ourselves up. We'll keep going. We will finish the race. In the words of Dick Hoyt, who's pushed his disabled son Rick in 31 Boston Marathons, "We can't let something like this stop us." This doesn't stop us.

And that's what you've taught us, Boston. That's what you've reminded us: to push on, to persevere, to not grow weary, to not get faint. Even when it hurts, even when our heart aches, we summon the strength that maybe we didn't even know we had, and we carry on. We finish the race. [*Applause*] We finish the race.

And we do that because of who we are. And we do that because we know that somewhere around the bend, a stranger has a cup of water. Around the bend, somebody is there to boost our spirits. On that toughest mile, just when we think that we've hit a wall, someone will be there to cheer us on and pick us up if we fall. We know that.

And that's what the perpetrators of such senseless violence—these small, stunted individuals who would destroy instead of build and think somehow that makes them important—that's what they don't understand. Our faith in each other, our love for each other, our love for country, our common creed that cuts across whatever superficial differences there may be—that is our power. That's our strength.

That's why a bomb can't beat us. That's why we don't hunker down. That's why we don't cower in fear. We carry on. We race. We strive. We build, and we work, and we love. And we raise our kids to do the same. And we come together to celebrate life and to walk our cities, and to cheer for our teams. When the Sox and Celtics and Patriots or Bruins are champions again—to the chagrin of New York and Chicago fans—[*laughter*]—the crowds will gather and watch a parade go down Boylston Street.

And this time next year, on the third Monday in April, the world will return to this great American city to run harder than ever and to cheer even louder, for the 118th Boston Marathon. Bet on it.

Tomorrow the Sun will rise over Boston. Tomorrow the Sun will rise over this country that we love: this special place, this state of grace.

Scripture tells us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us." As we do, may God hold close those who've been taken from us too soon. May He comfort their families. And may He continue to watch over these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. In his remarks, he referred to Krystle M. Campbell, Martin Richard, and Lingzi Lu, who were killed in the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA; and Denise Richard, mother, and Jane Richard, sister, of Martin Richard. The related proclamation of April 16 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to First Responders and Volunteers in Boston
April 18, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Well, listen, we just had a wonderful interfaith service, and I want to thank Governor Patrick for helping to organize that. I want to thank both the Governor and your extraordinary mayor, Tom Menino, for the incredible leadership and cool under pressure, the organization, the mobilization, and the courage that they have shown, reflective of this great city and reflective of this great Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Now, I'm not going to speak long. I just—he started calling me Reverend Obama, so I know—[*laughter*]—I know I was—I don't want to go on any longer than I need to. The main message, in addition to just giving—having a chance to shake some hands and give some hugs, is just to say how proud the whole country is of you, how grateful we are that in the face of chaos and to tragedy, all of you displayed the very best of the American spirit.

You displayed grit. You displayed compassion. You displayed civic duty. You displayed courage. And when we see that kind of spirit, there's something about that that's infectious. It makes us all want to be better people. You've inspired the entire country. You've inspired the world. And for that, you should be profoundly proud.

But as Deval and I were talking as we were driving in from the airport, the key is that we hang on to a little bit of that, because it's right there under the surface every day. And it expresses itself obviously in the Marathon. It expresses itself in Patriot's Day. It expresses itself in all the small interactions, the gestures of kindness and generosity and tolerance and compassion that make up the fabric of our lives. And we don't always pay attention to it, and we don't always celebrate it, and it's certainly not usually on a television screen; it's not always reported on. But that's who we are.

And if there's anything that was a theme in that interfaith service, it's that out of these ashes, out of the blood that's spilled and the injuries borne, out of that, we get a chance to see and highlight and appreciate that spirit. And we've got to sustain it, because in all of our lives at some point, there are going to be some troubles, and there's evil in the world, and there's hardship. But if that spirit is evident and manifest, and that's what we're teaching our kids and that's what we're embodying in our own lives, then who can stop us? Who can touch us?

So thank you, everybody. I'm proud of you. I'm proud of Boston. And I just said, I'm looking forward to the 118th Boston Marathon. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. at Cathedral High School.

Statement on the Explosion at the West Fertilizer Company Plant in West, Texas
April 18, 2013

Today our prayers go out to the people of West, Texas, in the aftermath of last night's deadly explosion at a fertilizer plant. A tight-knit community has been shaken, and good, hard-working people have lost their lives. I want to thank the first responders who worked tirelessly through the night to contain the situation and treat the wounded. My administration, through FEMA and other agencies, is in close contact with our State and local partners on the ground to make sure there are no unmet needs as search-and-rescue and response operations continue. West is a town that many Texans hold near and dear to their hearts, and as residents continue to respond to this tragedy, they will have the support of the American people.

Remarks on the Arrest of Boston Terrorist Attack Suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev

April 19, 2013

Good evening, everybody. Tonight our Nation is in debt to the people of Boston and the people of Massachusetts. After a vicious attack on their city, Bostonians responded with resolve and determination. They did their part as citizens and partners in this investigation.

Boston police and State police and local police across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts responded with professionalism and bravery over 5 long days. And tonight, because of their determined efforts, we've closed an important chapter in this tragedy.

I've been briefed earlier this evening by FBI Director Mueller. After the attacks on Monday, I directed the full resources of the Federal Government to be made available to help State and local authorities in the investigation and to increase security as needed. And over the past week, close coordination among Federal, State, and local officials—sharing information, moving swiftly to track down leads—has been critical to this effort.

They all worked as they should, as a team. And we are extremely grateful for that. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to all our outstanding law enforcement professionals. These men and women get up every day, they put on that uniform, they risk their lives to keep us safe, and as this week showed, they don't always know what to expect. So our thoughts are with those who were wounded in pursuit of the suspects, and we pray for their full recovery.

We also send our prayers to the Collier family who grieve the loss of their son and brother, Sean. "He was born to be a police officer," said his chief at MIT. He was just 26 years old. And as his family has said, he died bravely in the line of duty and doing what he committed his life to doing: serving and protecting others. So we're grateful to him.

Obviously, tonight there are still many unanswered questions. Among them, why did young men who grew up and studied here, as part of our communities and our country, resort to such violence? How did they plan and carry out these attacks? And did they receive any help? The families of those killed so senselessly deserve answers. The wounded—some of whom now have to learn how to stand and walk and live again—deserve answers.

And so I've instructed the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security and our intelligence community to continue to deploy all the necessary resources to support the investigation, to collect intelligence, and to protect our citizens. We will determine what happened. We will investigate any associations that these terrorists may have had. And we'll continue to do whatever we have to do to keep our people safe.

One thing we do know is that whatever hateful agenda drove young these men to such heinous acts will not—cannot—prevail. Whatever they thought they could ultimately achieve, they've already failed. They failed because the people of Boston refuse to be intimidated. They failed because, as Americans, we refuse to be terrorized. They failed because we will not waver from the character and the compassion and the values that define us as a country. Nor will we break the bonds that hold us together as Americans.

That American spirit includes staying true to the unity and diversity that makes us strong, like no other nation in the world. In this age of instant reporting and tweets and blogs, there's a temptation to latch on to any bit of information, sometimes to jump to conclusions. But when a tragedy like this happens, with public safety at risk and the stakes so high, it's important that we do this right. That's why we have investigations. That's why we relentlessly gather the facts. That's why we have courts. And that's why we take care not to rush to judgment, not about the motivations of these individuals, certainly not about entire groups of people.

After all, one of the things that makes America the greatest nation on Earth—but also one

of the things that makes Boston such a great city—is that we welcome people from all around the world: people of every faith, every ethnicity, from every corner of the globe. So as we continue to learn more about why and how this tragedy happened, let's make sure that we sustain that spirit.

Tonight we think of all the wounded, still struggling to recover. Certainly, we think of Krystle Campbell. We think of Lingzi Lu. We think of little Martin Richard. Their lives reflected all the diversity and beauty of our country, and they were sharing the great American experience together.

Explosion at the West Fertilizer Company Plant in West, Texas

Finally, let me say that even as so much attention has been focused on the tragic events in Boston, understandably, we've also seen a tight-knit community in Texas devastated by a terrible explosion. And I want them to know that they are not forgotten. Our thoughts, our prayers are with the people of West, Texas, where so many good people lost their lives, some lost their homes, many are injured, many are still missing.

I've talked to Governor Perry and Mayor Muska, and I've pledged that the people of West will have the resources that they need to recover and rebuild. And I want everybody in Texas to know that we will follow through with those commitments.

All in all, this has been a tough week. But we've seen the character of our country once more. And as President, I'm confident that we have the courage and the resilience and the spirit to overcome these challenges and to go forward, as one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sean A. Collier, police officer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who was killed on April 19 in pursuit of the suspected bombers of the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA; John DiFava, chief of police, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; suspected bombers Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who was killed in a shootout with police on April 19, and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; and Krystle M. Campbell, Lingzi Lu, and Martin Richard, who were killed in the attack.

The President's Weekly Address
April 20, 2013

On Monday, an act of terror wounded dozens and killed three innocent people at the Boston Marathon. But in the days since, the world has witnessed one sure and steadfast truth: Americans refuse to be terrorized.

Ultimately, that's what we'll remember from this week. That's what will remain: the stories of heroism and kindness, resolve and resilience, generosity and love. The brave first responders—police officers and firefighters, EMTs, and National Guard—who ran toward danger to help their fellow citizens. The race volunteers, spectators, and exhausted runners who rushed to help, including troops and veterans who never expected to see such scenes on the streets of America.

The determined doctors and nurses at some of the world's best hospitals, who have toiled day and night to save so many lives. The bighearted people of Boston—residents, priests, shopkeepers—who carried victims in their arms, delivered water and blankets, lined up to give blood, opened their homes up to total strangers.

And the heroic Federal agents and police officers who worked together throughout the week, often at great risk to themselves, to keep our communities safe. As a country, we are eternally grateful for the profound sacrifices they make in the line of duty, sometimes making the ultimate sacrifice to defend the people they've sworn to protect.

If anyone wants to know who we are, what America is, how we respond to evil and terror, that's it: selflessly, compassionately, and unafraid.

Through the days that would test even the sturdiest of souls, Boston's spirit remains undaunted. America's spirit remains undimmed. Our faith in each other, our love for this country, our common creed that cuts across whatever superficial differences we may have, that's what makes us strong. That's why we endure.

In the days to come, we will remain vigilant as a nation. And I have no doubt the city of Boston and its surrounding communities will continue to respond in the same proud and heroic way that they have thus far, and their fellow Americans will be right there with them every step of the way. May God bless the people of Boston and the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:50 p.m. on April 19 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on April 20. In the address, the President referred to Krystle M. Campbell, Lingzi Lu, and Martin Richard, who were killed in the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 20.

Statement on the Reelection of President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy
April 20, 2013

I congratulate President Giorgio Napolitano on his reelection as President of Italy. For 7 years, President Napolitano has demonstrated extraordinary leadership in Italy, in Europe, and around the world. I admire his decision to once again serve the Italian people as President and welcome the decision that the Italian Parliament has made to come together to select him for continued service.

President Napolitano's steadfast commitment to the alliance between the United States and Italy is deep and abiding and reflects the enduring bonds among our people. His continued stewardship of the transatlantic relationship will ensure that we move forward together in facing the challenges of our times.

Remarks at the White House Science Fair
April 22, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, good afternoon, everybody. And welcome to the White House Science Fair, one of my favorite events during the course of the year.

And I just had a chance to see some of the outstanding exhibits that have been put forward by some of these amazing young people. And let me just start by saying, in my official capacity as President: This stuff is really cool. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank these incredible young people for explaining to me what the heck is going on. [*Laughter*]

Every one of you is enormously talented, obviously, but there's also a community of people who helped all these young people succeed: dedicated teachers who believed in them and challenged them to do even more; all of them have loving parents and mentors and family. So I want to not only give the young people a big round of applause, but all the parents and teachers and principals and everybody who was involved, give yourselves a big round of applause as well.

Of course, primarily, we're here to celebrate these young scientists and visionaries who dream and create and innovate, who ask the question, why not? Why not try something better, something that's faster, something that helps more people? And that drive, that refusal

to give up, that focus on the future is part of what makes America great. And all of you are participants in this long line of inventors and creators that have made this the most dynamic economy and the most dynamic country on Earth.

And that's one of the things that I've been focused on as President, is how do we create an all-hands-on-deck approach to science, technology, engineering, and math. And I'm happy to have so many key members of my science team who are here today, including my Chief Science Adviser, John Holdren, who is here. There's John. NIH Director Francis Collins. There's Francis right there, the tall guy. We've got Acting Director of the National Science Foundation Cora Marrett, who is here. There's Cora. And we've got real-life astronaut and NASA Administrator Charles Bolden. Where's Charlie? There he is, right there.

So we need to make this a priority: to train an army of new teachers in these subject areas and to make sure that all of us as a country are lifting up these subjects for the respect that they deserve. And one of the things I'm concerned about is that, as a culture, we're great consumers of technology, but we're not always properly respecting the people who are in the labs and behind the scenes creating the stuff that we now take for granted. And we've got to give the millions of Americans who work in science and technology not only the kind of respect they deserve, but also new ways to engage young people.

So today I'm proud to announce a new AmeriCorps program that are going to——

[*At this point, an audience member applauded.*]

That's our Community Service Director, so—[*laughter*]—she is a little bit biased, but I like that in her. She's got that kind of get-up-and-go. A new AmeriCorps program that's going to connect more professional scientists and engineers to young students who might follow in their footsteps.

And other people are stepping up too. Some of America's biggest tech companies are encouraging their workers to mentor young students. You've got media organizations that are working with athletes, like outstanding wide receiver Victor Cruz from the New York Giants, who's here to highlight how critical math and science are to sports. And by the way, since Victor is here, I don't know, did you see the exhibit about the whole cooling shoulder pads and helmet that these young guys did? And they had a whole slogan that said you can succeed in athletics and science. They were very impressive. Had the little Gatorade coming in so you—[*laughter*]—you didn't even have to, like, reach for your Gatorade; you could just—it would automatically transmit itself into your helmet. [*Laughter*] It could work.

We've got nonprofits that are helping to organize 1,000 summer learning events this year. They all realize how important science, technology, engineering, and math are to the future. So we are doing this together.

And after all, the Science Fair projects of today could become the products and businesses of tomorrow. Three students—Evan Jackson, Alec Jackson, Caleb Robinson—those are the folks that I talked about. They're from Flippen Elementary School. Keep in mind, they're in third, fourth grade, and they've already got this idea for cool pads so that Victor doesn't get overheated when he's out on the field. But think about that. If you're inventing stuff in the third grade, what are you going to do by the time you get to college? [*Laughter*] And we just had the University of Alabama's national championship football team here last week, and I know they're interested in this idea because it gets really hot down in Alabama.

A lot of these students are working on the next generation of medical research. So listen to this story. When pancreatic cancer took the life of Jack Andraka's close family friend, it inspired Jack to look for new ways to improve detection. So Jack requested space from research labs to pursue his work nearly 200 times. Two hundred times he asked; 200 times he was turned down. Finally, with the help of some folks at John Hopkins, he got the research facilities that he needed, developed a pancreatic cancer test that is faster, cheaper, and more sensitive than the test that came before it,

which is not bad for a guy who is just barely old enough to drive. So where's Jack? There he is. Jack, stand up, because that's pretty spectacular stuff. That's great work. I don't know what you guys were doing when you were juniors in high school. [*Laughter*] That's what Jack's doing. [*Laughter*] Better than I was doing, I promise you. [*Laughter*]

Now, today is not just the third White House Science Fair, it's also the 43d Earth Day. So I want to give a special shout-out to all of the young people who participated who focused their attention on how to harness cleaner forms of energy and how to create more energy efficiency. So we've got young people like Caleb Meyer. Where's Caleb? Caleb's way back there. Stand up, Caleb, so we can see you. Caleb built a wind turbine that's small and fast enough to be installed on your roof or in your front yard.

We've got Jon Kubricki and Bridget Zarych, who, together with their classmates, designed an inexpensive press that can recycle garbage like banana peels into briquettes as an alternative to using wood for fuel. They're in eighth grade. I don't know what you were doing in eighth grade. [*Laughter*] That's what they're doing, which could potentially help to reduce carbon emissions, save trees and deforestation, and reduce the amount of smoke inhalation that has an impact on people.

We've got Sara Volz, who is breeding new types of algae. Where's Sara? There's Sara. Sara is breeding new types of algae. She stores this in a lab in her bedroom. [*Laughter*] So, Sara, you have very supportive parents. [*Laughter*] One reporter asked her, "Exactly what is growing under your bed that's going to save the planet?" [*Laughter*] And Sara's answer was algae that can produce more oil for cheaper biofuels. So, by the way, Jon Kubricki and Bridget Zarych, I didn't have them stand up. I want to acknowledge them. I saw them. Maybe they're still cleaning their hands off from—[*laughter*]. But there they are. There they are.

So I've got to say, young people like these, every one of them have these kinds of incredible innovations. Some of them are already fully operational. Some of them are getting fine tuned. But young people like these have to make you hopeful about the future of our country. And it's also a reminder for us, the adults, we've got to do our part. We've got to do everything we can to make sure that we are giving these young people opportunity to pursue their studies and discover new ways of doing things. And we've got to make sure that we're also leaving behind a world that is safer and cleaner and healthier than the one we find—found it. That's our obligation.

And that's why, over the last 4 years, we've made historic investments in the clean energy future that we need. And today, we import less oil than we have in 20 years. Thanks to new fuel economy standards, by the middle of the next decade, cars will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. We've doubled the amount of renewable energy that we're generating from sources like wind and solar, and by the way, creating tens of thousands of good, American jobs in the process. We're emitting less carbon pollution into the environment than we have in nearly 20 years.

But we understand this is not enough. We've got to do better. And that's why we've got to pursue an all-of-the-above energy strategy that includes investing in more biofuels and more fuel-efficient vehicles and more solar power and more wind power and more people going back to work building cars and homes and businesses that are more energy efficient than the ones that we've got right now.

That's why I've proposed new job-creating investments in science and innovation. And all these young people, as young as they are, they're all going to be going to college, and a lot of them are going to want to continue to pursue their research and to pursue their dreams. And if there is not the research grant pipeline in place, many of them will not have the resources to invent and discover the things that will make us healthier and make us more energy efficient and improve the quality of our lives.

So this is not the time to gut investments that keep our businesses on the cutting edge, that keep our economy humming, that improve the quality of our lives. This is the time

to reach a level of research and development that we haven't seen since the height of the space race. That's what we should be doing. That's what we should be focused on.

And that should not be a partisan idea. America has always been about discovery and invention and engineering and science and evidence. That's who we are. That's in our DNA. That's how this country became the greatest economic power in the history of the world. That's how we were able to provide so many contributions to people all around the world with our scientific and medical and technological discoveries.

And that's what these young people are—here are all about. And if extraordinary young people like all of you can use your talents to shape the future for our families and our communities and our countries, we've got a responsibility to make sure that they've got the tools to do it.

So I want to thank all the Science Fair winners, not only for the work that you guys are doing, but also the example that you're setting for your peers and also for your adults, the adults that are in your lives. We could not be prouder of you. And I want you to keep up your incredible work.

And part of the reason that we're doing this here, we celebrate our great football players like Victor, and we celebrate outstanding musicians, and that's all appropriate. But we've got to make sure that we're also celebrating every single day in our schools, in our classrooms, and in our country the outstanding contributions that scientists and engineers and mathematicians and engineers are providing to us every single day. And we want you to know that you've got a whole country behind you as you pursue your dreams. And your success is going to be our success as well. So way to go.

Thank you. Appreciate it, everybody. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Wendy Spencer, Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service; White House Science Fair participants Evan Jackson, Alec Jackson, and Caleb Robinson of McDonough, GA, Jack Andraka of Crownsville, MD, Caleb Meyer of Hope, ND, Jon Kubricki and Bridget Zarych of Little Egg Harbor, NJ, and Sara Volz of Colorado Springs, CO, and her parents David and Pattye Volz; and John Roach, contributing writer, NBC News Digital.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean

April 22, 2013

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean, done at Tokyo on February 24, 2012, and signed by the United States on May 2, 2012 (the "Convention"). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Secretary of State on the Convention that includes an article-by-article analysis.

The Convention establishes a regional fisheries management organization through which Parties will cooperate to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries resources in the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean while protecting the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur.

The Convention will require implementing legislation, which is being drafted and will be submitted separately to the Congress for its consideration.

Cooperation under the Convention will address fisheries resources not covered under

preexisting international fisheries management instruments and will help to prevent destructive fishing practices on the high seas that may have impacts on fisheries resources in areas subject to U.S. jurisdiction. Ratification by the United States would also ensure that future U.S. fisheries interests in the region subject to the Convention will be factored into allocation decisions. I therefore recommend that the Senate give favorable consideration to the Convention and give its advice and consent to ratification at the earliest possible date.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 22, 2013.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Amendment to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries
April 22, 2013

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Amendment to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (the "Convention"), adopted on September 28, 2007, at the twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Secretary of State on the Amendment, which includes an article-by-article analysis.

The Amendment serves to bring the Convention in line with modern international fisheries governance, including revisions to its decisionmaking and objection rules and a new comprehensive dispute settlement procedure. The Amendment also reflects changes to the budget contribution scheme that are expected to significantly reduce U.S. annual payments to NAFO. Involved Federal agencies and stakeholders strongly support the proposed changes to the Convention. The strengthened Convention will improve the way NAFO manages the fish stocks under its purview and enforces compliance with the measures it adopts, which in turn will improve the chances that key stocks in the Northwest Atlantic will recover enough to support resumed fishing.

The recommended changes to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention Act of 1995 necessary to implement the Amendment will be submitted separately to the Congress. I therefore recommend that the Senate give favorable consideration to the Amendment to the Convention and give its advice and consent to ratification at the earliest possible date.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 22, 2013.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean
April 22, 2013

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean (the "Convention"), done at Auckland, New Zealand, November 14, 2009, with a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Secretary of State on the Convention that includes an article-by-article analysis.

The Convention establishes a regional fisheries management organization through which Parties will give effect to their duty to cooperate in the conservation and sustainable use of the high seas fishery resources in the South Pacific Ocean and to safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur.

The Convention requires Parties to apply specific conservation and management principles and approaches in giving effect to the objective of the Convention. These principles and approaches are enshrined in existing international instruments to which the United States is a party, such as the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of December 10, 1982, relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of December 4, 1995. In addition, the Convention requires that Parties design and adopt specific conservation and management measures, such as limitations on catch or effort, time or area closures, and gear restrictions.

The Department of State, Department of Commerce, U.S. Coast Guard, and relevant U.S. stakeholders strongly support the Convention. The legislation necessary to implement the Convention will be submitted separately to the Congress for its consideration. I therefore recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Convention and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 22, 2013.

Remarks Honoring the 2013 National and State Teachers of the Year
April 23, 2013

The President. Well, hello, everybody. Please have a seat. I am thrilled to welcome our State and National Teachers of the Year to the White House this afternoon.

Now, if—people who know me know I've just got a soft spot for teachers, partly—my sister is a teacher, my mom was a teacher for a while. And if there's one thing we can't say enough to our Nation's educators, it is "thank you." So today we've got a chance to do that: to show our extraordinary appreciation for the difference that they make in the lives of our children and the lives of our Nation.

Now, before we get started, I've got to recognize another outstanding educator, our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who is as passionate about the future of our kids as anybody that I know. And I'd like to acknowledge and applaud the three outstanding principals of the year who are joining us because we know that unless we've got outstanding leadership in our schools, it's very hard for even great teachers to do their job. And so please give them a big round of applause as well.

Now, these educators behind me come from all over the country. They represent cities and towns of every shape and size, all types of schools. But the one thing that binds them together is that they are absolutely devoted to nurturing the next generation. They're role models who show our kids how to work hard to reach their potential. They encourage our children's passion. They inspire our children's imaginations.

And this year's National Teacher of the Year, Jeff Charbonneau, is from Zillah, Washington. Did I say that right, Jeff?

Jeff Charbonneau. Charbonneau, so yes.

The President. Charbonneau.

Mr. Charbonneau. Charbonneau from Zillah.

The President. From Zillah. [*Laughter*] That's why he's a good teacher. [*Laughter*] As Jeff put it, a teacher's "greatest accomplishments are revealed each time a student realizes that he or she has an unlimited potential." And I'll bet any—everybody here can remember a moment like that, when a teacher helped them find that spark that allowed them to get to

where they are today, a teacher who saw something in us that maybe at the time we didn't see in ourselves.

Twelve years ago, when Jeff decided to return to his hometown to teach, Zillah High School had no engineering curriculum. The science curriculum was lagging. Kids had to go off campus for technology classes, and the computer resources were frankly pretty poor.

But Jeff was determined to turn that around. He wanted to convince kids that something like quantum mechanics wasn't something to run away from, but something to dive into. And he said, "It's my job to convince them that they are smart enough, that they can do anything."

And now, with Jeff's leadership at his high school, science enrollment is way up. Kids are graduating at college-level science—with college-level science credits. The school expects to have to hire more teachers now to meet the demand.

This kind of transformation is exactly why I've proposed preparing an additional 100,000 math and science teachers across the country over the next decade. And excellent teachers like Jeff could make up part of a master teachers corps, a network of outstanding educators who serve as leaders and mentors for their colleagues in these particular subject areas.

But it's not just classroom teaching that distinguishes Jeff. He reinvigorated the school's yearbook. He started an outdoors club. He brought his passion to the drama program. He's even helping out other schools. And because of Jeff, hundreds of thousands—or hundreds of students all over the State are now participating in high-skills robotics competitions and gaining valuable engineering experience, all in the name of creating what Jeff calls "paradise." That's what school is for him, that's what he wants it to be for his students, in their classrooms, but also in their activities and the greater community.

And basically, there's nothing that Jeff will not try to give his students the best education in every respect. And by the way, I think it's important for us to acknowledge Jeff's wife and children and mom and dad and brother, all presumably have to put up with him constantly doing all this stuff. [*Laughter*] And we appreciate them for the great support that they've given him.

Now, what's true for Jeff is true for every educator standing behind me. They understand that their job is more than teaching subjects like reading or chemistry. They're not just filling blackboards with numbers and diagrams. In classrooms across America, they're teaching things like character and compassion and resilience and imagination. They're filling young minds with virtues and values and teaching our kids how to cooperate and overcome obstacles. So today we honor the dedicated professionals that help guide that critical development.

Any parent knows it's hard to drop your son off or your daughter off at school that first time. In the instant that car door slams or the school bus door shuts, there is a little flutter that goes on. I like quoting somebody who said that being a parent is like having your heart outside your body wandering around. [*Laughter*] But these teachers, they're the ones that we trust with our kids. They're people who love our kids.

A few months ago, we saw the true depths of a teacher's commitment when six educators were killed trying to protect the children they embraced as their own. There was the teacher who locked her first-grade students in a bathroom and whispered, "I love you," because, in her words, "I wanted that to be the last thing they heard, and not gunfire." The special education teacher who was found cradling a student in her arms, trying to protect him from the evil that ultimately took them both.

In those moments, those brave teachers showed the world what they do is more than just educate kids. They embrace them, and they nurture them, and they love them. And we know that the men and women behind me do the same.

These folks did not go into teaching for money. [*Laughter*] They certainly didn't go into it because of the light hours and the easy work. They walk into the classroom every single day because they love doing what they do, because they're passionate about helping our

children realize the best versions of themselves so that our country can become the best version of itself.

And I just want to say to all of them, I hope that in some small measure, this award keeps them going. Because I never want our teachers to feel discouraged at a time of budget cuts, at a time when all too often problems in the schools are laid at the feet of teachers; where we expect them to do so much, and sometimes they get so little in return.

I want you guys to know that the country appreciates you. The kids appreciate you. Parents appreciate you. What you do matters. It's critical to our success as a country, but most importantly, it's critical to those kids themselves. I cannot think of something more important than reaching that child who, maybe, came in uninspired, and suddenly, you've inspired them.

And by the way, I want to mention, I often talk about STEM and math and science; I really do think it's critically important. We've fallen behind on a lot of those subjects. But I don't want to neglect our English teachers and our arts teachers, our music teachers, our history teachers, our social science teachers, because, yes, we want folks inventing things and we need more engineers and scientists and probably fewer lawyers. I can say that as a lawyer. [*Laughter*] But part of what you're also teaching young people is qualities like compassion and being able to put yourself in somebody else's shoes. And that's what makes our society worth living in as well.

So, bottom line is, thank you. And the least the rest—the least that the rest of us can do is to give all of these folks the respect that they've earned, the gratitude we owe them. Teaching is a profession and it should be treated like one. And that means we're going to have to recruit and prepare and reward our next generation of great educators more effectively. Secretary Duncan's been working with folks around the country on a new blueprint for teaching in the 21st century, listening to some of these outstanding teachers and educators and principals so that we can figure out what best practices are out there.

Educators like Jeff and everyone up here today, they represent the very best of America: committed professionals who give themselves fully to the growth and development of our kids. And with them at the front of the classroom and leading our schools, I am absolutely confident that our children are going to be prepared to meet the tests of our time and the tests of the future.

So we're grateful to all of you. Thanks for helping our kids dream big, hope deeply, and realize a brighter future. So with that, I would now like to present Jeff with his apple. And I want to—but don't bite into it—[*laughter*]—and invite him to say a few words. Give Jeff a big round of applause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Susan Chin, principal, Veazie Street Elementary School in Providence, RI; Laurie Barron, principal, Smokey Road Middle School in Newnan, GA; Trevor Greene, principal, Toppenish High School in Toppenish, WA; Monika M. Charbonneau, wife, Andrew J. and Makayla M. Charbonneau, children, Marc E. and Darline M. Charbonneau, parents, and Ryan E. Charbonneau, brother, of 2013 National Teacher of the Year Jeffrey A. Charbonneau; Kaitlin Roig, teacher, Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT; and Anne Marie Murphy, special education aide, Sandy Hook Elementary School, who was killed in the December 14, 2012, shootings in Newtown. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar

April 23, 2013

The President. Well, I just want to welcome the Amir of Qatar and thank him and the people of his country for the friendship that they've shown towards the United States. There's an excellent relationship between the United States and Qatar on a whole range of levels: with respect to security, with respect to our military cooperation, our commerce and our trade.

Qatar has been a center of innovation. We've seen enormous progress within the country on everything ranging from education to health care. And I think His Highness has shown extraordinary leadership over the last many years in helping to guide his country.

Obviously, Qatar is also an important country in the region and has an influence that extends beyond its relatively small population. And so we had an opportunity to discuss a whole range of issues that directly relate to U.S. interests and U.S. security, but more importantly, the security of the entire world.

We had a conversation about the situation in Syria. And obviously, we have been cooperating closely with Qatar and other countries in seeking to bring about an end to the slaughter that's taking place there—the removal of President Asad, who has shown himself to have no regard for his own people—and to strengthen an opposition that can bring about a democratic Syria that represents all people and respects their rights regardless of their ethnicity or their religious affiliations. And I'm very pleased that we are going to be continuing to work in the coming months to try to further support the Syrian opposition, and we'll be closely coordinating our strategies to bring about a more peaceful resolution to the Syrian crisis.

We also had an opportunity to discuss the situation in Egypt, where we both very much want to see success on the part of Egyptian democracy. And both of our countries are committed to trying to encourage not only progress in this new democracy, but also economic progress that can translate into actual prosperity for the people there.

We had an opportunity to discuss the situation with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we both agree that peace is in the interests of everyone: a secure Israel side by side with a sovereign Palestinian state. And we exchanged ideas about how we can advance those negotiations, and I've shared the importance of providing support to President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority so that they can be in position to have fruitful negotiations with the Israelis that can bring about, in a timely fashion, a two-state solution.

And I had an opportunity to thank the Amir for the strong support that his country has provided to our efforts in Afghanistan, including the efforts that he has personally been involved with in getting a dialogue between the Afghan Government and the Taliban that might potentially result in some sort of political reconciliation.

These are all very difficult issues, and neither of us are under any illusions that they will be solved overnight. But what we agree with is that if our two countries are communicating frankly and constructively and pursuing common strategies, that we can be a force for good for the entire region and for a vision of the Middle East that is democratic, that is prosperous, that is tolerant, that is representative of all peoples, and that is a force for good around the world.

And so I want to thank the Amir for this visit and for his friendship. And I look forward to working with him and the Government of Qatar for many years to come.

[*At this point, Amir Hamad spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were then translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Interpreter. I was delighted to have this very positive meeting with the President today. We discussed several issues of mutual concerns to

both our countries, especially the situation in Syria. We also addressed issues concerning our mutual military relationship, which is good, as you know, and also exchanges in education. As you know, there are several universities, American universities that opened branches in Qatar.

We also discussed our economic relationship. There are joint oil and gas projects between the two countries.

We also talked about the serious changes that are affecting the Middle East, especially countries like Egypt, which we consider to be a very important country and also important for peace with Israel. And for Qatar, it's very important for us to see peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and to see also a good relationship between Arab countries and Israel once a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement is reached.

[*Amir Hamad spoke in English as follows.*]

Amir Hamad. Actually, she meant by "gas and oil" that we will talk with the President, but it's with a relation between us and Americans, with big American companies like ExxonMobil, et cetera. They are enjoying working with us in the sector of the hydrocarbon.

The other thing, it's the Syrian issue. As you know——

[*Amir Hamad spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were then translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Interpreter. We also discussed the Syrian issue. What's happening in Syria is a major, horrific tragedy in the region and the world. And we hope to find a solution for the bloodshed in Syria and for this current Government to leave power so that—to give room to others to take over. And we hope that any party that succeeds the current regime would be supportive of democracy and the political process.

[*Amir Hamad continued in Arabic, and his remarks were then translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Interpreter. We in Qatar support the peace process and finding a political peace, and Qatar supports that.

And we once again would like to thank the President.

[*Amir Hamad spoke in English as follows.*]

Amir Hamad. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:28 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

Statement on Senator Max S. Baucus's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
April 23, 2013

I want to thank Max Baucus for his nearly 35 years of service to the people of Montana. Max has made small businesses a top priority, often taking "Work Days" to visit local businesses across Montana and spend a day working alongside his constituents to gain perspective and help bolster the local economy. As Finance Committee Chairman and a senior member of both the Agriculture and the Environment and Public Works Committees, Max has been a leader on a broad range of issues that touch the lives of Americans across the country. Michelle and I commend Senator Baucus on his career and wish him and his family well in the future.

Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day
April 24, 2013

Today we commemorate the Meds Yeghern and honor those who perished in one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. Ninety-eight years ago, 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. We pause to reflect on the lives extinguished and remember the unspeakable suffering that occurred. In so doing, we are joined by millions across the world and in the United States, where it is solemnly commemorated by our States, institutions, communities, and families. We also remind ourselves of our commitment to ensure that such dark chapters of history are not repeated.

I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view has not changed. A full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts is in all of our interests. Nations grow stronger by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past, thereby building a foundation for a more just and tolerant future. We appreciate this lesson in the United States, as we strive to reconcile some of the darkest moments in our own history. We recognize those courageous Armenians and Turks who have already taken this path and encourage more to do so, with the backing of their Governments and mine.

The history and legacy of the Armenian people is marked by an indomitable spirit and a great resiliency in the face of tremendous adversity and suffering. The United States is stronger for the contributions Armenian Americans have made to our society, our culture, and our communities. In small measure, we return that contribution by supporting the Armenian people as they work toward building a nation that would make their ancestors proud: one that cherishes democracy and respect for human liberty and dignity.

Today we stand with Armenians everywhere in recalling the horror of the Meds Yeghern, honoring the memory of those lost, and affirming our enduring commitment to the people of Armenia.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Sylvia Mathews Burwell as Director of the Office of Management and Budget
April 24, 2013

I am pleased that the Senate took bipartisan action today to confirm Sylvia Mathews Burwell as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Sylvia shares my commitment to growing our economy, shrinking our deficits in a balanced way, and reigniting a rising, thriving middle class. Sylvia has spent a career fighting for working families, and she was part of an OMB team that presided over three budget surpluses in a row. Her experience will be especially important as we continue our efforts to replace the indiscriminate budget cuts that are already starting to cost jobs, hurt families, and inconvenience Americans. Sylvia will be a key member of my economic team, and I look forward to working with her in the years ahead.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Dallas, Texas
April 24, 2013

Thank you so much. Well, let me begin by thanking Naomi and Larry for opening up this extraordinary home to all of us. It is wonderful to see them again. And they've been such longtime supporters. They were there back in the day when many of you could not pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] But they've just been great friends and are active on so many fronts. Obviously, Larry is labor, and Naomi is management—[*laughter*]—as is true in our household

as well. [*Laughter*] But we really appreciate them and their very impressive sons.

I also want to acknowledge Henry Muñoz who's here and is just doing an outstanding job as our finance chair of the DNC. Where's Henry? There he is. Thank you, Henry. And I understand that the former mayor of this great city, Ron Kirk, is still around. So, everybody, give a big round of applause to Ron.

Obviously, this has been a tough couple of weeks for the country. I have spent time in Boston and have been inspired by the incredible resilience of that city in the wake of such a horrific tragedy, had a chance to visit with some of the victims of the explosion and talk to the families of some of the folks who were lost. And then tomorrow I'll be attending a memorial service for the tragedy that took place in West, Texas, and have a chance to visit with some of those families.

And there's no words that are satisfactory when you're confronting these kinds of losses. And families cope, they do their best, but obviously, their lives are transformed by this. And so I don't want to pretend that somehow you can put a positive gloss on those kinds of events. On the other hand, what is remarkable is the strength and the courage and the fellowship that you see in people when they're confronted with these kinds of challenges. And in Boston, what you saw was not just the character of an extraordinary American city, but it was also the character of a nation.

There is something about tough times that brings out the best in us, and all the petty differences and the divisions of race and class and religion and political persuasion all seem to fade away. And I remember, as I was driving from the airport to the memorial service in Boston, I was with Deval Patrick—outstanding Governor of Massachusetts and a great friend, who handled the whole situation as well as anybody could—and we agreed that wouldn't it be something if we could just somehow capture and sustain that spirit beyond tragedy.

That's kind of a cliche. We talk about this a lot. We talked about this after 9/11; we talk about it after a natural disaster like Sandy. We're all struck by how we come to each other's aid and these huge waves of empathy come forward and people are willing to do anything for strangers because they understand there but for the grace of God go I. And they also understand that there's something fundamental that binds us together as Americans and that we love this country and this country is simply a collection of incredible people: our fellow citizens.

And that idea of citizenship, the idea that we don't just have obligations to ourselves—we do; we have obligations obviously to our families and our immediate circles. But we have also an obligation to something larger than ourselves; that our orbit of concern extends to a child somewhere in a border town in Texas who is struggling to get a decent education. And it extends to a senior citizen somewhere in Maine that is trying to figure out how they can get enough heating oil to get through a winter and have enough to eat at the same time. And it extends to the young immigrant who just came here and is trying to find their way in California. And it applies to a single mom in New York who is going back and has gotten her education and is looking for some decent daycare. That all of us have a stake in their success, and all of us have a stake in a country that expresses this incredible quality of compassion and concern and fellow feeling not just in our churches or our synagogues or our mosques or our temples, not just in our workplaces or our neighborhoods or our Little League, but also expresses itself through our government.

And the reason, I think, all of you are here is because you believe that too. And the Democratic Party at its best tries to give expression to that. The Democratic Party doesn't always get it right, and this is not a feeling that is unique to Democrats. I'm really looking forward to attending the Bush Library opening tomorrow, and one of the things I will insist upon is that whatever our political differences, President Bush loves this country and loves its people and shared that same concern and was concerned about all people in America, not just some, not just those who voted Republican. I think that's true about him, and I think that's true about most of us.

But what's also true is that policy matters. How we express that best part of ourselves is a matter of significant debate, and it's a matter of votes, and it's a matter of legislation and budgets and how we're allocating resources and how we're prioritizing what we think is important. And although I couldn't be prouder of the work that we've done over the last 4 years, we all know we've got a lot more work to do on that front.

Middle class families all across America are struggling to get by. And things have stabilized since the crisis in 2008, but for a lot of folks, they're still just barely keeping their heads above water. There are millions of kids across this country who are still poorly educated or malnourished or don't have any place to go outside of school. And for them, college is just a distant dream. They can't even imagine the prospect of actually creating a life for themselves that's similar to what they see on television or maybe just walking down the streets of Dallas. It's like looking through a pane of glass.

We have made enormous strides when it comes to broadening equality in this country. And I could not be prouder of the work that we've done under my administration to make sure that we have a strong civil rights division, that we ended "don't ask, don't tell," that we're championing the rights of the LGBT community, that we're making sure that women are getting paid the same as men for the work that they do. But we all know that in all kinds of interactions, large and small, there are people out there who aren't getting a fair shot, still aren't getting a fair deal, still aren't being treated the way we would want ourselves to be treated. And government has something to say about that.

We have enormous challenges like climate change that are easy to ignore in the short term, and yet I think most of us here want to make sure that the next generation is bequeathed the same incredible bounty, this amazing land of ours, that we inherited from our parents and our grandparents.

So we've got a lot of work to do. And unfortunately, right now Washington is not—how do I put this charitably? [*Laughter*] It's not as functional as it should be. It could do better. And when you think about the work that we've been able to do over the last 4, 4½ years, some of it, happily, has been bipartisan. There have been times where we've been able to tackle issues together. And particularly when it comes to national security and keeping America safe, I think that there's been some convergence among Democrats and Republicans that we have to act wisely overseas and we've got to make sure that we're supporting our troops when they come home and we've got to take every step that we can to guard against terrorist acts, but we've also got to do so consistent with our Constitution and rule of law.

But when it comes to domestic policy, when it comes to budgets, when it comes to action that is translating into real change for people day to day, the fact of the matter is, is that when Democrats were in charge of the House, we were able to make sure that 30 million people get health care and that people who have health care have the kinds of protections they need from insurance company abuse and are getting the kind of preventive care that's going to drive our health care costs down over the long term.

The fact of the matter is, is that when Democrats were in charge, we were able to rein in some of the excesses of Wall Street in a way that assures long-term stability in the financial system and makes it a lot less likely that we end up seeing the kinds of taxpayer bailouts that not only weren't fair, but aren't good for our economy. The fact is, is that when Democrats were in charge, that's when we were able to make sure that we got "don't ask, don't tell" ended. And so who's setting the agenda and who's running the show in Congress makes a difference.

And I'm going to spend the next year and a half doing everything I can to try to bring the parties together around some basic, smart, commonsense agendas that in past years haven't even been particularly partisan: making sure that we're balancing our budget or making sure that we're bringing down our deficits and managing our budgets in a way that doesn't just load up the entire burden on seniors or

students or the poor, but asks a little bit from everybody.

And making sure that we can still invest in things like early childhood education and making sure that we're investing in research and science so that we can continue to maintain our cutting edge internationally, rebuilding our infrastructure so that we continue to have the best infrastructure in the world—these are not things that, in the past at least, have been Democrat and Republican.

I come from the "Land of Lincoln," and it turns out that was the first Republican President's agenda as well. He wanted to build railroads and locks and dams, and he started the National Foundation for Science and started land-grant colleges because he understood that we have a free market and the genius of America is unleashing the capacities of our people. But he also understood that there's a role for Government to play to make sure that everybody is getting a fair shot, to make sure that there are ladders of opportunity, to make sure that everybody can realize their full potential.

So these aren't Democratic ideas, these are American ideas. Unfortunately, they've gotten caught up in some partisan politics. And we're going to do everything we can over the next year and a half to break through that.

So, occasionally, I may make some of you angry because I am going to reach out to Republicans. I'm going to keep on doing it. Even if some of you guys think I'm a sap, I will keep on doing it—[*laughter*]—because I think that's what the country needs. But what I also believe in is that when Democrats have the opportunity to set the agenda, then we don't have a country where just a few are doing really, really well; we've got a country where potentially everybody has a chance to do well if they're willing to work hard and if they're willing to take responsibility.

That's what we're fighting for. That's why you're here. And I hope that all of you recognize that despite the fact that I've got a lot of gray hair and I don't look exactly like I did the first time I came to Dallas as a potential Senate candidate, the same passion and the same values that motivated me then are the values that motivate me now and that we win elections to give us the possibility of actually getting stuff done on behalf of the American people. We don't win elections just to have a party on Inauguration Day, and we don't win elections just so we've got a title on our door, and we don't win elections just because it's sport. We win elections so that we have the possibility of delivering for the American people. And delivering means sustained work after the election.

So I can't do that by myself. I can only do it with you. And as Larry helpfully reminded me, I understand that Texas is a so-called red State, but you've got 10 million Democrats here in Texas. And beyond the fact that there are a whole lot of Democrats in Texas, there are a whole lot of people here in Texas who need us and who need us to fight for them. And I don't know about you, but I intend to fight for them as long as I have the honor of holding this office and probably a little bit after that as well.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:06 p.m. at the residence of Naomi Aberly and Laurence H. Lebowitz. In his remarks, he referred to former U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 25. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas
April 25, 2013

Thank you. Please be seated. To President Bush and Mrs. Bush; to President Clinton and now former Secretary Clinton; to President George H.W. Bush and Mrs. Bush; to President and Mrs. Carter; to current and former world leaders and all the distinguished guests

here today: Michelle and I are honored to be with you to mark this historic occasion.

This is a Texas-sized party. And that's worthy of what we're here to do today: honor the life and legacy of the 43d President of the United States, George W. Bush.

When all the living former Presidents are together, it's also a special day for our democracy. We've been called "the world's most exclusive club," and we do have a pretty nice clubhouse. But the truth is, our club is more like a support group. The last time we all got together was just before I took office. And I needed that. Because as each of these leaders will tell you, no matter how much you may think you're ready to assume the office of the Presidency, it's impossible to truly understand the nature of the job until it's yours, until you're sitting at that desk.

And that's why every President gains a greater appreciation for all those who served before him, for the leaders from both parties who have taken on the momentous challenges and felt the enormous weight of a nation on their shoulders. And for me, that appreciation very much extends to President Bush.

The first thing I found in that desk the day I took office was a letter from George, and one that demonstrated his compassion and generosity. For he knew that I would come to learn what he had learned: that being President, above all, is a humbling job. There are moments where you make mistakes. There are times where you wish you could turn back the clock. And what I know is true about President Bush, and I hope my successor will say about me, is that we love this country and we do our best.

Now, in the past, President Bush has said it's impossible to pass judgment on his Presidency while he's still alive. So maybe this is a little bit premature. But even now there are certain things that we know for certain.

We know about the son who was raised by two strong, loving parents in Midland, famously inheriting, as he says, "my daddy's eyes and my mother's mouth." [*Laughter*] The young boy who once came home after a trip to a museum and proudly presented his horrified mother with a small dinosaur tailbone he had smuggled home in his pocket. [*Laughter*] I'll bet that went over great with Barbara.

We know about the young man who met the love of his life at a dinner party, ditching his plans to go to bed early and instead talking with the brilliant and charming Laura Welch late into the night.

We know about the father who raised two remarkable, caring, beautiful daughters, even after they tried to discourage him from running for President, saying, "Dad, you're not as cool as you think you are." [*Laughter*] Mr. President, I can relate. [*Laughter*] And now we see President Bush the grandfather, just beginning to spoil his brandnew granddaughter.

So we know President Bush the man. And what President Clinton said is absolutely true: To know the man is to like the man, because he's comfortable in his own skin. He knows who he is. He doesn't put on any pretenses. He takes his job seriously, but he doesn't take himself too seriously. He is a good man.

But we also know something about George Bush the leader. As we walk through this library, obviously, we're reminded of the incredible strength and resolve that came through that bullhorn as he stood amid the rubble and the ruins of Ground Zero, promising to deliver justice to those who had sought to destroy our way of life.

We remember the compassion that he showed by leading the global fight against HIV/AIDS and malaria, helping to save millions of lives, and reminding people in some of the poorest corners of the globe that America cares and that we're here to help.

We remember his commitment to reaching across the aisle to unlikely allies like Ted Kennedy, because he believed that we had to reform our schools in ways that help every child learn, not just some; that we have to repair a broken immigration system; and that this progress is only possible when we do it together.

Seven years ago, President Bush restarted an important conversation by speaking with the American people about our history as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. And even though comprehensive immigration

reform has taken a little longer than any of us expected, I am hopeful that this year, with the help of Speaker Boehner and some of the Senators and Members of Congress who are here today, that we bring it home for our families and our economy and our security and for this incredible country that we love. And if we do that, it will be in large part thanks to the hard work of President George W. Bush.

And finally, a President bears no greater decision and no more solemn burden than serving as Commander in Chief of the greatest military that the world has ever known. As President Bush himself has said, "America must and will keep its word to the men and women who have given us so much." So even as we Americans may at times disagree on matters of foreign policy, we share a profound respect and reverence for the men and women of our military and their families. And we are united in our determination to comfort the families of the fallen and to care for those who wear the uniform of the United States.

On the flight back from Russia, after negotiating with Nikita Khrushchev at the height of the cold war, President Kennedy's secretary found a small slip of paper on which the President had written a favorite saying: "I know there is a God. And I see a storm coming. If he has a place for me, I believe I am ready."

No one can be completely ready for this office. But America needs leaders who are willing to face the storm head on, even as they pray for God's strength and wisdom so that they can do what they believe is right. And that's what the leaders with whom I share this stage have all done. That's what President George W. Bush chose to do. That's why I'm honored to be part of today's celebration.

Mr. President, for your service, for your courage, for your sense of humor, and most of all, for your love of country, thank you very much. From all the citizens of the United States of America, God bless you. And God bless these United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. at the George W. Bush Presidential Center on the campus of Southern Methodist University. In his remarks, he referred to Barbara P. Bush and Jenna Bush Hager, daughters, and Margaret Laura "Mila" Hager, granddaughter, of former President George W. Bush.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for the Victims of the Explosion at the West Fertilizer Company Plant at Baylor University in Waco, Texas
April 25, 2013

Please. Thank you, Senator Cornyn, Governor Perry, President Starr, gathered dignitaries, the community of Baylor and Waco, most of all, the family and the friends and neighbors of West, Texas.

I cannot match the power of the voices you just heard on that video. And no words adequately describe the courage that was displayed on that deadly night. What I can do is offer the love and support and prayers of the Nation.

The Book of Psalms tells us: "For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us. We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance." We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

For this State, for our country, these have been trying and difficult days. We gather here in Texas to mourn brave men who went through fire and all those who have been taken from us. We remain mindful of our fellow Americans in flooded States to the north who endure the high waters. We pray for those in Boston who have been tested and the wounded whose greatest tests still lie ahead.

But know this: While the eyes of the world may have been fixed on places far away, our hearts have also been here, in your time of tribulation. And even amidst such sorrow and so much pain, we recognize God's abundance.

We give thanks for the courage and the compassion and the incredible grace of the people of West.

We're grateful for Mayor Muska and Mayor Duncan and all those who have shown such leadership during this tragedy. And to the families and neighbors grappling with unbearable loss, we are here to say, you are not alone, you are not forgotten. We may not all live here in Texas, but we're neighbors too. We're Americans too, and we stand with you, and we do not forget. And we'll be there even after the cameras leave and after the attention turns elsewhere. Your country will remain ever ready to help you recover and rebuild and reclaim your community.

Now, until last week, I think it's fair to say that few outside this State had ever heard of West. And I suspect that's the way most people in West like it. [*Laughter*] Now, it is true that weary travelers—and now the wider world—know they can rely on the Czech Stop for a brief respite in the middle of a long stretch of highway. I want to say, by the way, all the Presidents—former Presidents in Dallas send their thoughts and prayers, and George W. and Laura Bush spoke longingly about the kolaches—[*laughter*]—and the even better company, as they've driven through West. And what they understood, and what all of you understand, is what makes West special is not the attention coming from far-flung places. What makes West special, what puts it on the map is what makes it familiar: the people who live there, neighbors you can count on, places that haven't changed, things that are solid and true and lasting.

Most of the people in West know everybody in West. Many of you are probably descended from some of those first settlers: hardy immigrants who crossed an ocean and kept on going. So for you, there's no such thing as a stranger. When someone is in need, you reach out to them, and you support them; you do what it takes to help them carry on.

That's what happened last Wednesday, when a fire alarm sounded across a quiet Texas evening. As we've heard, the call went out to volunteers—not professionals—people who just love to serve. People who want to help their neighbors. A call went out to farmers and car salesmen and welders and funeral home directors, the city secretary, and the mayor. It went out to folks who are tough enough and selfless enough to put in a full day's work and then be ready for more.

And together, you answered the call. You dropped your schoolwork, left your families, jumped in firetrucks and rushed to the flames. And when you got to the scene, you forgot fear, and you fought that blaze as hard as you could, knowing the danger, buying time so others could escape. And then, about 20 minutes after the first alarm, the Earth shook, and the sky went dark, and West changed forever.

Today our prayers are with the families of all who we've lost: the proud sons and daughters of West whose memories will live on in our hearts, parents who loved their kids, and leaders who served their communities. They were young and old, from different backgrounds and different walks of life. A few were just going about their business. But an awful lot ran towards the scene of disaster trying to help. One was described as the kind of guy whose phone was always ringing with folks in need of help, help he always provided. That's just who these folks were.

Our thoughts are with those who face a long road: the wounded, the heartbroken, families who lost their homes and possessions in an instant. They're going to need their friends in West, but they're also going to need their friends in Texas and their friends all across this country. They'll still need you to answer that call. They will still need those things that are lasting and true. For as Scripture teaches us, "a friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

To the people of West, just as we've seen the love you share in better times, as friends and brothers and sisters, these hard days have shown your ability to stand tall in times of unimaginable adversity.

You saw it in leaders like Mayor Muska, who lost close friends. And you saw it in the hospital staff who spent the night treating people that they knew, toiling through their tears as they

did what had to be done. We saw it in the folks who helped evacuate an entire nursing home, including one man who drove an elderly resident to safety and then came back to do it again, twice. We saw it in the people so generous that when the Red Cross set up a shelter for folks who couldn't go back to their homes, not that many people showed up, because most had already been offered a place to stay with their friends and family and neighbors.

Complete strangers drove from hundreds of miles to donate supplies. Firefighters from surrounding communities manned the stations so surviving volunteers could recover from their wounds. Right here at Baylor, students stood in line for hours to give blood. And a nearby school district opened its doors to the students who can't go back to their classrooms, putting welcome signs on lockers and in the hallways.

So that's the thing about this tragedy. This small town's family is bigger now. It extends beyond the boundaries of West. And in the days ahead, this love and support will be more important than ever, because there will be moments of doubt and pain and the temptation to wonder how this community will ever fully recover. Families who have lost such remarkable men of the sort that we saw in that video, there are going to be times where they simply don't understand how this could have happened.

But today I see in the people of West, in your eyes, that what makes West special isn't going to go away. And instead of changing who you are, this tragedy has simply revealed who you've always been.

It's the courage of Deborah Sulak, who works as a cashier just around the corner from the fire station. She said: "It's going to be tough for the families. But we're going to rebound because we're fighters." And that courage will bring West back.

It's the love of Carla Ruiz, who used to live in West, but now lives in Austin. And last week, she drove all the way back. "I had to be here," she said. "You have to be here for family." That love will keep West going.

It's the faith of someone like Pastor John Crowder that will sustain the good people of West for as long as it takes. His church was damaged in the explosion. So on Sunday, the congregation assembled outside. "What happened Wednesday was awful," he told them, "but God is bigger than all of this." God is bigger than all of this, and He is here with you in West. He is bigger than all of this, and He is here with you.

Going forward, it's not just your town that needs your courage and your love and your faith. America does too. We need towns where if you don't know what your kids are up to, then chances are your neighbors do too, and they'll tell on those kids in a second. [*Laughter*] America needs towns that holds fundraisers to help folks pay the medical bills and then take the time to drop off a home-cooked meal, because they know a family is under stress. America needs communities where there's always somebody to call if your car gets stuck or your house gets flooded. We need people who so love their neighbors as themselves that they're willing to lay down their lives for them.

America needs towns like West. That's what makes this country great, is towns like West. "For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us. We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance."

You have been tested, West. You have been tried. You have gone through fire. But you are and always will be surrounded by an abundance of love. You saw it in the voices on those videos. You see it in the firefighters and first responders who are here. All across America, people are praying for you and thinking of you. And when they see the faces of those families, they understand that these are not strangers, these are neighbors. And that's why we know that we will get through this.

God bless West. May God grant His peace on those that we've lost, His comfort on their families. May He continue to bless this great State of Texas, and may He continue to bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:54 p.m. in the Ferrell Center. In his remarks, he referred to Kenneth W. Starr, president, Baylor University; Mayor Tommy Muska of West, TX; Mayor

Malcolm Duncan, Jr., of Waco, TX; Joseph F. Pustejovsky, city secretary, West, TX, who was killed during the West Fertilizer Co. explosion on April 17; and John Crowder, pastor, First Baptist Church in West, TX. The related proclamation of April 24 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Planned Parenthood National Conference
April 26, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Thank you. Thank you! All right, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. You're making me blush. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. Thank you.

Cecile, thank you for the warm introduction, and thank you for the outstanding leadership that you've shown over the years. You just do a great, great job. I want to thank all of you for the remarkable work that you're doing day in, day out in providing quality health care to women all across America. You are somebody that women—young women, old women, women in between—count on for so many important services. And we are truly grateful to you.

I'm sorry that I could not be at the party yesterday. I understand it was a little wild. [*Laughter*] That's what I heard. But as all of you know, obviously, we've gone through a pretty tough week and a half, and I was down in Texas, letting know—letting the people of West, Texas, know that we all love them and care about them in their time of grieving.

But obviously, this is a special national conference because it's been nearly a hundred years since the first health clinic of what later would become Planned Parenthood opened its doors to women in Brooklyn. And for nearly a century now, one core principle has guided everything all of you do: that women should be allowed to make their own decisions about their own health. It's a simple principle.

So what I see in this audience, extraordinary doctors and nurses and advocates and staff who work tirelessly to keep the doors at health centers all across the country going, then I'm reminded of those very early efforts and all the strides that we've made in subsequent decades. And I also think about the millions of mothers and daughters and wives and sisters, friends and neighbors, who walk through those doors every year.

And somewhere, there's a woman who just received a new lease on life because of a screening that you provided that helped catch her cancer in time. Somewhere, there's a woman who's breathing easier today because of the support and counseling she got at her local Planned Parenthood health clinic. Somewhere, there's a young woman starting a career who, because of you, is able to decide for herself when she wants to start a family.

One in five women in this country has turned to Planned Parenthood for health care—one in five. And for many, Planned Parenthood is their primary source of health care, not just for contraceptive care, but for lifesaving preventive care, like cancer screenings and health counseling.

So when politicians try to turn Planned Parenthood into a punching bag, they're not just talking about you, they're talking about the millions of women who you serve. And when they talk about cutting off your funding, let's be clear: They're talking about telling many of those women, you're on your own. They're talking about shutting those women out at a time when they may need it most, shutting off communities that need more health care options for women, not less.

So the fact is, after decades of progress, there's still those who want to turn back the clock to policies more suited to the 1950s than the 21st century. And they've been involved in an orchestrated and historic effort to roll back basic rights when it comes to women's health.

Forty-two States have introduced laws that would ban or severely limit access to a woman's right to choose; laws that would make it harder for women to get the contraceptive care

that they need; laws that would cut off access to cancer screenings and end educational programs that help prevent teen pregnancy.

In North Dakota, they just passed a law that outlaws your right to choose, starting as early as 6 weeks, even if a woman's raped. A woman may not even know that she's pregnant at 6 weeks. In Mississippi, a ballot initiative was put forward that could not only have outlawed your right to choose, but could have had all sorts of other far-reaching consequences, like cutting off fertility treatments, making certain forms of contraception a crime.

That's absurd. It's wrong. It's an assault on women's rights. And that's why when the people of Mississippi were given a chance to vote on that initiative, they turned it down. And Mississippi is a conservative State. [*Applause*] Mississippi is a conservative State, but they wanted to make clear there's nothing conservative about the government injecting itself into decisions best made between a woman and her doctor. And folks are trying to do this all across the country.

When you read about some of these laws, you want to check the calendar; you want to make sure you're still living in 2013. [*Laughter*]

Forty years after the Supreme Court affirmed a woman's constitutional right to privacy, including the right to choose, we shouldn't have to remind people that when it comes to a woman's health, no politician should get to decide what's best for you. No insurer should get to decide what kind of care that you get. The only person who should get to make decisions about your health is you. That's why we fought so hard to make health care reform a reality.

That principle is at the heart of the Affordable Care Act. Because of the ACA, most insurance plans are now covering the cost of contraceptive care so that a working mom doesn't have to put off the care she needs just so she can pay her bills on time. Because of the Affordable Care Act, 47 million women have new access to preventive care like mammograms and cancer screenings with no copay, no deductible, no out-of-pocket costs, so they don't have to put off a mammogram just because money is tight. Because of the Affordable Care Act, young people under the age of 26 can now stay on their parent's health care plan. And insurance companies soon will no longer be able to deny you coverage based on preexisting conditions like breast cancer or charge you more just because you are a woman. Those days are ending. [*Applause*] Those days are ending.

Now, I know how hard you worked to help us pass health care reform. You and your supporters got out there: You organized, you mobilized, you made your voices heard. It made all the difference. But here's the thing: If Americans don't know how to access the new benefits and protections that they're going to receive as we implement this law, then health care reform won't make much of a difference in their lives.

So I'm here to also ask for your help, because we need to get the word out. We need you to tell your patients, your friends, your neighbors, your family members what the health care law means for them. Make sure they know that if they don't have health insurance, they'll be able to sign up for quality, affordable health insurance starting this fall in an online marketplace where private insurers will compete for their business. Make sure that they know that there are plans out there right now that cover the cost of contraception and preventive care free of charge.

We've got to spread the word, particularly among women, particularly among young women, who are the ones who are most likely to benefit from these laws. We need all the women who come through your doors telling their children, their husbands, and their folks in their neighborhoods about their health care options. We need all college students who come through your doors to call up their friends and post on Facebook talking about the protections and benefits that are kicking in.

And you are all in a unique position to deliver that message because the women you serve know you and they trust you. And the reason for that is that you haven't let them down before.

I know it's not always easy. As Cecile describes, Planned Parenthood is the only organi-

zation that she's ever been at where there are opponents who, in her words, "literally get up every day trying to figure out how to keep us from doing our work." Now, if she had worked in the administration—[*laughter*]—she'd be more familiar with this phenomenon. [*Laughter*] But when it comes to your patients, you never let them down, no matter what.

And that's because you never forget who this is all about. This is about a woman from Chicago named Courtney who has a disease that can leave women infertile. So, in college, she turned to Planned Parenthood for access to affordable contraceptive care to keep her healthy. You didn't just help her plan for a family, you made sure she could start one. And today, she's got two beautiful kids. That's what Planned Parenthood is about.

This is about a woman in Washington State named Joyce who for years could only afford health care at her local Planned Parenthood clinic. And heeding your advice, she never missed her annual exam. During one of them, your doctors helped catch an aggressive form of cervical cancer early enough to save her life. Today, she's been cancer free for 25 years.

So every day, in every State, in every center that Planned Parenthood operates, there are stories like those: lives you've saved, women you've empowered, families that you've strengthened. That's why, no matter how great the challenge, no matter how fierce the opposition, if there's one thing the past few years have shown, it's that Planned Parenthood is not going anywhere. It's not going anywhere today. It's not going anywhere tomorrow.

As long as we've got to fight to make sure women have access to quality, affordable health care, and as long as we've got to fight to protect a woman's right to make her own choices about her own health, I want you to know that you've also got a President who's going to be right there with you fighting every step of the way.

Thank you, Planned Parenthood. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Cecile Richards, president, Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With King Abdullah II of Jordan and an Exchange With Reporters

April 26, 2013

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome to the Oval Office once again King Abdullah. His Majesty is a great friend of the United States. And Jordan is a great partner to the United States on a whole host of issues. And obviously, although we just recently saw each other—and I want to thank again His Majesty for the extraordinary hospitality that he showed during our visit—there remain a host of very urgent issues in the region that we're going to have an opportunity to discuss.

First of all, I want to congratulate His Majesty on a series of reforms that he's initiated inside of Jordan, and we want to find out how we can continue to be supportive and helpful in creating greater economic opportunity and prosperity in the area.

We have been supportive with respect to loan guarantees and other efforts, in part because we've also seen King Abdullah take some very important steps to further open democratization and entrepreneurship and economic development inside of Jordan. We want to encourage that because we think Jordan can be an extraordinary model for effective governance in the region.

We're also going to have an opportunity to talk about the Middle East peace process. And the last time I saw King Abdullah, I'd just come out of Israel and the West Bank in consultations with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. And Jordan, like the United States, has an enormous stake in peace. And we do think that there's a window of

opportunity that needs to be seized, and so we will both consult in how we can jumpstart serious conversations that could lead to a peaceful settlement and both a secure Israel with normalized relations with its neighbors and a Palestinian state that was sovereign.

Of great urgency right now obviously is the situation in Syria. Jordan has experienced a huge influx of refugees coming into the country from Syria, people who've been displaced. Jordan historically has maintained open borders and allowed these refugees, on a humanitarian basis, to come in, but it's an enormous strain on a small country. And we are mobilizing international support to help with these refugees, but obviously, our goal is to create a stable Syria, where civilians are not at risk.

And we both agree that at this point, President Asad has lost legitimacy and that we need to find a political transition that allows a multisect, democratic transition to take place so that Syria can be a place where all people can live in peace and harmony.

This will be difficult to accomplish. And yesterday some of you saw that I asked my people to brief Congress about the fact that we now have some evidence that chemical weapons have been used on the populations in Syria. Now, these are preliminary assessments; they're based on our intelligence gathering. It—we have varying degrees of confidence about the actual use, but there are a range of questions around how, when, where these weapons may have been used.

So we're going to be pursuing a very vigorous investigation ourselves, and we're going to be consulting with our partners in the region as well as the international community and the United Nations to make sure that we are investigating this as effectively and as quickly as we can.

But I meant what I've said, and I will repeat, that it's obviously horrific as it is when mortars are being fired on civilians and people are being indiscriminately killed. To use potential weapons of mass destruction on civilian populations crosses another line with respect to international norms and international law. And that is going to be a game changer.

We have to act prudently. We have to make these assessments deliberately. But I think all of us, not just in the United States, but around the world, recognize how we cannot stand by and permit the systematic use of weapons like chemical weapons on civilian populations.

So this is going to be something that we'll be paying a lot of attention to, trying to confirm, and mobilize the international community around those issues.

But in everything that we do, we very much appreciate the kinds of support, advice, counsel, and partnership that we have with His Majesty and the people of Jordan. And we look forward to a fruitful consultation this afternoon.

King Abdullah. Mr. President, thank you very much. We're delighted to be back here again. And may I first start off by expressing, on behalf of myself, the delegation and people of Jordan, our true, heartfelt condolences on the tremendous tragedies both in Boston for the bombings, as well as that of Texas, especially that of Boston. We've always stood together in our fight against terrorism, and this is an issue that we will always be strong partners there.

As you've mentioned, sir, on the issue of the peace process, when you were in Jordan, I—we had mentioned, this is the homework stage. Jordan will continue to work very closely with the Israelis and the Palestinians, obviously with our American allies to see how we can bring both sides closer together.

But one of the major concerns that brings us here to Washington together, as you alluded to, is obviously the challenge with Syria, the fragmentation of Syrian society, which is becoming more and more alarming.

Since your last visit to Jordan 5 weeks ago, we've had over 60,000 refugees, up to over half a million, so we're at 10 percent of an increase of our population. We're so grateful to the support that you and the American people have given to our country. You couldn't do more, quite honestly, and we're so grateful. I just wanted to express our appreciation on behalf of myself and the Jordanian people for that.

I think, sir, that we are both working very hard to look for a political solution for a Syria that is one that is, as you mentioned, inclusive so that we bring everybody together, which is sort of our last hope to—as we're now seeing, the surge of the second threat appear, which is that of militant terrorist organizations that have risen over the past several months. But I am confident, with your leadership and with the meetings that we will have today, that we can find a mechanism to bring the solution—to an end as quickly as possible.

Lastly, sir, you had the Crown Prince of the United Arab Emirates, Mohammed bin Zayed, who is one of our strongest strategic allies. And I know that is his position with the United States, as well as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the three of us are working very hard in cooperation with the United States to try to find a quick and just solution to the Syrian crisis.

So I look forward to our discussions later this afternoon, and I hope that together we will be able to alleviate the suffering—[*inaudible*].

President Obama. Okay.

Syria

Q. Mr. President, why has the red line been crossed——

President Obama. You guys all have the same question?

Q. Yes.

Q. You know that they are——

Q. Do you have a red line, Mr. President? Do you have a red line?

President Obama. Hold on a second, guys. One at a time.

The—what we have right now is an intelligence assessment. And as I said, knowing that potentially chemical weapons have been used inside of Syria doesn't tell us when they were used, how they were used. Obtaining confirmation and strong evidence, all of those things we have to make sure that we work on with the international community. And we ourselves are going to be putting a lot of resources into focusing on this.

And I think that, in many ways, a line's been crossed when we see tens of thousands of innocent people being killed by a regime. But the use of chemical weapons and the dangers that poses to the international community, to neighbors of Syria, the potential for chemical weapons to get into the hands of terrorists—all of those things add increased urgency to what is already a significant security problem and humanitarian problem in the region.

So we're going to be working with countries like Jordan to try to obtain more direct evidence and confirmation of this potential use. In the meantime, I've been very clear publicly, but also privately, that for the Syrian Government to utilize chemical weapons on its people crosses a line that will change my calculus and how the United States approaches these issues.

So this is not an on-or-off switch. This is an ongoing challenge that all of us have to be concerned about. And we're going to be working with the international community and our partners to keep our eyes on what's happening on the ground, to gather any evidence of potential chemical weapon use, and at the same time, to continue to help with a moderate and inclusive opposition to help bring about the day when the Syrian people can once again focus on living their lives, raising their children, starting businesses, and obtaining basic freedom and human rights.

This is going to be a long-term proposition. This is not going to be something that is solved easily overnight. But I know that King Abdullah is committed to trying to find these kinds of solutions. So am I. All right?

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority. King Abdullah referred to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the United Arab Emirates.

The President's Weekly Address
April 27, 2013

Hi, everybody. Our top priority as a nation must be growing the economy, creating good jobs, and rebuilding opportunity for the middle class.

But 2 months ago, Congress allowed a series of automatic budget cuts to fall across the Federal Government that would do the opposite. In Washington-speak, these cuts were called the sequester. It was a bad idea then. And as the country saw this week, it's a bad idea now.

Because of these reckless cuts, there are parents whose kids just got kicked out of Head Start programs who right now are scrambling for a solution. There are seniors who depend on programs like Meals on Wheels to live independently looking for help. There are military communities—families that have obviously already sacrificed enough—coping under new strains. All because of these cuts.

This week, the sequester hurt travelers, who were stuck for hours in airports and on planes and rightly frustrated by it. And maybe because they fly home each weekend, the Members of Congress who insisted on these cuts finally realized that they actually apply to them too.

Republicans claimed victory when the sequester first took effect, and now they've decided it was a bad idea all along. Well, first, they should look at their own budget. If the cuts they proposed were applied across the board, the FAA would suffer cuts three times deeper.

So Congress passed a temporary fix, a bandaid. But these cuts are scheduled to keep falling across other parts of the Government that provide vital services for the American people. And we can't just keep putting bandaids on every cut. It's not a responsible way to govern. There is only one way to truly fix the sequester: by replacing it before it causes further damage.

A couple of weeks ago, I put forward a budget that replaces the next several years of these dumb cuts with smarter cuts, reforms our Tax Code to close wasteful special interest loopholes, and invests in things like education, research, and manufacturing that will create new jobs right now.

So I hope Members of Congress will find the same sense of urgency and bipartisan cooperation to help the families still in the crosshairs of these cuts. Members of Congress may not feel the pain felt by kids kicked off Head Start or the 750,000 Americans projected to lose their jobs because of these cuts or the long-term unemployed who will be further hurt by them. But that pain is real.

The American people worked too hard, for too long, rebuilding from one economic crisis just to see your elected officials keep causing more. Our economy is growing. And our deficits are shrinking. We're creating jobs on a consistent basis. But we need to do more to help middle class families get ahead, and give more folks a chance to earn their way into the middle class. We can do that, if we work together. That's what you expect. And that's what I'm going to keep on working on every single day to help deliver. Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:40 p.m. on April 26 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building for broadcast on April 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 27.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
April 27, 2013

White House Correspondents' Association President Ed Henry. And without further ado, I'd like to introduce the President of the United States.

[*At this point "Hail to the Chief" began to play. The music then changed to "All I Do Is Win" by rap artist DJ Khaled.*]

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. [*Laughter*] How do you like my new entrance music? Rush Limbaugh warned you about this. Second term, baby. [*Laughter*] We're changing things around here a little bit. [*Laughter*]

Actually, my advisers were a little worried about the new rap entrance music. [*Laughter*] They are a little more traditional. They suggested that I should start with some jokes at my own expense, just take myself down a peg. I was like, guys, after 4½ years, how many pegs are there left? [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the White House correspondents. Ed, you're doing an outstanding job. We are grateful for the great work you've done. To all the dignitaries who are here, everybody on the dais; I especially want to say thank you to Ray Odierno, who does outstanding service on behalf of our country, and all our men and women in uniform every single day.

And of course, our extraordinary First Lady, Michelle Obama. Everybody loves Michelle. [*Laughter*] She's on the cover of Vogue, high poll numbers. But don't worry, I recently got my own magazine cover. [*Laughter*]

[*An image of a magazine titled "Senior Leisure" with a photo of the President and Vice President Joe Biden playing golf was shown.*]

Now, look, I get it. These days, I look in the mirror and I have to admit, I'm not the strapping young Muslim Socialist that I used to be. [*Laughter*] Time passes. You get a little gray. [*Laughter*]

And yet, even after all this time, I still make rookie mistakes. Like, I'm out in California, we're at a fundraiser, we're having a nice time. I happen to mention that Kamala Harris is the best looking attorney general in the country. [*Laughter*] As you might imagine, I got trouble when I got back home. [*Laughter*] Who knew Eric Holder was so sensitive? [*Laughter*]

And then, there's the Easter egg roll, which is supposed to be just a nice, fun event with the kids. I go out on the basketball court, took 22 shots, made 2 of them. [*Laughter*] That's right: 2 hits, 20 misses. The executives at NBC asked, "What's your secret?" [*Laughter*]

So yes, maybe I have lost a step. But some things are beyond my control. For example, this whole controversy about Jay-Z going to Cuba, it's unbelievable. I've got 99 problems, and now Jay-Z is one. [*Laughter*] That's another rap reference, Bill. [*Laughter*] I wanted to let you know.

Of course, everybody has got plenty of advice. Maureen Dowd said I could solve all my problems if I were just more like Michael Douglas in "The American President." [*Laughter*] And I know Michael is here tonight. Michael, what's your secret, man? [*Laughter*] Could it be that you were an actor in an Aaron Sorkin liberal fantasy? [*Laughter*] Might that have something to do with it? I don't know. Check in with me. Maybe it's something else. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, I recognize that this job can take a toll on you. I understand, second term, you need a burst of new energy, try some new things. And my team and I talked about it. We were willing to try anything. So we borrowed one of Michelle's tricks. [*Laughter*]

[*Several images of the President with a bangs hairstyle were shown.*]

I thought this looked pretty good, but no bounce. [*Laughter*] Anyway——

I want to give a shout-out to our headliner, Conan O'Brien. I was just talking to Ed, and I understand that when the Correspondents' Association was considering Conan for this gig, they were faced with that age-old dilemma: Do you offer it to him now or wait for 5 years and then give it to Jimmy Fallon? [*Laughter*] That was a little harsh. [*Laughter*] I love Conan.

And of course, the White House press corps is here. I know CNN has taken some knocks lately, but the fact is, I admire their commitment to cover all sides of a story, just in case one of them happens to be accurate. [*Laughter*]

Some of my former advisers have switched over to the dark side. For example, David Axelrod now works for MSNBC, which is a nice

change of pace since MSNBC used to work for David Axelrod. [*Laughter*]

The History Channel is not here. I guess they were embarrassed about the whole Obama-is-a-devil thing. [*Laughter*]

[*An image of Satan, played by actor Mohamen Mehdi Ouazanni, from the History Channel's miniseries "The Bible" was shown.*]

Of course, that never kept Fox News from showing up. [*Laughter*] They actually thought the comparison was not fair—to Satan. [*Laughter*]

But the problem is, is that the media landscape is changing so rapidly. You can't keep up with it. I mean, I remember when BuzzFeed was just something I did in college around 2 a.m. [*Laughter*] It's true. [*Laughter*]

Recently, though, I found a new favorite source for political news. These guys are great. I think everybody here should check it out; they tell it like it is. It's called whitehouse.gov. [*Laughter*] I cannot get enough of it.

The fact is, I really do respect the press. I recognize that the press and I have different jobs to do. My job is to be President; your job is to keep me humble. Frankly, I think I'm doing my job better. [*Laughter*]

But part of the problem is, everybody is so cynical. I mean, we're constantly feeding cynicism, suspicion, conspiracies. You remember a few months ago, my administration put out a photograph of me going skeet shooting at Camp David? You remember that? And quite a number of people insisted that this had been Photoshopped.

[*An image of the President skeet shooting was shown.*]

But tonight I have something to confess: You were right. Guys, can we show them the actual photo? [*Laughter*]

[*An image of the President skeet shooting, with a bald eagle perched on his shoulder, kneeling on the roof of a racecar driven by Vice President Biden in a barren, rocky landscape with a rainbow, lightning, and a large full moon in the sky, and a giant kitten shooting laser beams out of its eyes at a monster truck in the background was shown.*]

We were just trying to tone it down a little bit. [*Laughter*] That was an awesome day. [*Laughter*]

There are other new players in the media landscape as well, like super PACs. Did you know that Sheldon Adelson spent $100 million of his own money last year on negative ads? You've got to really dislike me—[*laughter*]—to spend that kind of money. I mean, that's Oprah money. [*Laughter*] You could buy an island and call it "Nobama" for that kind of money. [*Laughter*] Sheldon would have been better off offering me $100 million to drop out of the race. [*Laughter*] I probably wouldn't have taken it, but I'd have thought about it. [*Laughter*] Michelle would have taken it. [*Laughter*] You think I'm joking? [*Laughter*]

I know Republicans are still sorting out what happened in 2012, but one thing they all agree on is they need to do a better job reaching out to minorities. And look, call me self-centered, but I can think of one minority they could start with. [*Laughter*]

[*The President raised his hand.*]

Hello. [*Laughter*] Think of me as a trial run, you know? [*Laughter*] See how it goes. [*Laughter*]

If they won't come to me, I will come to them. Recently, I had dinner—it's been well publicized—I had dinner with a number of the Republican Senators. And I'll admit it wasn't easy. I proposed a toast; it died in committee. [*Laughter*]

Of course, even after I've done all this, some folks still don't think I spend enough time with Congress. Why don't you get a drink with Mitch, they ask. Really? [*Laughter*] Why don't you get a drink with Mitch McConnell? [*Laughter*] I'm sorry. I get frustrated sometimes.

I am not giving up. In fact, I'm taking my charm offensive on the road: a Texas barbeque with Ted Cruz, a Kentucky bluegrass concert

with Rand Paul, and a book-burning with Michele Bachmann. [*Laughter*]

My charm offensive has helped me learn some interesting things about what's going on in Congress: It turns out, absolutely nothing. [*Laughter*] But the point of my charm offensive is simple: We need to make progress on some important issues. Take the sequester. Republicans fell in love with this thing, and now they can't stop talking about how much they hate it. It's like we're trapped in a Taylor Swift album. [*Laughter*]

One Senator who has reached across the aisle recently is Marco Rubio, but I don't know about 2016. I mean, the guy has not even finished a single term in the Senate and he thinks he's ready to be President. [*Laughter*] Kids these days.

I, on the other hand, have run my last campaign. On Thursday, as Ed mentioned, I went to the opening of the Bush Presidential Library in Dallas. It was a wonderful event, and that inspired me to get started on my own legacy, which will actually begin by building another edifice right next to the Bush Library. Can we show that, please? [*Laughter*]

[*An image of the Bush Library was shown. A billboard atop an adjacent building displayed the words "His Fault," with an arrow pointing toward the Bush Library. The adjacent building was labeled "The Blame Bush Library."*]

I'm also hard at work on plans for the Obama Library. And some have suggested that we put it in my birthplace, but I'd rather keep it in the United States. [*Laughter*] Did anybody not see that joke coming? [*Laughter*] Show of hands. Only Gallup? Maybe Dick Morris? [*Laughter*]

Now, speaking of Presidents and their legacies, I want to acknowledge a wonderful friend, Steven Spielberg, and Daniel Day-Lewis, who are here tonight. We had a screening of their most recent film, "Lincoln," which was an extraordinary film. I am a little nervous, though, about Steven's next project. I saw a behind-the-scenes look on HBO. Well, let's just check it out. Roll the tape.

[*A video about a mock film project by director Steven Spielberg titled "Obama" was shown.*]

It's a remarkable transformation. Do I really sound like that, though, honey? [*Laughter*] Wow.

Groucho Marx once said—and, Senator Cruz, that's Groucho Marx, not Karl. That's the other guy. [*Laughter*] Groucho Marx once told an audience, "Before I speak, I have something important to say." [*Laughter*] And along those same lines, I want to close on a more serious note.

Obviously, there has been no shortage of news to cover over these past few weeks. And these have been some very hard days for too many of our citizens. Even as we gather here tonight, our thoughts are not far from the people of Boston and the people of West, Texas. There are families in the Midwest who are coping with some terrible floods. So we've had some difficult days.

But even when the days seemed darkest, we have seen humanity shine at its brightest. We've seen first responders and National Guardsmen who have dashed into danger, law enforcement officers who lived their oath to serve and to protect, and everyday Americans who are opening their homes and their hearts to perfect strangers.

And we also saw journalists at their best, especially those who took the time to wade upstream through the torrent of digital rumors to chase down leads and verify facts and painstakingly put the pieces together to inform and to educate and to tell stories that demanded to be told.

If anyone wonders, for example, whether newspapers are a thing of the past, all you needed to do was to pick up or log on to papers like the Boston Globe. When their communities and the wider world needed them most, they were there making sense of events that might at first blush seem beyond our comprehension. And that's what great journalism is, and that's what great journalists do. And that's why, for example, Pete Williams's new nickname around the NBC newsroom is "Big Papi."

And in these past few weeks, as I've gotten a chance to meet many of the first responders and the police officers and volunteers who raced to help when hardship hits, I was reminded, as I'm always reminded when I meet our men and women in uniform—whether they're in war theater or here back home or at Walter Reed in Bethesda—I'm reminded that all these folks, they don't do it to be honored, they don't do it to be celebrated. They do it because they love their families and they love their neighborhoods and they love their country.

And so these men and women should inspire all of us in this room to live up to those same standards, to be worthy of their trust, to do our jobs with the same fidelity and the same integrity and the same sense of purpose and the same love of country. Because if we're only focused on profits or ratings or polls, then we're contributing to the cynicism that so many people feel right now.

And so those of us in this room tonight, we are incredibly lucky. And the fact is, we can do better, all of us. Those of us in public office, those of us in the press, those who produce entertainment for our kids, those with power, those with influence—all of us, including myself—we can strive to value those things that I suspect led most of us to do the work that we do in the first place: because we believed in something that was true and we believed in service and the idea that we can have a lasting, positive impact on the lives of the people around us.

And that's our obligation. That's a task we should gladly embrace on behalf of all of those folks who are counting on us, on behalf of this country that's given us so much.

So thank you all, to the White House correspondents for the great work you do. God bless you all. May God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to radio show hosts Rush Limbaugh and Dick Morris; musician Shawn C. "Jay-Z" Carter; Bill O'Reilly, host, Fox News Channel's "The O'Reilly Factor" program; Maureen B. Dowd, columnist, New York Times; screenwriter Aaron Sorkin; Conan C. O'Brien, host, TBS's "Conan" program; James T. Fallon, Jr., host, NBC's "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon" program; former White House Senior Adviser David M. Axelrod; Sheldon G. Adelson, chairman and chief executive officer, Las Vegas Sands Corp.; talk show host Oprah Winfrey; actor Daniel Day-Lewis; and Pete Williams, correspondent, NBC News.

Remarks at the National Academy of Sciences
April 29, 2013

Thank you so much. Please, everybody, have a seat.

Well, it's good to be back. Good morning, everybody, and thank you, Dr. Cicerone, for the kind introduction and the great work that you do. The good doctor was reminding me that the first time I came here, he—apparently joking, I warned him and John Holdren not to age too much in their jobs. And it turns out, I'm the guy who's aged. [*Laughter*] They look great.

But as always, it's an honor to join our Nation's preeminent scholars, including my own science adviser, John Holdren, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the National Academy of Sciences. And since I did not do well enough in chemistry or physics to impress you much on those topics, let me instead tell a story.

One hundred and fifty years ago, the Nation, as all of you know, was in the midst of the Civil War, and the Union had recently suffered a devastating defeat at Fredericksburg. The road ahead seemed long and uncertain. Confederate advances in weapons technology cast a dark shadow on the Union.

The previous spring, in the waters outside of Hampton Roads, the ironclad Confederate battleship *Virginia* had sunk two wooden Union ships and advanced on a third, and this endangered the Union blockade of Virginia

and threatened Union forces along the Potomac River. And then, overnight, the USS *Monitor*, an ironclad herself, arrived and fought the *Virginia* to a draw in the world's first battle between ironsided ships.

There was no victor, but the era of ironclad warfare had begun. And it brought unexpected challenges for President Lincoln and his Navy as they expanded this fleet in early 1863, because aboard their new ironside battleships, sailors found that the iron siding made the ships' compasses unpredictable, so it skewed navigation and they were bumping into things and going the wrong way. [*Laughter*] So the basic physics of magnetism undermined the usefulness of the ironclad vessels, even as the Confederates were stocking up on them.

And that's where your predecessors came in. Because in March of 1983—1863, rather—President Lincoln and Congress established the National Academy of Sciences as an independent and nonprofit institution charged with the mission to provide the Government with the scientific advice that it needed. And this was advice that was particularly useful in the thick of battle.

The National Academy soon counted the Nation's top scientists as members. They quickly got to work. By the next year, they were inspecting the Union's ironclads and installing an array of bar magnets around the compasses to correct their navigation. So right off the bat, you guys were really useful. [*Laughter*] In fact, it's fair to say we might not be here had you not—[*laughter*]—certainly, I would not be here. [*Laughter*]

Now, political leaders have long recognized the connection between technology and warfare throughout our human history. Sadly, this is an element of the human condition. We take our wars very seriously, and we're always looking for new ways to engage in a war. But President Lincoln founded the Academy with a mandate that went far beyond the science and technology of war. Even as the Nation was at war with itself, President Lincoln had the wisdom to look forward, and he recognized that finding a way to harness the highest caliber scientific advice for the Government would serve a whole range of long-term goals for the Nation.

It was the same foresight that led him to establish land-grant colleges and finish the transcontinental railroad: the idea that the essence of America is this hunger to innovate, this restlessness, this quest for the next big thing. And although much of this innovation would be generated by the powers of our free market, the investments and the convening power of the Federal Government could accelerate discovery in a way that would continually push the Nation forward.

That's our inheritance, and now the task falls to us. We, too, face significant challenges, obviously not of the magnitude that President Lincoln faced, but we've got severe economic and security and environmental challenges. And what we know from our past is that the investments we make today are bound to pay off many times over in the years to come.

So we will continue to pursue advances in science and engineering, in infrastructure and innovation, in education and environmental protection, especially science-based initiatives to help us minimize and adapt to global threats like climate change.

And I'm confident we'll meet that task because we've got you—brilliant and committed scientists—to help us guide the way. And part of what's made the Academy so effective is that all the scientists elected to your elite ranks are volunteers, which is fortunate because we have no money anyway. [*Laughter*] For 150 years, you've strived to answer big questions, solve tough problems, not for yourselves, but for the benefit of the Nation. And that legacy has endured from the Academy's founding days. And when you look at our history, you've stepped up at the times of enormous need and, in some cases, great peril.

When Woodrow Wilson needed help understanding the science of military preparedness, he asked the Academy's eminent scientists to lay it out for him. When George W. Bush, more recently, wanted to study the long-term health effects of traumatic brain injuries suffered by soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, he set your scholars to the task. Today, my

administration relies on your expertise to answer critical questions like: How do we set our basic priorities for research? How can we get the most out of the nanotechnology revolution? What are the underlying causes of gun violence?

And more important than any single study or report, the members of this institution embody what is so necessary for us to continue our scientific advance and to maintain our cutting edge, and that's restless curiosity and boundless hope, but also a fidelity to facts and truth and a willingness to follow where the evidence leads.

Now, I'd like to acknowledge the other organizations that have been obviously very important in this whole process—the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine—all who've contributed similar leadership in maintaining the tradition, upholding the highest standard of science.

And by the way, we do have colleagues in Congress who believe in science and believe in evidence. One of them is here, Congressman Rush Holt. We're very grateful to him for his outstanding work. And I want to thank many of the members of my administration, as well as PCAST, my—I always forget what exactly it stands for, but—[*laughter*]—it's my smart science people, who have contributed enormously to the work that we're doing on a whole range of issues, from energy to manufacturing—advanced manufacturing, have really been extraordinary. I want to thank the members of my administration who are here as well, who all are invested in making sure that we keep American science the best in the world.

Now, the good news is America remains a world leader in patents and scientific discovery. Our university system is the crown jewel of our economy as well as our civilization. And that's what's allowing us to continually replenish our stock of people who are willing to dream big dreams and reach higher than anybody else.

And what I want to communicate to all of you is, is that as long as I'm President, we're going to continue to be committed to investing in the promising ideas that are generated from you and your institutions, because they lead to innovative products, they help boost our economy, but also because that's who we are. I'm committed to it because that's what makes us special and ultimately what makes life worth living.

And that's why we're pursuing "Grand Challenges" like making solar energy as cheap as coal and building electric vehicles as affordable as the ones that run on gas. And earlier this month, I unveiled the BRAIN Initiative, which will give scientists the tools that they need to get a dynamic picture of the brain in action and better understand how we think and learn and remember.

Today, all around the country, scientists like you are developing therapies to regenerate damaged organs, creating new devices to enable brain-controlled prosthetic limbs, and sending sophisticated robots into space to search for signs of past life on Mars. That sense of wonder and that sense of discovery, it has practical application, but it also nurtures what I believe is best in us.

And right now we're on the brink of amazing breakthroughs that have the chance, the potential, to change life for the better, which is why we can't afford to gut these investments in science and technology. Unfortunately, that's what we're facing right now. Because of the across-the-board cuts that Congress put in place—the sequester, as it's known in Washingtonspeak—it's hitting our scientific research. Instead of racing ahead on the next cutting-edge discovery, our scientists are left wondering if they'll get to start any new projects—any new research projects at all over the next few years, which means that we could lose a year, 2 years of scientific research as a practical matter because of misguided priorities here in this town.

With the pace of technological innovation today, we can't afford to stand still for a year or 2 years or 3 years. We've got to seize every opportunity we have to stay ahead. And we can't let other countries win the race for ideas and technology of the future. And I say that, by the way, not out of just any nationalistic pride—although,

obviously, that's part of it—but it's also because nobody does it better than we do when it's adequately funded, when it's adequately supported. And what we produce here ends up having benefits worldwide. We should be reaching for a level of private and public research and development investment that we haven't seen since the height of the space race. That's my goal.

And it's not just resources. I mean, one of the things that I've tried to do over these last 4 years, and will continue to do over the next 4 years, is to make sure that we are promoting the integrity of our scientific process; that not just in the physical and life sciences, but also in fields like psychology and anthropology and economics and political science—all of which are sciences because scholars develop and test hypotheses and subject them to peer review—but in all the sciences, we've got to make sure that we are supporting the idea that they're not subject to politics, that they're not skewed by an agenda; that, as I said before, we make sure that we go where the evidence leads us. And that's why we've got to keep investing in these sciences.

And what's true of all sciences is that in order for us to maintain our edge, we've got to protect our rigorous peer review system and ensure that we only fund proposals that promise the biggest bang for taxpayer dollars. And I will keep working to make sure that our scientific research does not fall victim to political maneuvers or agendas that in some ways would impact on the integrity of the scientific process. That's what's going to maintain our standards of scientific excellence for years to come.

That's why, by the way, one of the things that I've focused on as President is an all-hands-on-deck approach to the sciences, as well as technology and engineering and math. And that's why we're spending a lot of time focused on the next generation. With the help of John Holdren and everybody who's working with my administration, we want to make sure that we are exciting young people around math and science and technology and computer science. We don't want our kids just to be consumers of the amazing things that science generates, we want them to be producers as well. And we want to make sure that those who historically have not participated in the sciences as robustly—girls, members of minority groups here in this country—that they are encouraged as well.

We've got to make sure that we're training great calculus and biology teachers and encouraging students to keep up with their physics and chemistry classes. That includes Malia and Sasha. [*Laughter*] It means teaching proper research methods and encouraging young people to challenge accepted knowledge. It means expanding and maintaining critical investments in biomedical research and helping innovators turn their discoveries into new businesses and products. And it means maintaining that spirit of discovery.

Last week, I got a chance to do one of my favorite things as President, and that is, we started these White House Science Fairs. And these kids are remarkable. I mean, I know you guys were smart when you were their age, but—[*laughter*]—I might give them the edge. [*Laughter*] I mean, you had young people who were converting algae into sustainable biofuels. That was one of my favorites because the young lady had—she kept the algae under her bed; she had, like, a whole lab, which meant that she had really supportive parents. [*Laughter*] I pictured it bubbling out and starting to creep into the hallways. [*Laughter*]

You had young people who were purifying water with bicycle-power-generated batteries. You had young people who had already devised faster and cheaper tests for cancer. These are 15-, 16-year-olds.

They were all dreaming to grow up and be just like you, maybe with a little less gray hair—[*laughter*]—but they shared your passion. They shared that excitement. And what was interesting was, not only did they share that sense of wonder and discovery, but they also shared this fundamental optimism that if you figured this stuff out, people's lives would be better; that there were no inherent barriers to us solving the big problems that we face as long as we were diligent and focused and observant and curious.

And we've got to make sure that we're supporting that next generation of dreamers and risk takers, because if we are, things will be good. They leave me with extraordinary optimism. They leave me hopeful. They leave—they put a smile on my face. And I am absolutely convinced that if this Academy and the successors who become members of this Academy are there at the center and the heart of our public debate, that we'll be able to continue to use the innovation that powers our economy and improves our health, protects our environment and security, that makes us the envy of the world.

So I want to thank you on behalf of the American people. And I want to make sure that you know that you've got a strong supporter in the White House.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ralph J. Cicerone, president, National Academy of Sciences; Sara Volz, student, Cheyenne Mountain High School in Colorado Springs, CO, and her parents David and Pattye Volz; Payton Karr and Kiona Elliott, students, Northeast High School in Oakland Park, FL; and Jack Andraka, student, North County High School in Crownsville, MD. He also referred to the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST).

Remarks on the Nomination of Anthony R. Foxx To Be Secretary of Transportation

April 29, 2013

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. Ray LaHood has said that being the Secretary of Transportation is the best job he ever had in public service. And that's fitting, because Ray may be the best Secretary of Transportation that the Nation's ever had.

From the day that he was sworn in, Ray has fought tirelessly to rebuild America's infrastructure, creating good jobs that strengthen the economy and allow us to better compete in the global economy. Over the past 4 years, thanks to Ray's leadership, we've built or improved more than 350,000 miles of road, enough to circle the world more than 14 times. We've upgraded more than 6,000 miles of rail, enough to go coast to coast and back. We've repaired or replaced more than 20,000 bridges and helped put tens of thousands of construction workers back on the job. And that's all due in no small part to Ray LaHood's leadership.

So every American can thank Ray for his dedication to make our transportation system not just stronger, but also safer. When it comes to his focused attention on the dangers of distracted driving, for example, it's saving lives.

And on a personal note, Ray LaHood has been a good friend of mine for many years. Before he served in my Cabinet, we served together in Congress. He's a Republican; I'm a Democrat. These days, that sometimes keeps folks apart, but what always brought Ray and I together was a shared belief that those of us who serve in public service owe their allegiance not to party, but to the people who elected them to represent them.

And it helps that we're from the same State. Ray is from Peoria; I'm from Chicago. But we both love the State of Illinois, and we both get out there on the golf course—and we're not that good—[*laughter*]—but we don't take ourselves too seriously. He is a good man and has been an outstanding public servant and a model for the kind of bipartisan approach to governance that I think we need so badly in this town.

So, Ray, on a personal level, I could not be more grateful to you for your service and for your friendship.

Now, unfortunately, for us, but fortunately for them, Ray is now looking forward to spending more time with his wife Kathy and their family, especially a whole gaggle of grandchil-

dren. And so today I'm proud to announce my intent to nominate another impressive leader to carry on his great work at the Department of Transportation: the mayor of Charlotte, my friend from North Carolina, Mr. Anthony Foxx.

Anthony's life reflects the values he learned growing up in West Charlotte, where he was raised by his single mom and his grandparents. I should add, by the way, that his grandmother is here, and she informed me that she worked here in the White House in the Truman administration. So she's just coming back to—she's just coming back for a visit. And so the values that they instilled in them was to take pride in hard work, to take responsibility for your actions, to take care of your community. And over the past 3½ years, those values have helped Anthony become one of the most effective mayors that Charlotte's ever seen.

When Anthony became mayor in 2009, Charlotte, like the rest of the country, was going through a bruising economic crisis. But the city has managed to turn things around. The economy is growing. There are more jobs, more opportunity. And if you ask Anthony how that happened, he'll tell you that one of the reasons is that Charlotte made one of the largest investments in transportation in the city's history.

Since Anthony took office, they've broken ground on a new streetcar project that's going to bring modern electric tram service to the downtown area. They've expanded the international airport. And they're extending the city's light rail system. All of that has not only helped create new jobs, it's helped Charlotte become more attractive to business.

So I know Anthony's experience will make him an outstanding Transportation Secretary. He's got the respect of his peers, mayors and Governors all across the country. And as a consequence, I think that he's going to be extraordinarily effective. One of the things that Ray taught me in watching him do his job is that establishing personal relationships with mayors and Governors and county executives makes all the difference in the world, because transportation is one of those things that—it's happening on the ground.

And the Federal Government has got to be responsive and has to understand what it's like when you're a mayor or a Governor or a county executive trying to get these projects up and running, which also means that we have the potential of continuing to streamline our approvals and get rid of some—sometimes difficulties in permitting that slow projects down, because we want to get people back to work and we want to get this country moving.

So I am absolutely confident that Anthony is going to do an outstanding job. I want to thank his mom and grandma and lovely wife and two good-looking kids for being willing to serve as well. And I hope that the Senate confirms him quickly because we've got a lot of work to do.

Our top priority as a nation right now is doing everything we can to grow our economy and create good jobs and rebuild opportunity for the middle class. And one of the best ways we can do that is to put more Americans back to work rebuilding our infrastructure.

So that's why, in my State of the Union Address, I proposed a Fix-It-First program to put more people to work as soon as possible on our most urgent repairs. And to make sure taxpayers don't shoulder the entire burden, I've also proposed a partnership with the private sector. But Congress has to step up, fund these projects. They need to do it right away.

We need to modernize the infrastructure that powers our economy. We need more high-speed rail and Internet and high-tech schools and self-healing power grids and bridges and tunnels and ports that help us ship products all around the world stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's how we're going to attract more businesses. That's how we're going to create more jobs. That's how we're going to stay competitive in this global economy.

So to Ray LaHood and his entire family, I want to thank you for just doing an extraordinary job. To Anthony and his family, I want to thank you guys for agreeing to serve. And I know that today's announcement is not the biggest thing that Anthony's family's got going on in the next week, because tomorrow is

Anthony's birthday. [*Laughter*] So we're happy that we can kick off the celebration here at the White House.

And with that, what I'd like to do is ask both of them to say a few words, starting with our outstanding current Secretary of Transportation, Mr. Ray LaHood.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Laura Foxx, mother, Mary Foxx, grandmother, Samara Foxx, wife, and Zachary and Hillary, children, of Secretary-designate Foxx.

The President's News Conference
April 30, 2013

The President. Good afternoon—or good morning, everybody. I am here to answer questions in honor of Ed Henry [Fox News], as he wraps up his tenure as president of the White House Correspondents' Association.

Ed, because of that, you get the first question. Congratulations.

Q. Thank you, sir, I really appreciate that. And I hope we can go back to business and being mad at each other a little bit. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm never mad at you.

Q. Okay, good. Thank you, I appreciate that.

The President. You may be mad at me. [*Laughter*]

Syria

Q. I'm not. A couple of questions on national security. On Syria, you said that the red line was not just about chemical weapons being used, but being spread, and it was a game changer. It seemed cut and dry. And now your administration seems to be suggesting that line is not clear. Do you risk U.S. credibility if you don't take military action?

And then on Benghazi, there are some survivors of that terror attack who say they want to come forward and testify—some in your State Department—and they say they've been blocked. Will you allow them to testify?

The President. Well, first of all, on Syria, I think it's important to understand that for several years now, what we've been seeing is a slowly unfolding disaster for the Syrian people. And this is not a situation in which we've been simply bystanders to what's been happening. My policy from the beginning has been that President Asad had lost credibility, that he attacked his own people, has killed his own people, unleashed a military against innocent civilians, and that the only way to bring stability and peace to Syria is going to be for Asad to step down and to move forward on a political transition.

In pursuit of that strategy, we've organized the international community. We are the largest humanitarian donor. We have worked to strengthen the opposition. We have provided nonlethal assistance to the opposition. We have applied sanctions on Syria. So there are a whole host of steps that we've been taking precisely because, even separate from the chemical weapons issue, what's happening in Syria is a blemish on the international community generally, and we've got to make sure that we're doing everything we can to protect the Syrian people.

In that context, what I've also said is that the use of chemical weapons would be a game changer, not simply for the United States, but for the international community. And the reason for that is that we have established international law and international norms that say when you use these kinds of weapons, you have the potential of killing massive numbers of people in the most inhumane way possible, and the proliferation risks are so significant that we don't want that genie out of the bottle. So when I said that the use of chemical weapons would be a game changer, that wasn't unique to—that wasn't a position unique to the United States, and it shouldn't have been a surprise.

And what we now have is evidence that chemical weapons have been used inside of Syria, but we don't know how they were used, when they were used, who used them. We

don't have a chain of custody that establishes what exactly happened. And when I am making decisions about America's national security and the potential for taking additional action in response to chemical weapon use, I've got to make sure I've got the facts. That's what the American people would expect.

And if we end up rushing to judgment without hard, effective evidence, then we can find ourselves in a position where we can't mobilize the international community to support what we do. There may be objections even among some people in the region who are sympathetic with the opposition if we take action. So it's important for us to do this in a prudent way.

And what I've said to my team is we've got to do everything we can to investigate and establish with some certainty what exactly has happened in Syria, what is happening in Syria. We will use all the assets and resources that we have at our disposal. We'll work with the neighboring countries to see whether we can establish a clear baseline of facts. And we've also called on the United Nations to investigate.

But the important point I want to make here is that we already are deeply engaged in trying to bring about a solution in Syria. It is a difficult problem. But even if chemical weapons were not being used in Syria, we'd still be thinking about tens of thousands of people, innocent civilians—women, children—who've been killed by a regime that's more concerned about staying in power than it is about the well-being of its people. And so we are already deeply invested in trying to find a solution here.

What is true, though, is, is that if I can establish in a way that not only the United States, but also the international community feel confident is the use of chemical weapons by the Asad regime, then that is a game changer because what that portends is potentially even more devastating attacks on civilians, and it raises the strong possibility that those chemical weapons can fall into the wrong hands and get disseminated in ways that would threaten U.S. security or the security of our allies.

Q. By game changer, you mean U.S. military action?

The President. By game changer, I mean that we would have to rethink the range of options that are available to us.

Now, we're already, as I've said, invested in trying to bring about a solution inside of Syria. Obviously, there are options that are available to me that are on the shelf right now that we have not deployed. And that's a spectrum of options. As early as last year, I asked the Pentagon, our military, our intelligence officials to prepare for me what options might be available. And I won't go into the details of what those options might be, but clearly, that would be an escalation, in our view, of the threat to the security of the international community, our allies, and the United States, and that means that there are some options that we might not otherwise exercise that we would strongly consider.

2012 Attack on the U.S. Mission in Benghazi, Libya

Q. And on the Benghazi question, I know pieces of this story have been litigated, and you've been asked about it. But there are people in your own State Department saying they've been blocked from coming forward, that they survived the terror attack, and they want to tell their story. Will you help them come forward and just say it once and for all?

The President. Ed, I'm not familiar with this notion that anybody has been blocked from testifying. So what I'll do is I will find out what exactly you're referring to. What I've been very clear about from the start is that our job with respect to Benghazi has been to find out exactly what happened, to make sure that U.S. Embassies not just in the Middle East, but around the world are safe and secure, and to bring those who carried it out to justice.

But I'll find out what exactly you're referring to.

Q. They've hired an attorney because they're saying that they've been blocked from coming forward.

The President. I'm not familiar with it.

Q. Okay.

The President. Jessica [Jessica Yellin, CNN].

Terrorist Attack in Boston, MA

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. There's a report that your Director of National Intelligence has ordered a broad review—this is regards to the Boston Marathon bombing—that your DNI has ordered a broad review of all the intelligence gathering prior to the attack. There is also a series of Senators—Susan Collins, Saxby Chambliss, Lindsey Graham—who allege that all these years after 9/11, there still wasn't enough intelligence shared prior to the attack. And now, Lindsey Graham, who is a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, has said that Benghazi and Boston are both examples of the U.S. going backwards on national security. Is he right? And did our intelligence miss something?

The President. No, Mr. Graham is not right on this issue, although I'm sure it generated some headlines.

I think that what we saw in Boston was State, local, Federal officials, every agency rallying around a city that had been attacked, identifying the perpetrators just hours after the scene had been examined. We now have one individual deceased, one in custody. Charges have been brought.

I think that all our law enforcement officials performed in an exemplary fashion after the bombing had taken place. And we should be very proud of their work, as obviously we're proud of the people of Boston and all the first responders and the medical personnel that helped save lives.

What we also know is that the Russian intelligence services had alerted U.S. intelligence about the older brother as well as the mother, indicating that they might be sympathizers to extremists. The FBI investigated that older brother. It's not as if the FBI did nothing. They not only investigated the older brother, they interviewed the older brother. They concluded that there were no signs that he was engaging in extremist activity. So that much we know.

And the question then is, was there something that happened that triggered radicalization and actual—an actual decision by the brother to engage in the attack that we—the tragic attack we actually saw in Boston? And are there things—additional things that could have been done in that interim that might have prevented it?

Now, what Director Clapper is doing is standard procedure around here, which is when an event like this happens, we want to go back and we want to review every step that was taken. We want to leave no stone unturned. We want to see, is there, in fact, additional protocols and procedures that could be put in place that would further improve and enhance our ability to detect a potential attack? And we won't know that until that review is completed. We won't know that until the investigation of the actual crime is fully completed. And that's still ongoing.

But what I can say is, is that based on what I've seen so far, the FBI performed its duties, the Department of Homeland Security did what it was supposed to be doing.

But this is hard stuff. And I've said for quite some time that because of the pressure that we've put on Al Qaida core, because of the pressure that we've put on these networks that are well financed and more sophisticated and can engage in and project transnational threats against the United States, one of the dangers that we now face are self-radicalized individuals who are already here in the United States, in some cases, may not be part of any kind of network, but because of whatever warped, twisted ideas they may have, may decide to carry out an attack. And those are in some ways more difficult to prevent.

And so what I've done for months now is to indicate to our entire counterterrorism team, what more can we do on that threat that is looming on the horizon? Are there more things that we can do, whether it's engaging in communities—engaging with communities where there's a potential for self-radicalization at this—of this sort? Is there work that can be done in terms of detection? But all of this has to be done in the context of our laws, due process.

And so part of what Director Clapper is doing, then, is going to be to see if we can determine any lessons learned from what happened.

Counterterrorism Cooperation With Russia/Terrorism

Q. Are you getting all the intelligence and information you need from the Russians? And should Americans be worried when they go to big, public events now?

The President. The Russians have been very cooperative with us since the Boston bombing. Obviously, old habits die hard; there's still suspicions sometimes between our intelligence and law enforcement agencies that date back 10, 20, 30 years, back to the cold war. But they're continually improving. I've spoken to President Putin directly. He's committed to working with me to make sure that those who report to us are cooperating fully in not only this investigation, but how do we work on counterterrorism issues generally.

In terms of what—the response of the American people, I think everybody can take a cue from Boston. You don't get a sense that anybody is intimidated when they go to Fenway Park a couple days after the bombing. There are joggers right now, I guarantee you, all throughout Boston and Cambridge and Watertown. And I think one of the things that I've been most proud of in watching the country's response to the terrible tragedy there, is a sense of resilience and toughness. And we're not going to be intimidated. We are going to live our lives.

And people, I think, understand that we've got to do everything we can to prevent these kinds of attacks from taking place, but people also understand—in the same way they understand after a shooting in Aurora or Newtown or Virginia Tech or after the foiled attempts in Times Square or in Detroit—that we're not going to stop living our lives because warped, twisted individuals try to intimidate us. We're going to do what we do, which is go to work, raise our kids, go to ball games, run in marathons. And at the same time, we're going to make sure that everybody is cooperating and is vigilant in doing everything we can, without being naive, to try to prevent these attacks from happening in the future.

Jonathan Karl [ABC News].

The President's Policy Agenda/Budget Control Act of 2011

Q. Mr. President, you are a hundred days into your second term. On the gun bill, you put, it seems, everything into it to try to get it passed. Obviously, it didn't. Congress has ignored your efforts to try to get them to undo these sequester cuts. There was even a bill that you threatened to veto that got 92 Democrats in the House voting yes. So my question to you is, do you still have the juice to get the rest of your agenda through this Congress?

The President. If you put it that way, Jonathan—[*laughter*]—maybe I should just pack up and go home. Golly.

I think it's a little—as Mark Twain said, rumors of my demise may be a little exaggerated at this point.

We understand that we're in a divided Government right now. The Republicans control the House of Representatives. In the Senate, this habit of requiring 60 votes for even the most modest piece of legislation has gummed up the works there. And I think it comes to no surprise not even to the American people, but even Members of Congress themselves that right now things are pretty dysfunctional up on Capitol Hill.

Despite that, I'm actually confident that there are a range of things that we're going to be able to get done. I feel confident that the bipartisan work that's been done on immigration reform will result in a bill that passes the Senate, passes the House, and gets on my desk. And that's going to be a historic achievement. And I'm—I've been very complimentary of the efforts of both Republicans and Democrats in those efforts.

It is true that the sequester is in place right now. It's damaging our economy. It's hurting our people. And we need to lift it. What's clear is, is that the only way we're going to lift it is if we do a bigger deal that meets the test of lowering our deficit and growing our economy at the same time. And that's going to require some compromises on the part of both Democrats and Republicans.

I've had some good conversations with Republican Senators so far. Those conversations are continuing. I think there's a genuine desire on many of their parts to move past not only sequester, but Washington dysfunction. Whether we can get it done or not, we'll see.

But I think the sequester is a good example—or this recent FAA issue is a good example. You will recall that even as recently as my campaign, Republicans we're saying, sequester is terrible, this is a disaster, it's going to ruin our military, it's going to be disastrous for the economy, we've got to do something about it. Then, when it was determined that doing something about it might mean that we close some tax loopholes for the wealthy and the well connected, suddenly, well, you know what, we'll take the sequester. And the notion was somehow that we had exaggerated the effects of the sequester, remember? The President's crying wolf. He's Chicken Little. The sequester, no problem.

And then, in rapid succession, suddenly, White House tours, this is terrible! How can we let that happen? Meat inspectors, we've got to fix that. And most recently, what are we going to do about potential delays at airports?

So, despite the fact that a lot of Members of Congress were suggesting that somehow the sequester was a victory for them and this wouldn't hurt the economy, what we now know is that what I warned earlier, what Jay stood up here and warned repeatedly, is happening. It's slowed our growth. It's resulting in people being thrown out of work. And it's hurting folks all across the country.

And the fact that Congress responded to the short-term problem of flight delays by giving us the option of shifting money that's designed to repair and improve airports over the long term to fix the short-term problem, well, that's not a solution. So—and essentially, what we've done is we've said, in order to avoid delays this summer, we're going to ensure delays for the next two or three decades.

Federal Aviation Administration/Budget Control Act of 2011

Q. Why'd you go along with it?

The President. Well, hold on a second.

So the alternative, of course, is either to go ahead and impose a whole bunch of delays on passengers now—which also does not fix the problem—or the third alternative is to actually fix the problem by coming up with a broader, larger deal.

But, Jonathan, you seem to suggest that somehow, these folks over there have no responsibilities and that my job is to somehow get them to behave. That's their job. They're elected; Members of Congress are elected in order to do what's right for their constituencies and for the American people.

So if in fact they are seriously concerned about passenger convenience and safety, then they shouldn't just be thinking about tomorrow or next week or the week after that; they should be thinking about what's going to happen 5 years from now, 10 years from now, or 15 years from now. The only way to do that is for them to engage with me on coming up with a broader deal. And that's exactly what I'm trying to do, is to continue to talk to them about are there ways for us to fix this.

Frankly, I don't think that if I were to veto, for example, this FAA bill, that that somehow would lead to the broader fix. It just means that there'd be pain now, which they would try to blame on me, as opposed to pain 5 years from now. But either way, the problem is not getting fixed.

The only way the problem does get fixed is if both parties sit down and they say: How are we going to make sure that we're reducing our deficit sensibly? How are we making sure that we're investing in things like rebuilding our airports and our roads and our bridges and investing in early childhood education, all the—basic research, all the things that are going to help us grow? And that's what the American people want.

Just one interesting statistic when it comes to airports. There was a recent survey of the top airports in the country—in the world, and there was not a single U.S. airport that came in the top 25. Not one. Not one U.S. airport was considered by the experts and consumers who use these airports to be in the top 25 in the

world. I think Cincinnati Airport came in around 30th.

What does that say about our long-term competitiveness and future? And so when folks say, well, there was some money in the FAA to deal with these furloughs, well, yes, the money is this pool of funds that are supposed to try to upgrade our airports so we don't rank in the bottom of industrialized countries when it comes to our infrastructure.

And that's what we're doing; we're using our seed corn short term. And the only reason we're doing it is because right now we've got folks who are unwilling to make some simple changes to our Tax Code, for example, to close loopholes that aren't adding to our competitiveness and aren't helping middle class families.

So I'm—that's a long way of answering your question, but the point is that there are commonsense solutions to our problems right now. I cannot force Republicans to embrace those commonsense solutions. I can urge them to. I can put pressure on them. I can rally the American people around those commonsense solutions. But ultimately, they, themselves, are going to have to say, we want to do the right thing.

And I think there are Members certainly in the Senate right now, and I suspect Members in the House as well, who understand that deep down. But they're worried about their politics. It's tough. Their base thinks that compromise with me is somehow a betrayal. They're worried about primaries. And I understand all that. And we're going to try to do everything we can to create a permission structure for them to be able to do what's going to be best for the country. But it's going to take some time.

Bill Plante [CBS News].

Detention Facilities at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba

Q. Mr. President, as you're probably aware, there's a growing hunger strike on Guantanamo Bay among prisoners there. Is it any surprise really that they would prefer death rather than have no end in sight to their confinement?

The President. Well, it is not a surprise to me that we've got problems in Guantanamo, which is why when I was campaigning in 2007 and 2008, and when I was elected in 2008, I said we need to close Guantanamo. I continue to believe that we've got to close Guantanamo.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—can do it?

The President. Well, I think it is critical for us to understand that Guantanamo is not necessary to keep America safe. It is expensive. It is inefficient. It hurts us in terms of our international standing. It lessens cooperation with our allies on counterterrorism efforts. It is a recruitment tool for extremists. It needs to be closed.

Now, Congress determined that they would not let us close it and despite the fact that there are a number of the folks who are currently in Guantanamo, who the courts have said could be returned to their country of origin or potentially a third country.

I'm going to go back at this. I've asked my team to review everything that's currently being done in Guantanamo, everything that we can do administratively. And I'm going to reengage with Congress to try to make the case that this is not something that's in the best interests of the American people. And it's not sustainable.

I mean, the notion that we're going to continue to keep over a hundred individuals in a no-man's land in perpetuity, even at a time when we've wound down the war in Iraq, we're winding down the war in Afghanistan, we're having success defeating Al Qaida core, we've kept the pressure up on all these transnational terrorist networks, when we've transferred detention authority in Afghanistan—the idea that we would still maintain forever a group of individuals who have not been tried, that is contrary to who we are, it is contrary to our interests, and it needs to stop.

Now, it's a hard case to make because I think for a lot of Americans, the notion is out of sight, out of mind. And it's easy to demagogue the issue. That's what happened the first time

this came up. I'm going to go back at it because I think it's important.

Q. Meanwhile, you continue to force-feed these folks so they don't die?

The President. I don't want these individuals to die. Obviously, the Pentagon is trying to manage the situation as best as they can. But I think all of us should reflect on why exactly are we doing this? Why are we doing this? I mean, we've got a whole bunch of individuals who have been tried who are currently in maximum security prisons around the country. Nothing's happened to them. Justice has been served. It's been done in a way that's consistent with our Constitution, consistent with due process, consistent with rule of law, consistent with our traditions.

The individual who attempted to bomb Times Square: in prison, serving a life sentence. The individual who tried to bomb a plane in Detroit: in prison, serving a life sentence. A Somali who was part of Al Shabaab, who we captured: in prison. So we can handle this.

And I understand that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, with the traumas that had taken place, why, for a lot of Americans, the notion was somehow that we had to create a special facility like Guantanamo and we couldn't handle this in a normal, conventional fashion. I understand that reaction. But we're now over a decade out. We should be wiser. We should have more experience in how we prosecute terrorists.

And this is a lingering problem that is not going to get better. It's going to get worse. It's going to fester. And so I'm going to, as I said before, examine every option that we have administratively to try to deal with this issue, but ultimately, we're also going to need some help from Congress, and I'm going to ask some folks over there who care about fighting terrorism, but also care about who we are as a people to step up and help me on it.

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Max Baucus, Democratic Senator, referred to the implementation of your health care law as a potential train wreck. You've had other Democrats been whispering nervousness about the implementation and the impact—and it's all self-centered a little bit, the impact that it might have on their own political campaigns in 2014. Why do you think—just curious—why does Senator Baucus, somebody who ostensibly helped write your bill, believe that this is going to be a train wreck? And why do you believe he's wrong?

The President. Well, I think that any time you're implementing something big, there's going to be people who are nervous and anxious about, is it going to get done, until it's actually done.

But let's just step back for a second and make sure the American people understand what it is that we're doing. The Affordable Care Act—Obamacare—has now been with us for 3 years. It's gone through Supreme Court tests. It's gone through efforts to repeal. A huge chunk of it has already been implemented. And for the 85 to 90 percent of Americans who already have health insurance, they're already experiencing most of the benefits of the Affordable Care Act even if they don't know it. Their insurance is more secure. Insurance companies can't drop them for bad reasons. Their kids are able to stay on their health insurance until they're 26 years old. They're getting free preventive care.

So there are a whole host of benefits that, for the average American out there—for the 85 to 90 percent of Americans who already have health insurance—this thing's already happened. And their only impact is that their insurance is stronger, better, more secure than it was before. Full stop. That's it. They don't have to worry about anything else.

The implementation issues come in for those who don't have health insurance, maybe because they have a preexisting condition and the only way they can get health insurance is to go out on the individual market, and they're paying 50 percent or 100 percent more than those of us who are lucky enough to have group plans; people who are too poor to get health insurance and the employers don't offer them. Maybe they work for a small business,

and this small business can't afford right now to provide health insurance.

So all the implementation issues that are coming up are implementation issues related to that small group of people, 10 to 15 percent of Americans—now, it's still 30 million Americans, but a relatively narrow group—who don't have health insurance right now or are on the individual market and are paying exorbitant amounts for coverage that isn't that great.

And what we're doing is, we're setting up a pool so that they can all pool together and get a better deal from insurance companies. And those who can't afford it, we're going to provide them with some subsidies. That's it. I mean, that's what's left to implement, because the other stuff has been implemented and it's working fine.

The challenge is that setting up a market-based system—basically, an online marketplace where you can go on and sign up and figure out what kind of insurance you can afford and figuring out how to get the subsidies—that's still a big, complicated piece of business. And when you're doing it nationwide, relatively fast, and you've got half of Congress who is determined to try to block implementation and not adequately funding implementation, and then you've got a number of members of—or Governors, Republican Governors who know that it's bad politics for them to try to implement this effectively and some even who have decided to implement it and then their Republican-controlled State legislatures say, don't implement and won't pass enabling legislation, when you have that kind of situation, that makes it harder.

But having said all that, we've got a great team in place. We are pushing very hard to make sure that we're hitting all the deadlines and the benchmarks.

I'll give you an example, a recent example. We put together, initially, an application form for signing up for participation in the exchanges that was initially about 21 pages long, and immediately, everybody sat around the table and said, well, this is too long. Especially in this age of the Internet, people aren't going to have the patience to sit there for hours on end. Let's streamline this thing. So we cut what was a 21-page form now down to a form that's about 3 pages for an individual, a little more than that for a family, well below the industry average. So those kinds of refinements we're going to continue to be working on.

But I think the main message I want to give to the American people here is, despite all the hue and cry and sky-is-falling predictions about this stuff, if you've already got health insurance, then that part of Obamacare that affects you, it's pretty much already in place. And that's about 85 percent of the country.

What is left to be implemented is those provisions to help the 10 to 15 percent of the American public that is unlucky enough that they don't have health insurance. And by the way, some of you who have health insurance right now, at some point, you may lose your health insurance, and if you've got a preexisting condition, this structure will make sure that you are not left vulnerable.

But it's still a big undertaking. And what we're doing is making sure that every single day, we are constantly trying to hit our marks so that it will be in place.

And the last point I'll make: Even if we do everything perfectly, there will still be glitches and bumps, and there will be stories that can be written that say, oh, look, this thing is not working the way it's supposed to and this happened and that happened. And that's pretty much true of every government program that's ever been set up. But if we stay with it and we understand what our long-term objective is, which is making sure that in a country as wealthy as ours, nobody should go bankrupt if they get sick and that we would rather have people getting regular checkups than going to the emergency room because they don't have health care, if we keep that in mind, then we're going to be able to drive down costs, we're going to be able to improve efficiencies in the system, we're going to be able to see people benefit from better health care. And that will save the country money as a whole over the long term.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Do you believe, without the cooperation of a handful of Governors, particularly large

States like Florida and Texas, that you can fully implement this?

The President. I think it's harder. There's no doubt about it.

Q. But can you do it without them?

The President. We will implement it. There will be—we have a backup Federal exchange. If States aren't cooperating, we set up a Federal exchange so that people can access that Federal exchange.

But yes, it puts more of a burden on us. And it's ironic, since all these folks say that they believe in empowering States, that they're going to end up having the Federal Government do something that we'd actually prefer States to do if they were properly cooperating.

Let's see how we're doing on time here. Last question, Antonieta Cadiz [La Opinión]—where's Antonieta? There you are. Tell those big guys to get out of your way. [*Laughter*]

Immigration Reform/Mexico/President's Travel to Costa Rica

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. And two questions. There are concerns about how the immigration bill from the House, from the Gang of Eight—in the House, has complicated chances for immigration reform in the Senate. It seems to be a more conservative proposal. Is there room for a more conservative proposal than the one presented in the Senate? That's immigration.

And second, on Mexico, yesterday the Mexican Government said all contact with the U.S. law enforcement will now go through a single door, the Federal Interior Ministry. Is this change good for the U.S. relationship with Mexico? Do you think the level of security and cooperation can be maintained?

The President. On immigration reform, I've been impressed by the work that was done by the Gang of Eight in the Senate. The bill that they produced is not the bill that I would have written, there are elements of it that I would change, but I do think that it meets the basic criteria that I laid out from the start, which is: We've got to have more effective border security, although it should build on the great improvements that have been made on border security over the last 4 to 5 years. We should make sure that we are cracking down on employers that are gaming the system. We should make the legal immigration system work more effectively so that the waits are not as burdensome, the bureaucracy is not as complicated, so that we can continue to attract the best and the brightest from around the world to our shores in a legal fashion. And we want to make sure that we've got a pathway to citizenship that is tough, but allows people to earn over time their legal status here in this country.

And the Senate bill meets that—those criteria, in some cases not in the way that I would, but it meets those basic criteria. And I think it's a testament to the Senators that were involved that they made some tough choices and made some tough compromises in order to hammer out that bill.

Now, I haven't seen what Members of the House are yet proposing. And maybe they think that they can answer some of those questions differently or better. And I think we've got to be openminded in seeing what they come up with. The bottom line, though, is, is that they've still got to meet those basic criteria: Is it making the border safer? Is it dealing with employers in how they work with the governments to make sure that people are not being taken advantage of or taking advantage of the system? Are we improving our legal immigration system? And are we creating a pathway for citizenship for the 11 million or so who are undocumented in this country?

And if they meet those criteria, but they're slightly different than the Senate bill, then I think that we should be able to come up with an appropriate compromise. If it doesn't meet those criteria, then I will not support such a bill. So we'll have to wait and see.

When it comes to Mexico, I'm very much looking forward to taking the trip down to Mexico to see the new President, Peña Nieto. I had a chance to meet him here, but this will be the first, more extensive consultations, and it will be an opportunity for his Ministers, my Cabinet members who are participating, to really hammer out some of these issues.

A lot of the focus is going to be on economics. We've spent so much time on security issues between the United States and Mexico that sometimes, I think we forget this is a massive trading partner responsible for huge amounts of commerce and huge numbers of jobs on both sides of the border. We want to see how we can deepen that, how we can improve that and maintain that economic dialogue over a long period of time.

That doesn't mean that we're not going to be talking about security. I think that in my first conversation with the President, he indicated to me that he very much continues to be concerned about how we can work together to deal with transnational drug cartels. We've made great strides in the coordination and cooperation between our two Governments over the last several years. But my suspicion is, is that things can be improved.

And some of the issues that he's talking about really had to do with refinements and improvements in terms of how Mexican authorities work with each other, how they coordinate more effectively, and it has less to do with how they're dealing with us, per se. So I'm not going to yet judge how this will alter the relationship between the United States and Mexico until I've heard directly from them to see what exactly are they trying to accomplish.

But overall, what I can say is that my impression is, is that the new President is serious about reform. He's already made some tough decisions. I think he's going to make more that will improve the economy and security of Mexican citizens, and that will improve the bilateral relationship as well.

And I don't want to leave out that we're also going to be talking to, during my visit to Costa Rica, Presidents of Central American countries, many of whom are struggling with both economic issues and security issues, but are important partners for us, because I think that the vision here is that we want to make sure that our hemisphere is more effectively integrated to improve the economy and security of all people. That's good for the United States. That will enhance our economy. That can improve our energy independence.

There are a whole range of opportunities, and that's going to be the purpose of this trip. And I'm sure that those of you who will have the chance to travel with me, we'll have a chance to discuss this further.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you, guys.

National Basketball Association Player Jason Collins/Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Q. Jason Collins? Do you want to say anything about it?

The President. Yes. I'll say something about Jason Collins. I had a chance to talk to him yesterday. He seems like a terrific young man. And I told him I couldn't be prouder of him.

One of the extraordinary measures of progress that we've seen in this country has been the recognition that the LGBT community deserves full equality, not just partial equality, not just tolerance, but a recognition that they're fully a part of the American family.

And given the importance of sports in our society, for an individual who has excelled at the highest levels in one of the major sports to go ahead and say, this is who I am, I'm proud of it, I'm still a great competitor, I'm still 7 foot tall and can bang with Shaq—[*laughter*]—and deliver a hard foul, and for, I think, a lot of young people out there who are gay or lesbian who are struggling with these issues, to see a role model like that who is unafraid, I think it's a great thing.

And I think Americans should be proud that this is just one more step in this ongoing recognition that we treat everybody fairly and everybody is part of a family, and we judge people on the basis of their character and their performance and not their sexual orientation. So I'm very proud of him.

All right?

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:46 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to suspected April 15 Boston Marathon bombers Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who was killed in a shootout with police on April 19, and

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; Zubeidat Tsarnaeva, mother of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; Faisal Shahzad, who was convicted for the May 1, 2010, attempted bombing of Times Square in New York City; Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who was convicted for the December 25, 2009, attempted bombing of Northwest Airlines Flight 253; Sens. Marco A. Rubio, Jeffrey L. Flake, John S. McCain III, Lindsey O. Graham, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, Charles E. Schumer, and Michael F. Bennet; Jason Collins, center, National Basketball Association's Washington Wizards; and former NBA player Shaquille O'Neal.

Remarks at a Joining Forces Initiative Veterans Employment Event
April 30, 2013

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. David, thank you so much for your introduction and sharing your story, but most importantly, thanks for your extraordinary service to our Nation. We are very, very proud of you.

Thank you to our partners in crime—[*laughter*]—the outstanding Joe Biden and the even more outstanding Jill Biden. [*Laughter*] We are grateful for their leadership, their commitment on a whole range of issues. But I'm particularly grateful for the passion that, Jill, you've shown when it comes to our military families, because you know what it's like when a loved one is deployed. And that passion comes through with everything you do. So we're very, very proud of you.

I also want to recognize the members of my Cabinet and Joint Chiefs and some of our top brass who are here. We appreciate all the great work that they're doing. And your presence reflects our commitment to this cause across the entire Government.

And now I've got a simple task this morning, and that is to introduce the graceful, brilliant, inspiring love of my life—[*laughter*]—First Lady Michelle Obama. Joe and I are just warmup acts today, which in our families means, it's just another Tuesday. [*Laughter*] That's how it generally goes.

But of all the honors and privileges of serving as President, the opportunity to meet incredible people like David is among the things that I cherish the most. David, being here today is representative of a 9/11 generation: men and women who volunteered to put the uniform on even though they understood it was wartime, knowing full well they could be sent into harm's way.

And for more than a decade, they have answered every call, executing some of the most dangerous missions on the planet, operating some of the most cutting-edge, complex technologies known to man, leading their peers in moments where their decisions can determine life or death. And, as we saw during the attacks in Boston, as guardsmen and as veterans were racing towards danger, they put that courage and experience and skills that they've earned serving in our military to use every single day. George Washington once said, "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen."

Our troops and our military families who serve right alongside them keep us strong and they keep us safe. And as Commander in Chief, I've pledged that just as they've left their homes and families to take care of us, we've got to make sure we're taking care of them when they come home. That's our sacred obligation: to make sure that they get the care and the benefits and opportunities that they deserve. And that includes economic opportunity: good jobs worthy of their incredible talents.

And as David indicated, unfortunately, when they hit the job market, employers don't always recognize the high-quality, high-tech skills our newest veterans have gained in their military. They don't understand the leadership that they've shown under extraordinary circumstances. So, too often, just when these men and women are looking to move forward in the next chapter of their lives, they're stuck in neutral, scraping together odd jobs just to pay the bills.

Now, our economy is growing. It's creating jobs on a consistent basis. Although I just had a press conference; we could be doing even better if we'd get a little more cooperation down the street. But for post-9/11 veterans, employment continues to lag behind the national average, and that's especially true for our youngest veterans. And this does not make any sense.

If you can save a life on the battlefield, then you sure as heck can save one in an ambulance and a state-of-the-art hospital. If you can oversee a convoy of equipment and track millions of dollars of assets, then you can run a company's supply chain or you can balance its books. If you can lead a platoon in a war zone, then I think you can lead a team in a conference center.

There are lots of extremely talented young people who are more than qualified for the jobs that businesses are looking to fill. We've got the end of the Iraq war. The war in Afghanistan is drawing to a close. More than 1 million servicemembers are going to be transitioning back to civilian life in the coming years. So we've got to do everything we can to make sure they have every opportunity to succeed.

That's why, a year and a half ago, I signed new tax credits for companies that hire unemployed veterans and wounded warriors. And since then, the number of veterans hired through tax credits like these has more than doubled. And my budget's proposed extending these tax credits permanently. Congress needs to get that done.

We're working to help our troops earn the credentials they need for jobs in manufacturing and medicine and transportation. We strengthened the post-9/11 GI bill, helping nearly 1 million veterans and military family members get a college education. And for the first time in 20 years, we've overhauled the military's Transition Assistance Program to help our newest veterans compete for those private sector jobs. Our online Veterans Jobs Bank now has more than 2.5 million searchable job postings. With our Veterans Gold Card, our veterans receive 6 months of personalized career counseling. At my direction, the Federal Government has hired nearly 250,000 veterans.

So we've made progress, but we know the Government alone can't put every veteran and military spouse to work. So, about a year and a half ago, I went down to the Navy Yard and issued a challenge to America's businesses: Hire or train 100,000 veterans and military spouses by the end of 2013. And I am proud to say that these companies stepped up. And some of those companies are represented here today.

In just a year, businesses had already hired 125,000 veterans or military spouses. They committed to hiring 250,000 more. Today we're announcing a major milestone in this effort, thanks in large part to the leadership of so many companies that are represented here today. And we could not be more grateful for the commitments of these companies.

Now, they're doing it partly because it's good business sense, because they're getting great employees. But they're also doing it because they're patriots. They're also doing it because they really care about this country and they understand that they don't succeed unless they've got an incredible military that's doing this.

Hiring our veterans and military spouses is not just the patriotic thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. They're looking for highly skilled workers; highly skilled veterans and military spouses are looking for jobs. Let's connect them up. It's good for families, it's good for businesses, it's good for our country.

And that's why Joining Forces is so important. It's a way for us to both honor and serve the men and women who have served us so well, but also to move the country forward. That's why we've all got to step up and do our parts: government, business, schools, hospitals, community groups, houses of worship, neighbors, and obviously, our military and our VA. We've had to up our game, and we're not there yet, but we continually try to strive to improve to make sure we're doing the right thing. And just as service and sacrifice defines our military families, serving our military families has to define who we are as Americans.

Now, none of this could have happened had it not been for the extraordinary work that Michelle and Jill have engaged in over the last 2 years. And that's a call that we're renewing here today. I've got to tell you, I'm proud of my wife all the time. I could not be prouder of the work that she and Jill have done in this effort. They have put their heart and their soul into it; they care about it deeply. They identify so deeply with these military families because they understand the sacrifices that they're making.

So with that, let me introduce a woman who I've seen live out that message every day as a wife and a mother, a tireless champion of military families. Love her dearly: my wife, First Lady Michelle Obama.

[*At this point, the First Lady made remarks.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:46 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to PO David Padilla, USN, who found employment through the Paralyzed Veterans of America's Operation PAVE program; and Jill T. Biden, wife, and Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III, son, of Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden, Mrs. Biden, PO Padilla, and the First Lady.

Statement on the Investiture of King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands
April 30, 2013

On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I congratulate His Majesty Willem-Alexander on the occasion of his investiture as King of the Netherlands, and we wish the very best to him and Queen Maxima as they assume their new roles. Our two nations share a rich history and strong ties, and we enjoyed hosting the royal couple at the White House in September 2009, when they visited the United States to mark the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's historic voyage. We also send our heartfelt appreciation to Princess Beatrix for her steadfast friendship, selfless service, and exemplary leadership as she steps down after 33 years. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a valued friend of the United States, and we look forward to continuing our close cooperation in the years to come.

Remarks on the Nomination of Representative Melvin L. Watt To Be Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency and Thomas E. Wheeler To Be Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission
May 1, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you so much.

Well, good afternoon, everybody. And today I'm proud to put forward two outstanding individuals who are going to help us grow our economy, but are also going to be looking out for the middle class.

Seven years after the housing bubble burst, triggering the worst financial crisis of our lifetimes and costing Americans millions of jobs and, in some cases, their homes, our housing market is finally beginning to heal. Construction is expanding; housing starts are up nearly 50 percent. Just yesterday we learned that home prices in many cities are rising at the fastest rate since 2006.

So we're starting to see some bright spots in one of the most important parts of our economy. But I think everybody understands we've still got more work to do. We've got more folks to help. We've got responsible homeowners who have never missed a payment, but aren't allowed to refinance. We've got working families who are doing everything right, but still owe more on their homes than they're worth. We've got young people who are trying to start

a family and get into the housing market and have seen difficulties in terms of financing.

So there are a lot of areas where we can make significant improvement. That's why I've called on Congress to give every responsible homeowner in America the chance to save $3,000 a year by refinancing at today's historically low rates. That's $3,000; it's like a tax cut for every family who refinances. And families who would be interested in refinancing should ask their Representatives, why wouldn't we act on that, why don't we get moving on that? I'm ready to sign that bill, and I know that we're talking to Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle who recognize this is something that needs to get done.

In the meantime, I'll keep taking whatever steps I can administratively on my own. And one of the best things I can do is to nominate Mel Watt to lead the Federal Housing Finance Agency.

Mel was raised by a single mom, who is here today. It's wonderful to see you. You look just great. And Michelle does say hi. The—[*applause*]. Like many people I meet, when I first met Mel's mom, first thing she says is, I want to see Michelle. [*Laughter*] So that's kind of how things go for me. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, Mel's mom raised Mel and his brothers in Charlotte, North Carolina, just outside. Grew up in a house where you could see the stars through the roof and the ground through the floor. But Evelyn Watt sacrificed and worked hard to give her boys a fighting chance. As Mel says, "[She] never, ever let us know we were poor or couldn't do anything that anybody else could do."

And that love and support eventually led Mel to Congress, where he's represented the people of North Carolina for 20 years, every one of them, as a member of the committee that oversees housing policy. And in that capacity, Mel has led efforts to rein in unscrupulous mortgage lenders. He's helped protect consumers from the kind of reckless risk-taking that led to the financial crisis in the first place. And he's fought to give more Americans in low-income neighborhoods access to affordable housing.

So Mel understands as well as anybody what caused the housing crisis. He knows what it's going to take to help responsible homeowners fully recover. And he's committed to helping folks just like his mom: Americans who work really hard, play by the rules, day in and day out, to provide for their families. So, Mel, thank you so much for agreeing to accept this nomination. Thank you.

You can tell he's a good Congressman because some of his staff is choking up. [*Laughter*]

My second nominee will have a very different job, but one that's equally important to the future of America's economy.

When the Federal Communications Commission was founded almost 80 years ago, it was in charge of overseeing a few hundred radio stations and a few million phone lines. And today, the FCC sits at the center of a communications universe that is growing and changing faster than you can tweet. And that's why Julius Genachowski, who is an old buddy from law school and had so much success in the private sector as well as previously serving in the FCC, that's why Julius has had one of the toughest jobs in Washington.

Four years ago, Julius set two priorities as Chairman of the FCC: making high-speed Internet available everywhere and keeping it open to everyone. And thanks to his hard work and his leadership, the FCC has made extraordinary progress on both fronts. We're helping millions more Americans connect to high-speed Internet. We're unleashing the airwaves to support the latest in mobile technology. We're protecting the Internet as an open platform for innovation and free speech. And we're poised to do even more, thanks to Julius's efforts.

So he has been an extraordinary FCC Chairman, but Julius has decided to move on to new challenges in the digital frontier. And so today it is my great pleasure to nominate Tom Wheeler to take his place. Give Tom a big round of applause.

Now, if anybody is wondering about Tom's qualifications, Tom is the only member of both the cable television and the wireless industry hall of fame. So he's like the Jim Brown of

telecom—or the Bo Jackson of telecom. [*Laughter*] And that's because for more than 30 years, Tom has been at the forefront of some of the very dramatic changes that we've seen in the way we communicate and how we live our lives.

He was one of the leaders of a company that helped create thousands of good, high-tech jobs. He's in charge of the group that advises the FCC on the latest technology issues. He's helped give American consumers more choices and better products. So Tom knows this stuff inside and out. And I think Julius will attest to that, because Julius has benefited frequently from Tom's input and advice.

I also want to thank Mignon Clyburn—where is Mignon? There she is right there—who has been an incredible asset to the FCC for the last few years. And so Mignon is going to be Acting Chair until Tom is confirmed. And together, they've got a very important mission: giving businesses and workers the tools they need to compete in the 21st-century economy and making sure we're staying at the cutting edge of an industry that, again and again, we've revolutionized here in America.

And as technology continues to shape the way that we do business and communicate and transform the world, we want to make sure that it's American ingenuity, American innovation, and that we're setting up legal structures and regulatory structures that facilitate this continued growth and expansion that can create good jobs and continue to grow our economy.

So I just want to thank Julius and his family, his wonderful wife Rachel and the entire family, for their extraordinary service. I want to thank Mel, I want to thank Tom and their families for agreeing to step into these new and challenging roles. And I'm going to go ahead and thank the Senate now for what I'm sure—[*laughter*]—will be a speedy confirmation process so these two gentlemen can get to work right away.

Thank you very much, everybody. Hey!

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:27 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Evelyn Herron, mother, and Graham Watt, brother, of Rep. Watt; James N. Brown, former running back, National Football League's Cleveland Browns; former NFL and Major League Baseball player Vincent E. "Bo" Jackson; and Rachel Goslins, wife of former Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius M. Genachowski.

Remarks on the Nomination of Penny S. Pritzker To Be Secretary of Commerce and Michael B. Froman To Be United States Trade Representative

May 2, 2013

Thank you. Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Sit. [*Laughter*]

My top priority as President is to grow the economy, create good middle class jobs, make sure that the next generation prospers. And in a few minutes, I'll be departing the White House for a trip that will promote that priority.

First, I'm going to visit Mexico, one of our largest economic partners. Then I'll be visiting Costa Rica, where I'll attend a summit with Central American leaders. And in both instances, I'm going to be working to deepen our economic and trade relationships across Latin America, relationships that create jobs and growth here at home and offer our businesses growing markets where they can sell more American-made goods and services abroad.

But before I go, I had some business to do. I am proud to announce that I'll be nominating two outstanding individuals to my Cabinet who will focus on precisely these issues.

Over the past 4 years, I've tasked the Secretary of Commerce and the U.S. Trade Representative with opening new markets for American goods and services, doubling our exports for those goods and services all in support of millions of American jobs. And over those 4 years, Ron Kirk, along with his outstanding

team at USTR, has stood up for free trade and for American workers and businesses around the world. So he's finalized trade deals with South Korea, Colombia, Panama. He's cracked down on unfair trading practices to give American workers a fair shot in the global economy. And I could not be prouder of the work that he has done.

Meanwhile, at the Department of Commerce, Becky Blank has led our efforts to help promote high-tech manufacturing and travel and tourism—it is a big portfolio—and she has worked closely with the private sector to make sure that America remains the best place in the world to do business.

So I could not be more thankful to Ron and to Becky for their outstanding service. Ron couldn't be here today, but many members of his team are here, and we are so thankful to them. Becky, thank you. Becky is going to be taking on a pretty big job: making sure those Badgers behave up in Wisconsin. [*Laughter*] And we know she's going to be extraordinary leading that institution.

But today I'm in a position to nominate two extraordinary individuals to continue the work of Ron and Becky as key members of my economic team.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, when it comes to growing our economy and our middle class, we should focus on three things. Number one, making sure America is a magnet for good jobs. Number two, helping workers earn the skills they need to get those jobs. And number three, making sure their hard work actually leads to a decent living. Both these individuals share that focus.

First, I'm nominating Penny Pritzker to serve as my Secretary of Commerce. Now, Penny is one of our country's most distinguished business leaders. She's got more than 25 years of management experience in industries including real estate, finance, and hospitality. She's built companies from the ground up. She knows from experience that no government program alone can take the place of a great entrepreneur. She knows that what we can do is to give every business and every worker the best possible chance to succeed by making America a magnet for good jobs.

And Penny understands that just as great companies strengthen the community around them, strong communities and skilled workers also help companies thrive. So she's been an extraordinary civic leader in our shared hometown of Chicago. She served as a member of my Jobs Council. She was the driving force behind Skills for America's Future, which is a program that brings together companies and community colleges to shape and prepare skills-based training programs for workers that are tied into the businesses that potentially will hire them.

So she's got extraordinary experience. And in case I haven't embarrassed her enough, she's got a wonderful family; I watched her kids grow up, and today is her birthday. So, happy birthday, Penny. For your birthday present, you get to go through confirmation. [*Laughter*] It's going to be great. [*Laughter*]

Meanwhile, over two decades in both the public and private sectors, Mike Froman, who I'm nominating to serve as my U.S. Trade Representative, has established himself as one of the world's foremost experts on our global economy. And I'm not surprised, by the way, because we went to law school together. He was much smarter than me then; he continues to be smarter than me now.

And over the past 4 years, he's been my point person at global forums like the G–8 and the G–20. And by the way, when I say point person, he's really been the driving force, oftentimes, in organizing these incredible international summits in which huge amounts of business gets done. He's been a key negotiator alongside Ron Kirk on those trade agreements for South Korea, Colombia, and Panama, which support tens of thousands of American jobs.

He has won the respect of our trading partners around the world. He has also won a reputation as being an extraordinarily tough negotiator while doing it. He does not rest until he's delivered the best possible deal for American businesses and American workers. He's fought

to make sure that countries that break the rules are held accountable.

And Mike believes, just as I believe and just as Penny believes, that our workers are the most competitive in the world, so they deserve a level playing field. And Mike's going to continue to fight for that level playing field in his new role, as he helps to move forward trade negotiations with both the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, and will also continue to advise me on a broad range of economic issues.

And as I think some of you have gathered, I've had a chance to get to know Penny and Mike not just as leaders and professionals, but also as friends. And one of the reasons I'm proud to nominate them is they don't forget what matters. They know this is not about just growing balance sheets. It's about growing opportunity for people. It's about growing a sense of security for the middle class. And most of all, they operate with integrity, and they understand that public service is a privilege and you've got to do it right when you get involved on behalf of the American people.

So I just want to thank Penny and Mike and their extraordinary families for agreeing to serve in these roles. I urge the Senate to confirm Penny and Mike without delay, because they've got a lot of work to do. And I intend to work them to the bone as soon as they're official. [*Laughter*] So thank you very much, everybody. And thanks to their families for putting up with what I know will be challenging, but ultimately, the extraordinary reward of working on behalf of the American people.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Donald P. and Rose P. Traubert, children of Secretary-designate Pritzker.

The President's News Conference With President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico
May 2, 2013

President Peña Nieto. Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon, everyone. First and foremost, after the bilateral meeting, I would like to extend the warmest welcome to President Barack Obama, his team joining him. Once again, we would like to welcome all of you with open arms, and we hope you feel at home.

We appreciate your will to have upon this meeting a relation built on mutual respect, collaboration for the benefit of our peoples.

Before we cover the areas that we have shared during our bilateral meeting, on behalf of the Mexican people, I would like to reiterate our solidarity for the regretful acts that were committed in your country: in Boston and in West, in Texas. Unfortunately, it took the lives of American citizens.

If you allow me, I would like to share with the audience and the members of the media the areas that we have addressed with President Obama during the meeting that we just have had.

First of all, we have reached an agreement that the relation between Mexico and the United States should be broad in terms of the areas that it covers. It should open up opportunity and collaboration spaces in different arenas, with a very clear purpose in mind to make North American region a more productive and competitive region that will, in result, trigger the enormous potential that our peoples have, that our nations have. And we're well aware of the fact that we can take stock of our bilateral relation. Within the framework of the agreements made, we have reached a new level of understanding, as our two new administrations that begin roughly at the same time: the second term of President Obama and my administration.

Among the items that we covered, I can speak for how relevant trade and commerce is in the Mexico-U.S. relation. We have dimension of all the achievements made upon the free trade agreement and the benefits that our

economies have received from it. The exports made from the U.S. to its top trade partners, Mexico and Canada, this represents one-third, one out of each three products that are exported from the U.S. And only the relation with Mexico is higher than the one the U.S. has with European countries like the U.K., France, the Netherlands all together. Or the exports sent to China and Japan together doesn't reach the level that the U.S. has with Mexico.

I must stand out that the integration of our economies in the last years has shown to be relevant, and the content of exports sent out from Mexico have 40 percent of U.S. input. Therefore, I can conclude that the more growth Mexico shows and the more capacity to export, the more benefit the U.S. gets. Jobs are created in Mexico; therefore, jobs are created in the United States.

Therefore, one of the first agreements that we have made was to create a high-level dialogue that, within its framework, will foster trade and commerce with the United States. This means that for the first time—and probably, this is unprecedented—we will have the Mexican economic cabinet with their counterparts from various Government agencies from the United States, as well high-ranking officials. And we've heard from the President that in this group, the Vice President of the United States will participate in order to set a dialogue that will result in arrangements in terms of how the government can support all the efforts made by the private sector in order to have a stronger economic integration.

For this purpose, we have agreed that during the fall of this year, this high-level group will meet for the first time with the attendance of high-ranking officials to start working in the area of the economy.

We have also agreed to endeavor joint actions to have a safer border. Within the framework of the agreement made, we will have a 21st-century border that was about to be defined the work and action agenda that our teams have already set up. And now, through this agenda, we will have safer borders that will enable and expedite the transit of people and goods that every day cross our borders.

We have also agreed to create a binational group in order to find joint actions and joint mechanisms to support entrepreneurs in both of our countries, and by this, we will boost SMEs in our countries. We believe that this mechanism will serve as an enabler, and it will see further development for these small and medium-size companies that are present in both of our countries. And we hope that all the actions in a very near future will make the SMEs in the future becoming large enterprises. And this action will favor specifically young entrepreneurs in both of our countries.

Thirdly, we have agreed to boost our economy and our potential; we have agreed to create a bilateral forum on higher education, innovation, and research. Two government agencies will work together—CONACYT and the National Science Foundation from the U.S.—and presidents from Mexico and U.S. universities will be part of this group. And by this, more exchanges will happen between Mexico and the U.S., and students coming from the U.S. to Mexico.

We have agreed that higher education serves as a platform to boost the economic potential that we have in our nations. In order to compete with the world, specifically with highly developed countries where science and technology have been the target of their efforts and investment, it is fundamental that we have well-prepared youngsters with the skills necessary to give our economic development a greater strength and a greater capacity.

In a different arena, we have addressed security. We have both recognized the level of cooperation that the U.S. has shown towards the Mexican Government. And the new strategy in the area of security in our country has a very clear purpose, and that is to fight organized crime in all of its forms, be it drug dealing, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, or any crime perpetrated. We are not going to renounce to that responsibility as a Government and my administration. We're going to face crime in all of its forms.

But in our new strategy, we have emphasized the fact that we will reduce violence. Unfortunately, it affects coexistence between

Mexicans. To fight organized crime and reduce violence are not objectives that contradict each other. There is no clash between these two goals. These are two goals that fall within the framework of one same strategy. And President Obama's administration has expressed his will, as we know, to cooperate on the basis of mutual respect, to be more efficient in our security strategy that we are implementing in Mexico.

I have shared with President Obama, as well, what Mexico has done during the first months of my administration. I have shared with President Obama that Mexico has reached maturity in terms of its democracy. All political forces in the country have reached political maturity, have shown to be civil, and have managed to show respect to each other and also towards the Government of Mexico. Together, we have managed to set up a working agenda that, in result, will advance the reforms that will transform this structure that Mexico needs to boost its development. I have shared with President Obama the fact that we recognize all political voices in Mexico.

Finally, I would like to share with all of you that we fully agree that our nations, that our peoples must move from being neighbors to being part of a community. We are already part of a trade integration process. We have reached high levels of development. But still, there is potential to make of our nations, through a collaboration and integration of North America, we can make a more productive and a more competitive region.

I would like to conclude by quoting the words of former President Kennedy shared during his visit to Palacio Nacional 51 years ago, under former President Adolfo López Mateos. We have shared this quote with President Obama, but I would like to share it with all of you.

President Kennedy said to President López Mateos, "Geography has made us neighbors; tradition has made us friends." Let us not allow a gap fall between what nature has united. And that is why we vow so that this understanding, this dialogue climate that we have set up, in result, will give us more growth, more development, and more opportunities for our peoples.

Once again, allow me to reiterate, President Obama—and this goes for your delegation as well—you are warmly welcomed to Mexico, and I hope that your stay is fruitful and you enjoy your stay in Mexico as well.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Muchas gracias, Señor Presidente, to President Peña Nieto for your kind words and your extraordinary hospitality. As President-elect, you were the first leader I welcomed to the White House after our election. It was a sign of our extraordinarily close relationship between our two countries.

During Enrique's visit, I noted that he spent time as a student in the United States in one of our most beautiful States, the State of Maine. I must say, though: Maine is very cold, and so when I come here on a beautiful spring day here in this beautiful city, I understand why you came back home.

I want to thank you for your hospitality. I look forward to joining you and the First Lady, *la Señora* Rivera, this evening. And I want to thank all the people of Mexico for such a warm welcome. It's always a pleasure to visit.

As President Peña Nieto discussed, between our two countries, we're some 430 million people. Ten million—tens of millions of Mexican Americans enrich our national life in the United States. Well over 1 million Americans live here in Mexico. Every year, millions of tourists—most of them from the United States—visit this magnificent country. Every day, millions of workers in our countries earn a living from the jobs that are made possible by our trade, and more than 1 million people cross our shared border: businesspeople, students, educators, scientists, researchers, collaborating in every sphere of human endeavor.

In other words, Mexico and the United States have one of the largest, most dynamic relationships of any two countries on Earth. And yet we don't always hear about all aspects of these extraordinary ties because too often two issues get attention: security or immigration.

Obviously, these are serious challenges, and President Peña Nieto and I discussed them in depth today. I agreed to continue our close cooperation on security, even as the nature of that cooperation will evolve. As I told the President, it is obviously up to the Mexican people to determine their security structures and how it engages with other nations, including the United States. But the main point I made to the President is that we support Mexican Government's focus on reducing violence, and we look forward to continuing our good cooperation in any way that the Mexican Government deems appropriate.

I also reaffirmed our determination in the United States to meet our responsibilities: to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and to combat the southbound flow of illegal guns and cash that help to fuel violence.

Again, I want to pay tribute to the people of Mexico, who have made extraordinary sacrifices for their security and display great courage and resolve every day.

But even as we continue to deal with these urgent challenges, we can't lose sight of the larger relationship between our peoples, including the promise of Mexico's economic progress. I believe we've got a historic opportunity to foster even more cooperation, more trade, more jobs on both sides of the border, and that's the focus of my visit.

The United States and Mexico have one of the largest economic relationships in the world. Our annual trade has now surpassed $500 billion, more than $1 billion every day. We are your largest customer, buying the vast majority of Mexican exports. Mexico is the second largest market for U.S. exports. So, every day, our companies and our workers, with their integrated supply chains, are building products together. And this is the strong foundation that we can build on.

I want to commend President Peña Nieto and the Mexican people for the ambitious reforms that you've embarked on to make your economy more competitive, to make your institutions more effective. And I know it's hard, but it's also necessary.

Ultimately, only Mexicans can decide how Mexico reforms. But let me repeat what I told to the President: As Mexico works to become more competitive, you've got a strong partner in the United States, because our success is shared. When one of us prospers, both of us prosper. And that's the context for the progress that we made today.

As President mentioned, we're, first of all, creating a high-level dialogue to broaden and deepen our economic relationship. On our side, it will be led by members of my Cabinet. Vice President Biden will participate as well. Together with Mexico, we'll focus on increasing the connections between our businesses and workers, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship and making our economies even more competitive.

To that end, we also reaffirmed our goal of concluding negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership this year. This would be another major step in integrating our two economies and positioning us to compete in the fastest growing markets in the world, those in the Asia-Pacific region. We want to be able to sell more goods from Mexico and the United States. And if we're partnering together, we can do even better.

We agreed to continue to make our shared border even more efficient with new infrastructure and new technologies so it's even faster and cheaper to trade and do business together. We reaffirmed our commitment to the clean energy partnerships that allow our two countries to enhance our energy security and combat climate change. And I'm very pleased that we've agreed to expand collaborations and exchanges between our students, our schools, and our universities.

Just as Enrique once studied in our country, we want more Mexicans studying in the United States, and we want more American students studying here in Mexico. And we're going to focus on science and technology and engineering and math to help our young people, including our daughters, succeed in this global economy.

And finally, I updated the President on our efforts in the United States to pass commonsense,

comprehensive immigration reform that lives up to our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, including generations of Mexican Americans.

As we do, I think it's important for everybody to remember that our shared border is more secure than it's been in years. Illegal immigration attempts into the United States are near their lowest level in decades, and legal immigration continues to make both of our countries stronger and more prosperous and more competitive.

And this, in part, reflects the economic progress and greater opportunities here in Mexico. I think this progress should help inform the debate in the United States. And I'm optimistic that we're finally going to get comprehensive immigration reform passed.

I'll have much more to say about this and some other issues in my speech tomorrow. But for now, I want to express my gratitude to the President for his hospitality and also for your leadership. And given the progress that we're seeing here in Mexico, I see so many opportunities to continue to deepen the extraordinary friendship and common bond that we share between our two great nations and our two great peoples. I know we will do that.

So thank you very much. *Muchas gracias*.

Moderator. Now we will have a round of four questions. Marú Rojas from Radio Formula.

Border Security/Mexico-U.S. Relations

Q. To the President of Mexico, we welcome gladly that the agenda is broadened. There is no speculation on the priority topics to be included in your agendas. Could you clarify if this high-level group, please, as you have pointed out, will overcome efficiently the results of a fight that these two nations had on the issue of security? It seems to be that trade is now a priority; no longer security is.

And for President Obama, given your expertise during this second administration, what is your take on Enrique Peña Nieto's new administration in terms of reforms? You have acknowledged the reforms made so far. Is the U.S. Government seeing this reform as on the part of the administration or a pact? Thank you.

President Peña Nieto. Thank you very much. We have relaunched our relationship, and we have agreed on the climate within which we're going to work on. We have defined our priorities. We don't want to make this relationship targeted on one single issue. We want to broaden our relation to include different areas, and we want to specially emphasize our relation on the trade relation potential between Mexico and the U.S.

We're also going to cover other areas. Of course, public safety is included, and we have shared our view on that topic to work towards reducing violence by combating efficiently organized crime.

And I must insist, we have reviewed the long list of potential and opportunities that we have identified in the economic relation between the U.S. and Mexico in the area of trade and commerce. President Obama has already put it for the U.S. We represent a market that receives their exports. We're the second export destination, and in our case, the United States ranks first. We need to identify the areas where we can supplement each other's production of goods and exports and goods from Mexico to the world, because these products have a high content of U.S. input.

As I have stated, this means that if Mexico does well in its productive capabilities—that is to say, by creating more labor and its capability to export more products—the U.S. will benefit, and vice versa.

That is why this high-level meeting foresees the participation of officials that are a part of my cabinet. The U.S. has not a tradition of having cabinets like the ones we have, but President Obama has decided that high-ranking officials from different Government agencies will participate, including the U.S. Vice President. They will be part of this high-level group that will define specific actions. That—what has been done so far in the private sector complementarity has happened. And we have seen a good flow of trade between our countries. There is no doubt that even when it has reached a certain level, we can push it further.

We can extend its capabilities if both of our governments identify the right mechanisms, the right formula to boost economic integration. And that is precisely the agreement that we have reached today.

President Obama. Well, first of all, just on the security issue, I think it's natural that a new administration here in Mexico is looking carefully at how it's going to approach what has obviously been a serious problem. And we are very much looking forward to cooperating in any ways that we can to battle organized crime, as President Peña Nieto stated.

And we anticipate that there's going to be strong cooperation, that on our side of the border, we have continued work to do to reduce demand and to try to stem the flow of guns and cash from north to south.

So this is a partnership that will continue. I think that President Peña Nieto and his team are organizing a vision about how they can most efficiently and effectively address these issues. And we will interact with them in ways that are appropriate, respecting that ultimately, Mexico has to deal with its problems internally and we have to deal with ours as well.

With respect to the President's agenda, we had a wonderful relationship with President Calderón and the previous administration. The bonds between our two countries go beyond party. If a Republican President replaces me, there's still going to be great bonds between Mexico and the United States because not just the geography, but friendship and our interactions.

But what I have been impressed with is the President's boldness in his reform agenda. He's tackling big issues. And that's what the times demand. We live in a world that is changing rapidly, and in both the United States and in Mexico we can't be caught flatfooted as the world advances.

We have to make sure that our young people are the best educated in the world. And that means that some of the old ways of educating our kids may not work. We have to make sure that we're staying at the forefront of science and technology. And that means we've got to make sure that we're investing in those areas appropriately. We have to make certain that our economies are competitive around the world and that when it comes to energy, that we're addressing issues like climate change, but also making sure that it's done in a way that's creating jobs and businesses on both sides of the border.

And so what I very much appreciate is the President's willingness to take on hard issues, because sometimes, I think there's a temptation, once somebody is elected, to just stay elected, as opposed to trying to make sure that we use our time as well as we can to bring about the kinds of changes will help move the country forward.

Syria/Immigration Reform

White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney. From the U.S. press, Julie Pace of the Associated Press.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Administration officials, including Secretary Hagel, say that the U.S. is now more seriously considering sending weapons to the Syrian rebels. How has your thinking on the effectiveness of such a step evolved as the violence in Syria has continued? And do you now see lethal aid as the best option available for a U.S. escalation in Syria?

I also had a question on immigration that I was hoping you both could address. Senator Rubio said today that on the immigration bill being considered on Capitol Hill may not pass the Senate unless the border security measures are strengthened. Are you concerned that an effort to bolster those border security triggers may make a pathway to citizenship almost impossible for many people already in the U.S. illegally, including many Mexicans?

President Obama. Well, first of all, on Syria, what Secretary Hagel said today is what I've been saying now for months, which is we are continually evaluating the situation on the ground, working with our international partners to find the best way to move a political transition that has Asad leaving, stabilizes the country, ends the killing, and allows the Syrian people to determine their own destiny. And we've made enormous investments, not just in

humanitarian aid, but also in helping the opposition organize itself and make sure that it has a consistent vision about how it's operating.

And as we've seen evidence of further bloodshed, potential use of chemical weapons inside of Syria, what I've said is, is that we're going to look at all options. And we know that there are countries that are currently providing lethal aid to the opposition. We also know that the Asad regime is getting not just lethal aid, but also training and support from countries outside of Syria. And we want to evaluate and make sure that every step that we take advances the day when Asad is gone and you have people inside of Syria who are able to determine their own destiny rather than engage in a long, bloody sectarian war.

And we'll continue to evaluate that every step of the way. But as I mentioned at my press conference back in DC, we want to make sure that we look before we leap and that what we're doing is actually helpful to the situation as opposed to making it more deadly or more complex.

With respect to immigration reform, I expressed to President Peña Nieto that I'm optimistic about us getting this done, because it's the right thing to do. We've seen leaders from both parties indicate that now is the time to get comprehensive immigration reform done. And part of what we discussed is the importance of getting it done precisely because we do so much business between our two countries; that for us to constantly bog down on these border issues and debates instead of moving forward with a 21st-century border that's maintaining security and that is making sure that legal immigration and legal trade and commerce is facilitated, but at the same time, ensures that we're not seeing a lot of illegal traffic and allows us to continue to be a nation of immigrants that has contributed so much to the wealth and prosperity of our Nation—if we're going to get that done, now is the time to do it.

And the bill that Senator Rubio and others put forward, I think, is a great place to start. It doesn't contain everything I want, and I suspect that the final legislation will not contain everything I want. It won't contain everything that Republican leaders want either. But if we can get a basic framework that secures our border, building on the extraordinary success we've already had and the cooperation we've had with the Mexican Government; that cracks down on employers who are not taking the law seriously; that streamlines and enhances our legal immigration system, because the problems with our legal immigration system often force people into the illegal immigration system; and provides a pathway to citizenship for those who are currently living in the shadows inside of the United States—if it has those elements, then we should be able to build on that. And we can have arguments about other elements of this as we go further, but that's the core of what we need.

And frankly, we've put enormous resources into border security. Don't take my word for it: You had folks like Senator McCain and Senator Graham come down to the border and see the progress that's been made. There are areas where there's still more work to be done. Some of it, by the way, is not simply securing the United States from illegal traffic, some of it is also improving the infrastructure, which we talked about, for commerce to be able to come in smoothly, which creates jobs and helps our businesses both in the United States and in Mexico.

But what I'm not going to do is to go along with something where we're looking for an excuse not to do it as opposed to a way to do it. And I think we can. I think if all sides operate in good faith, that can be accomplished.

President Peña Nieto. On that matter, allow me to note that the Mexican Government acknowledges the efforts made by—the leadership made by President Barack Obama and your Congress to eventually pass the immigration bill. Mexico understands that this is a domestic affair for the U.S., and we wish you the best in this push that you're giving to immigration.

That is what I have to say in terms of the reform. Francisco Reséndiz from El Universal journal.

International Trade

Q. Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Mr. President, good afternoon. I would like to ask you both, specifically, what would be the most important outcome of President Obama's visit to Mexico, on the one hand? That is my question. And I would like to ask you as well: Have you considered the possibility to scale up the Mexico-U.S. relation and to integrate the region further? This could lead to a binational strategy in terms of fighting organized crime transnationally. Thank you very much for your answers.

President Peña Nieto. Thank you very much. In order to conclude this meeting, I would like to say that we have revitalized our relation between two governments that have two new administrations. This is President Obama's second term and this new administration for Mexico. The climate within which we are strengthening our relation is based on cordiality. Our relation is based on respect; it's based on cooperation and collaboration in all of those areas that we share a common interest.

We are not going to target this relation in one specific area. We want to address multiple issues. We want to work on an agenda that would allow us to identify all the potential areas that could help us advance our agenda.

We have emphasized trade and commerce during this visit because we have made a thorough analysis of the U.S. and Mexico trade relations. We have analyzed trade flows and how our economies supplement each other. And there is potential if we truly want to become in a more productive and more competitive North American region, well, that's what we need to do first to compete with other regions in the world.

Those are the highlights and specifically the agreements made to create a high-level dialogue, the bilateral forum to advance academic exchanges and to work towards science and innovation in both of our countries.

Also, we will have a binational dialogue to foster SMEs. Undoubtedly, these are mechanisms that, in result, will help us project further the economic and trade relation that Mexico has with the United States.

And certainly, I must insist, let me say it very clearly, the cooperation that we already have with the U.S. in the area of security, let me tell you that under this new strategy, we're going to order things up. We're going to make it institutional. The channels will be very clear. We're going to use one single channel in order to make—to be more efficient, to attain better results.

And we have reached a very good understanding with the U.S. Government. They know why we're emphasizing violence reduction in our strategy. President Obama has expressed his respect to the strategy that the Mexico's Government will define in the area of security, and they have shown to be willing to cooperate with us in order to reach the goals that we have set up to have a peaceful Mexico where there is security.

President Obama. Well, I think President Peña Nieto summarized it well. Let me give you one specific example, and that is the work that our countries are doing together around the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the TPP.

Our largest trading partner is Canada. Our second largest trading partner is Mexico. So North America has already become far more integrated economically than it was 10 years ago or 20 years ago. There are suppliers from Mexico who sell to U.S. companies that in turn sell back into Mexico or sell to Canada or sell around the world. There are jobs that are created in Mexico, jobs that are created in the United States. All of our economies have grown as a consequence of the work that's taking place together.

But as I said, the world is changing. So the fastest growing part of the world is the Asia-Pacific region, huge markets. And by us working closely together to upgrade and revamp our trade relationship, we're also in a position to project outward and start selling more goods and services around the world. And that means more jobs and more businesses that are successful in Mexico and in the United States.

Some of that is going to be bilateral. So finding ways that we can reduce trade frictions,

improving our transportation and our infrastructure cross-border, how we can improve our clean energy cooperation. Already, you have a situation in which energy that is created in power plants in California sometimes is sold during nonpeak times into Mexico. And then when it's peak times in California, then it's sold back into California, which makes it more efficient on both sides of the border, and that reduces the cost for consumers on both sides. Well, those are the kinds of very specific areas that we can continue to refine and improve on. And that's what this high-level economic dialogue will accomplish.

But even as we're improving our bilateral negotiations, what it also allows us to do, then, is to say we're aligned in projecting both to the Pacific and to the Atlantic in saying, let's make sure that we're taking advantage of all the economic opportunities that are taking place around the world.

When the United States prospers, Mexico does well. And when Mexico does well, the United States does well. And that I think is the main message of my visit here today. That's what I want to make sure we're focused on, because certainly in the United States—and I know here in Mexico as well—when the economy is growing, when people have opportunity, then a lot of our other problems are solved, or at least we have the resources to solve them. And so that is something that we really want to make sure that we're focused on during the rest of my term in office and during President Peña Nieto's term in office.

Family Planning and Access to Contraception/Gun Control

Press Secretary Carney. Next from the U.S. press, Kathleen Hennessey of the Los Angeles Times.

Q. Thanks to you both. Mr. President, I wanted to ask about a domestic issue if I could, the FDA rule on the morning-after pill that came out this week that prohibits girls under 15 from buying the "morning after" pill without a prescription. I'm wondering if—what your opinion on the rule is, and if it resolves some of the concerns you expressed last year when you talked about your role as a father and how that's influenced your thinking on this, and if you believe that there's scientific evidence to justify the 15-year-old cutoff.

And for President Peña Nieto, I wanted to ask you about gun control. The President's most recent attempt to pass new legislation on guns just failed in the Senate. You've spoken out on this before. I'm wondering if you talked to him about this in your meeting and if you would urge him—have urged him—to try again, or if there's more that you think the White House could do administratively, without approval from Congress, to resolve the issue. Thank you.

President Obama. Well, first of all, on the FDA issue, let me make a couple points clear. Number one, this is a decision made by the FDA and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. It's not my decision to make.

The first time around, where there were no age restrictions, Secretary Sebelius expressed concerns, and I supported those concerns. And I gave voice to them in the press room back in DC.

I—the rule that's been put forward by the FDA, Secretary Sebelius has reviewed, she's comfortable with. I'm comfortable with it.

The second point I want to make is, I'm very supportive of contraception because I think it's very important that women have control over their health care choices and when they are starting a family. That's their decision to make. And so we want to make sure that they have access to contraception. As you know we had a little bit of a fuss around what we're doing with the Affordable Care Act, but I very much think that's the right thing to do.

So the current ruling is actually—you phrased it as prohibiting. I think you could phrase it as, they're now allowing these contraceptions to be—contraceptives to be sold over the counter for 15-year-olds and older. It has not resolved the question of girls younger than 15.

There was a court case that came up that is being appealed by the Justice Department. That's a Justice Department decision. My understanding is, part of it has to do with the

precedent and the way in which the judge handled that case. And my suspicion is, is that the FDA may now be called upon to make further decisions about whether there's sufficient scientific evidence for girls younger than 15.

That's the FDA's decision to make. That's Secretary Sebelius's decision to review. But I'm very comfortable with the decision they've made right now based on solid scientific evidence for girls 15 and older.

I know you didn't direct the question to me, though I do want to editorialize just for a second about gun control. As I think all your Mexican counterparts understand and as I talked about with President Peña Nieto, we recognize we've got obligations when it comes to guns that are oftentimes being shipped down south and contributing to violence here in Mexico.

But frankly, what I'm most moved by are the victims of gun violence not just in Mexico, but back home, like the parents in Newtown. And I said the day that the legislation that had been proposed by Senators Manchin and Toomey in the Senate, the day that that failed to get 60 votes, that that was not the end, this was the beginning.

The last time we had major gun legislation it took six, seven, eight tries to get passed. Things happen somewhat slowly in Washington. But this is just the first round. And when you've got 90 percent of the American people supporting the initiatives that we put forward around background checks and making sure that drug traffickers, for example, can't just send in somebody with a clean record to purchase guns on their behalf with no way of tracking or stopping that. When you have commonsense legislation like that that the overwhelming majority of Americans, including gun owners, those of us who strongly support the Second Amendment, all of us supporting, I believe that eventually, we're going to get that done. And I'm going to keep on trying.

So I didn't mean to horn in on President Peña Nieto's response, but I just want to be clear that we're going to keep at this. One thing I am is persistent.

President Peña Nieto. In that regard, I believe that we have an agreement with President Obama's words. And what Mexico would like to see happening in the U.S., that is to control better the sales of weapons. And we cannot ignore the efforts made by President Obama's administration in order to approve the better control of weapons. If Mexico could add itself up to this important sector of the U.S. population—90 percent in favor of gun control—we would do it. But this is a domestic issue in the United States.

In terms of the areas that we are working in collaboration, areas that we can address, is specifically the fact—to avoid the fact that weapons bought in the U.S. could be brought to Mexico. Regretfully, many lives of Mexicans have been lost due to that illegal smuggling of weapons bought in the United States have reached Mexican soil. We have made our commitment, and we're working on it to work together towards making our borders safer. We are fighting illegal smuggling of weapons.

Mexico vows towards the efforts made by your Government, and we'll keep on supporting you to have better gun control in your country. But we're not going to wait until that happens. We are working by using more intelligence information, and we are taking action to have safer borders so that we don't have weapons being smuggled into Mexico that regretfully end up hurting many Mexicans.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

President Peña Nieto. Muchas gracias.

President Obama. Muchas gracias.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:24 p.m. at the Palacio Nacional. In his remarks, the President referred to Angelica Rivera, wife of President Peña Nieto; former President Felipe de Jesus Calderón Hinojosa of Mexico; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and Edward R. Korman, judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. President Peña Nieto referred to the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT). President Peña Nieto, the moderator, and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico

May 2, 2013

At the invitation of President Enrique Peña Nieto, President Barack Obama travelled to Mexico City on May 2–3 to discuss the broad range of bilateral, regional, and global issues that bind the United States and Mexico and touch the daily lives of citizens of both countries. Building on their positive initial meeting in Washington, D.C. last November, the two Presidents renewed their commitment to the United States-Mexico relationship.

Looking ahead to the next 4 years during which their presidencies will overlap, the two leaders noted the importance of taking advantage of opportunities and harnessing the enthusiasm and optimism that a new stage in bilateral relations brings. The Presidents underscored the strategic importance of the bilateral relationship and expressed a desire for even greater cooperation between their two nations. Specifically, the Presidents focused on: 1) economic competitiveness; 2) people-to-people connections; 3) leadership on regional and global issues; and 4) citizen security.

Economic Competitiveness

Underpinning our successful United States-Mexico economic relationship are trade and investment flows that support jobs in both countries. Bilateral trade was almost half a trillion dollars in 2012.

The two Presidents agreed on the need to continue forging a close and productive economic relationship to enhance their nations' competitiveness and to create more trade and investment opportunities. With this purpose, they decided to establish a High Level Economic Dialogue, which will be chaired at the cabinet level and focus on promoting competitiveness, productivity and connectivity, fostering economic growth and innovation, and partnering for global leadership. The leaders intend for the first meeting of the Dialogue to take place later this year, include representatives from relevant agencies and departments from both governments, and engage with relevant stakeholders, notably the private sector.

The two leaders also discussed the importance of the United States and Mexico working together, and with their Canadian partners, to make North America the most dynamic and competitive region in the world. They agreed to seek a successful conclusion to a high-standard Trans-Pacific Partnership this year that includes 21st century provisions that significantly strengthen the North American Free Trade Agreement. They also reiterated their commitment to the resolution of specific trade issues between their countries, and their interest in maintaining close coordination with regards to other relevant trade negotiations.

The Presidents also underscored the importance to both countries of a secure and efficient shared border. They noted the recent meeting of the 21st Century Border Management Executive Steering Committee, the first under President Peña Nieto's tenure, and agreed to support key projects and initiatives that improve infrastructure, support the efforts of local communities, facilitate the secure flow of legitimate trade and travel, and enhance law enforcement cooperation along the border.

President Obama and President Peña Nieto welcomed the positive steps the U.S. Congress is taking to implement the Transboundary Hydrocarbon Agreement, which will enhance energy security in North America and bolster the two countries' responsible stewardship of the Gulf of Mexico. They look forward to full implementation of the Agreement.

People-to-People Connections

The two leaders underscored the broad and deep connections that exist between the peoples of both countries, and their importance to the prosperity and culture of both societies.

The Presidents agreed to establish a Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research. It should start meeting this year

and bring together government, academia, and civil society to develop a shared vision on educational cooperation and propose concrete short-term and mid-term initiatives to promote bilateral collaboration and policy coordination.

Both Presidents expressed support for the U.S. government's "100,000 Strong in the Americas Initiative" as a way of enhancing academic mobility between Mexico and the United States.

President Obama noted that the bipartisan immigration bill recently introduced in the U.S. Senate was largely consistent with the principles he has repeatedly laid out. He reiterated his commitment to commonsense immigration reform that would institute a fair and effective immigration system that lives up to the United States' heritage as a nation of laws and recognizes the extraordinary contributions of immigrants, including generations of immigrants from Mexico, to make the United States a strong and vibrant Nation. President Peña Nieto recognized President Obama's efforts to advance this issue, and reaffirmed the Government of Mexico's commitment to supporting the wellbeing of Mexicans living abroad.

Global and Regional Leadership

The Presidents underscored the importance of their countries' cooperation on regional and international issues. These include job creation through sustained economic growth, the protection of human rights, gender equality, democratic governance, and addressing the challenges of climate change. They emphasized the importance of the Equal Futures Partnership, which Mexico will formally join, as a multilateral effort to expand women's economic empowerment and political participation.

As part of a commitment to working together in Central American and the hemisphere, the two Leaders noted a recently concluded Memorandum of Understanding for International Cooperation between the Secretariat of Foreign Relation's Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that will promote joint activities concerning development and cooperation with third countries. The two Presidents also reaffirmed their support to increased interconnection of electricity grids in the Americas, for example through the Connecting the Americas 2022 initiative launched at the Sixth Summit of the Americas.

Citizen Security

The Presidents reaffirmed their commitment to act as co-responsible partners through a renewed collaborative approach to citizen security. President Peña Nieto discussed the importance of ensuring a peaceful Mexico, as one of the five main pillars of his government's strategy, and of preventing crime by addressing the conditions that contribute to its occurrence, and strengthening institutions and the rule of law.

President Obama reiterated U.S. support for Mexico's efforts, and in particular for the transition to an accusatory system of justice that is transparent, effective, and efficient. The Presidents also emphasized the importance of continued actions against transnational organized crime, enhanced counter-illicit finance and arms trafficking efforts, and measures to reduce drug use and its consequences.

Presidents Obama and Peña Nieto will remain in close consultation on these and other issues of mutual interest, in order to further advance the partnership between their nations.

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

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma
May 2, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Burma that was declared on May 20, 1997, is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2013.

The Government of Burma has made significant progress in a number of critical areas, including releasing hundreds of political prisoners, achieving cease-fire talks with the 11 armed ethnic groups, taking significant steps toward eliminating press censorship, and enabling the participation of opposition parties in the country's political system.

Despite great strides that Burma has made in its reform effort, the situation in the country continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. The political opening is nascent, and concerns persist regarding remaining political prisoners, ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in ethnic minority areas, and the country's continued military relationship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United States is committed to supporting and strengthening Burma's reform efforts to ensure that the democratic transition becomes irreversible. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, Mexico
May 3, 2013

Hola! Buenos dias! Please, please, everybody, have a seat. It is wonderful to be back in Mexico, *lindo y querido*. I bring with me the greetings and friendship of the people of the United States, including tens of millions of proud Mexican Americans.

Now, this is my fourth visit to Mexico as President. This is my second visit to this museum. And each time that I come, I've been inspired by your culture and by the beauty of this land, and most of all, by the Mexican people. You've been so kind and gracious to me. You've welcomed my wife Michelle here to *el DF*. You've welcomed our daughter Malia and her classmates to Oaxaca. And as a proud father, I have to say that Malia's Spanish is getting very good. It helps that she's smarter than I am.

And it's an honor to be back in Mexico City, one of the world's great cities. *Es un placer estar entre amigos.*

And it's fitting that we gather at this great museum, which celebrates Mexico's ancient civilizations and their achievements in arts and architecture, in medicine and mathematics. In modern times, Mexico's blend of cultures and traditions found its expression in the murals of Rivera and the paintings of Frida and the poetry of Sor Juana and the essays of Octavio Paz. And Paz once spoke words that capture the

spirit of our gathering here today, in this place that celebrates your past, but which this morning is filled with so many young people who will shape Mexico's future. Octavio Paz said: "Modernity is not outside us, it is within us. It is today and the most ancient antiquity; it is tomorrow and the beginning of the world; it is a thousand years old and yet newborn."

And that's why I wanted this opportunity to speak with all of you today, because you live at the intersection of history that Octavio Paz was referring to. The young people of Mexico, you honor your heritage, thousands of years old, but you're also part of something new, a nation that's in the process of remaking itself. And as our modern world changes around us, it's the spirit of young people—your optimism and your idealism and your willingness to discard old habits that are no longer working—that will drive the world forward.

You see the difference between the world as it is and the world as it could to be, between old attitudes that stifle progress and the new thinking that allows us to connect and collaborate across cultures. And by the way, that includes how we think about the relationship between Mexico and the United States.

Despite all the bonds and the values that we share, despite all the people who claim heritage on both sides, our attitudes sometimes are trapped in old stereotypes. Some Americans only see the Mexico that is depicted in sensational headlines of violence and border crossings. And let's admit it, some Mexicans think that America disrespects Mexico or thinks that America is trying to impose itself on Mexican sovereignty or just wants to wall ourselves off. And in both countries, such distortions create misunderstandings that make it harder for us to move forward together. So I've come to Mexico because I think it's time for us to put the old mindsets aside. It's time to recognize new realities, including the impressive progress of today's Mexico.

It is true that there are Mexicans all across this country who are making courageous sacrifices for the security of your country, that in the countryside and in the neighborhoods not far from here, there are those who are still struggling to give their children a better life. But what's also clear is that a new Mexico is emerging.

I see it in the deepening of Mexico's democracy: citizens who are standing up and saying that violence and impunity is not acceptable; a courageous press that's working to hold leaders accountable; a robust civil society, including brave defenders of human rights who demand dignity and rule of law. You have political parties that are competing vigorously, but also transferring power peacefully and forging compromise. And that's all a sign of the extraordinary progress that's taken place here in Mexico.

And even though we know the work of perfecting democracy is never finished—that's true in America, that's true here in Mexico—you go forward knowing the truth that Benito Juarez once spoke: "Democracy is the destiny of humanity." And we are seeing that here in Mexico. [*Applause*] We're seeing that here in Mexico.

We're also seeing a Mexico that's creating new prosperity: trading with the world; becoming a manufacturing powerhouse, from Tijuana to Monterrey to Guadalajara and across the central highlands; a global leader in automobiles and appliances and electronics, but also a center of high-tech innovation, producing the software and the hardware of our digital age. One man in Querétaro spoke for an increasing number of Mexicans: "There's no reason to go abroad in search of a better life. There are good opportunities here." That's what he said, and you are an example of that.

And in fact, I see a Mexico that's lifted millions of people from poverty. Because of the sacrifices of generations, a majority of Mexicans now call themselves middle class, with a quality of life that your parents and grandparents could only dream of. This includes, by the way, opportunities for women, who are proving that when you give women a chance, they will shape our destiny just as well as men, if not better.

And I also see in Mexico's youth an empowered generation because of technology. I think I see some of you tweeting right now—[*laughter*]—what's happening. [*Laughter*] And wheth-

er it's harnessing social media to preserve indigenous languages or speaking up for the future that you want, you're making it clear that you want your voice heard.

And because of all the dynamic progress that's taking place here in Mexico, Mexico is also taking its rightful place in the world, on the world stage. Mexico is standing up for democracy not just here in Mexico, but throughout the hemisphere. Mexico is sharing expertise with neighbors across the Americas. When they face earthquakes or threats to their citizens or go to the polls to cast their votes, Mexico is there, helping its neighbors. Mexico has joined the ranks of the world's largest economies. It became the first Latin American nation to host the G–20.

And just as Mexico is being transformed, so are the ties between our two countries. As President, I've been guided by a basic proposition: In this relationship, there's no senior partner or junior partner, we are two equal partners, two sovereign nations. We must work together in mutual interest and mutual respect. And if we do that, both Mexico and the United States will prosper.

And just as I worked with President Calderón, I've reaffirmed with President Peña Nieto that the great partnership between our two countries will not simply continue, it's going to grow stronger and become broader. And in my time with President Peña Nieto, I've come to see his deep commitment to Mexico and its future. And we share the belief that as leaders, our guiding mission is to improve the lives of our people. And so we agree that the relationship between our nations must be defined not by the threats that we face, but by the prosperity and the opportunity that we can create together.

Now, as equal partners, both our nations must recognize our mutual responsibilities. So, here in Mexico, you've embarked on an ambitious reform agenda to make your economy more competitive and your institutions more accountable to you, the Mexican people. And as you pursue these reforms, I want you to know that you have strong support in the United States. Because we believe—I believe—that people all around the world deserve the best from their government. And whether you're looking for basic services or trying to start a new business, we share your belief that you should be able to make it through your day without paying a bribe. And when talented Mexicans like you imagine your future, you should have every opportunity to succeed right here in the country you love.

And in the United States, we recognize our responsibilities. We understand that much of the root cause of violence that's been happening here in Mexico, for which many so Mexicans have suffered, is the demand for illegal drugs in the United States. And so we've got to continue to make progress on that front.

I've been asked, and I honestly do not believe that legalizing drugs is the answer. But I do believe that a comprehensive approach—not just law enforcement, but education and prevention and treatment—that's what we have to do. And we're going to stay at it, because the lives of our children and the future of our nations depend on it.

And we also recognize that most of the guns used to commit violence here in Mexico come from the United States. I think many of you know that in America, our Constitution guarantees our individual right to bear arms, and as President, I swore an oath to uphold that right, and I always will. But at the same time, as I've said in the United States, I will continue to do everything in my power to pass commonsense reforms that keep guns out of the hands of criminals and dangerous people. That can save lives here in Mexico and back home in the United States. It's the right thing to do. So we'll keep increasing the pressure on gun traffickers who bring illegal guns into Mexico. We'll keep putting these criminals where they belong: behind bars.

So we recognize we've got work to do on security issues, but we also recognize our responsibility, as a nation that believes that all people are created equal: We believe it's our responsibility to make sure that we treat one another with dignity and respect. And this includes recognizing how the United States has been strengthened by the extraordinary contribu-

tions of immigrants from Mexico and by Americans of Mexican heritage.

Now, Mexican Americans enrich our communities, including my hometown of Chicago, where you can walk through neighborhoods like Pilsen, Little Village—*La Villita*—[*laughter*]—dotted with murals of Mexican patriots. You can stop at a *fonda*, you can hear some mariachi, you—where we are inspired by the deep faith of our both our peoples at churches like Our Lady of Guadalupe. [*Applause*] And we've got a Chicagoan in here somewhere. [*Laughter*]

And we're so grateful to Mexican Americans in every segment of our society: for teaching our children and running our companies and serving with honor in our military and making breakthroughs in science and standing up for social justice. Now, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., told Cesar Chavez once, we are "brothers in the fight for equality." And in fact, without the strong support of Latinos, including so many Mexican Americans, I would not be standing today as President of the United States. That's the truth.

And so given that is America's heritage, given that we share a border with Mexico, given ties that run back generations, it is critical that the United States recognize the need to reform our immigration system, because we are a nation of laws, but we're also a nation of immigrants. Like every nation, we have a responsibility to ensure that our laws are upheld. But we also know that as a nation of immigrants, the immigration system we have in the United States right now doesn't reflect our values. It separates families when we should be reuniting them. It's led to millions of people to live in the shadows. It deprives us of the talents of so many young people, even though we know that immigrants have always been the engine of our economy, starting some of our greatest companies and pioneering new industries.

That's one of the reasons I acted to lift the shadow of deportation from what we call the dreamers, young people brought to the United States as children. And that's why I'm working with our Congress to pass commonsense immigration reform this year—I'm convinced we can get it done—reform that continues to strengthen border security and strengthen legal immigration so citizens don't have to wait years to bring their families to the United States; reform that holds everyone accountable so immigrants get on the right side of the law and so immigrants are not exploited and abused; and most of all, reform that gives millions of undocumented individuals a pathway to earn their citizenship. And I'm optimistic that after years of trying, we are going to get it done this year. I'm absolutely convinced of it.

And obviously, we're going to have to work with the Mexican Government to make sure that we've got a well-regulated border. But I also want to work with the Mexican Government because I believe that the long-term solution to the challenge of illegal immigration is a growing and prosperous Mexico that creates more jobs and opportunities for young people here.

I agree with the Mexican student who said, "I feel like we can reach the same level as anyone in the world." That's absolutely true. And so I firmly believe, *juntos, podemos lograr más*—together, we can achieve more. So with the remainder of my time today, I want to focus on five areas where we can do more.

Number one, let's do more to expand trade and commerce that creates good jobs for our people. We already buy more of your exports than any country in the world. We sell more of our exports to Mexico than we do to Brazil, Russia, India, and China combined. Mexican companies are investing more in the United States, and we're the largest foreign investor in Mexico, because we believe in Mexico and want to be a partner in your success.

So, guided by the new economic dialogue that President Peña Nieto and I announced yesterday, let's do more to unlock the true potential of our relationship. Let's keep investing in our roads and our bridges and our border crossings so we can trade faster and cheaper. Let's help our smaller businesses, which employ most of our workers, access new markets and new capital, the big markets right across the border. Let's empower our young entrepreneurs as they create startup companies that

can transform how we live. And let's realize the Trans-Pacific Partnership this year so our two nations can compete and win in the fast-growing markets of the Asia-Pacific. If the United States and Mexico are working together, we can sell a whole lot of things on the other side of the Pacific Ocean where the fastest growing economies are taking off right now. So that's number one.

Number two, let's not just sell more things to each other, let's build more things together. So, with many of our companies operating in both countries, parts are now being shipped back and forth across the border as they're assembled. So, every day, U.S. and Mexican workers are building things together, whether it's crafts—whether it's cars or aircraft or computers or satellites.

And I think this is only the beginning. Given the skills of our workers, it makes even more sense for companies around the world to set up shop in the United States and set up shop in Mexico. And as Mexico reforms, we're going to be able to do more business together and sell more goods around the world. And the more that our companies collaborate, the more competitive they'll be. And the entire hemisphere will benefit because of those links and chains that have been created between our two countries.

Number three, as we secure our economic future, let's secure our energy future, including the clean energy that we need to combat climate change. Our nations are blessed with boundless natural beauty, from our coastlines and farmlands to your tropical forests. But climate change is happening. The science is undeniable. And so is the fact that our economies must become greener.

So, in the United States, we've made historic commitments to clean and renewable energy like solar and wind power. And we've made a commitment to reduce the emission of harmful carbon pollution. And here in Mexico, you're a leader in cutting carbon emissions and helping developing countries do the same. So together, let's keep building new energy partnerships by harnessing all these new sources and, by the way, creating the good jobs that come with these new technologies. And let's keep investing in green buildings and technologies that make our entire economy more efficient, but also make our planet cleaner and safer for future generations.

Number four—and this is part of staying competitive—let's do more together in education so our young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed. Here in Mexico you've made important progress, with more children staying in school longer and record numbers of students like you getting a university education. Just imagine how much the students of our two countries could do together, how much we could learn from each other.

And that's why President Peña Nieto and I announced a new partnership in higher education to encourage more collaboration between our universities and our university students. So we're going to focus on science and technology, on engineering and mathematics. And this is part of my broader initiative called 100,000 Strong in the Americas. We want 100,000 students from the United States studying in Latin America, including Mexico. And we want 100,000 Latin American students, including Mexican students, to come to study in the United States of America. Because when we study together and we learn together, we work together and we prosper together. That's what I believe.

And finally, to help spark prosperity in both out countries, let's truly invest in innovation and research and development together. Here in Mexico, you're now a global leader in graduating engineers and technicians. One of Mexico's leading scientists, Rafael Navarro-González, is helping analyze data from the rover that we've landed on Mars.

So together, let's remember that every dollar, every peso that we invest in research and development returns so much more to our economies in jobs and opportunity, new products, new services. And that's why I'm calling for us to forge new partnerships in aerospace and IT and nanotechnology and biotechnology and robotics. Let's answer the hope of a young woman, a student at the National Polytechnic Institute, who spoke for many in your genera-

tion, so eager to make your mark. She said, "Give us jobs as creators." Give us jobs as creators.

Sometimes, young people are known as just consumers of goods, but we want young people creating the new products, the next big thing that will change how we live our lives. So that's the agenda that I want to pursue.

And I understand that there are those—both here in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, but also back home in the United States—who are skeptical of progress, who maybe doubt the capacity for us to make the most of this moment. There are always cynics who say, "Aw, this is too hard," the headwinds you face are too stiff. They say: "Mexico has been here before. We look like we're making progress, we're looking at a bright horizon, on the verge of great possibility, but then we get blown off course."

And it's true that nothing is inevitable. Progress and success is never guaranteed. The future that you dream of, the Mexico you imagine, it must be built; it must be earned. Nobody else can do it for you. Only you can earn it. You are the future. As Nervo wrote in "La Raza de Bronce," *tu eres el sueño*—you are the dream.

For just as it was patriots who answered the call when Father Hidalgo rang the church bell two centuries ago, you—your lives in a free Mexico—are the dream that they imagined. And now it falls to you to keep alive those virtues for which so many generations of Mexicans struggled.

You are the dream that can stand up for justice and human rights and human dignity, here at home and around the world. You're the creators and the builders and the climbers and the strivers who can deliver progress and prosperity that will lift up not just the Mexican people for generations to come, but the entire world.

You're the men and women who will push this nation upwards as Mexico assumes its rightful place, as you proudly sing, "in heaven your eternal destiny was written by the finger of God."

You are the dream. This is your moment. And as you reach for the future, always remember that you have the greatest of partners, the greatest of friends, the nation that is rooting for your success more than anybody else, your neighbor, the United States of America.

Viva México! Viva los Estados Unidos! Que Dios los bendiga! Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:29 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to former President Felipe de Jesus Calderón Hinojosa of Mexico; Alejandro Landin Cruz and Emelyn Medina, students, National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City, Mexico; and Rafael Navarro-González, professor of astrobiology, National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico.

The President's News Conference With President Laura Chinchilla Miranda of Costa Rica in San Jose, Costa Rica
May 3, 2013

President Chinchilla. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, dear friends. Dear friends, journalists—international journalists, and from American and SICA. Thank you very much. Thank you for being here with us this afternoon.

In the first place and before we get any deeper concerning the results of the meetings that we just had recently, in the first place, what I'd like to do is to reiterate our warmest welcome, on behalf of all the Costa Rican people, to President Barack Obama and his delegation. And also I would like to reiterate on behalf of all Costa Ricans the feelings that we feel towards the United States of America.

And I also wanted to thank you very much for the way so cordial and constructive in which we have been able to develop this afternoon's issues, Mr. President, because I think that we have had very successful conversations in the bilateral meeting. It was my pleasure to

report that precisely thanks to this open process of conversations that we have had, it is that we can explore new horizons, always trying to strengthen these all traditions based on the defense of values—the essential values—that have characterized the relationship between the United States and Costa Rica.

Particularly speaking, I'm talking about values of peace, freedom, democracy, respect to the human rights, and the human development. These are the values that we share. And these are the values on which we aspire to continue to develop the relationship between our two nations.

The conversations that we have had have been very useful, and I—and they have basically focused on six fundamental issues that reflect this rich diversity that characterizes the relationship between the two nations. We talked about institutional strengthening. We talked about the issues of international policy and the involvement, in particular, to which Costa Rica aspires in the international economic scenario.

We also talked about the use of fundamental instruments in the relationship of the two nations, like CAFTA, for instance. We talked about an issue that is important but it is not the one that defines our relationship, which is security. And we also talked about a fundamental issue that undoubtedly is going to define the progress and the joint development, not only between the United States of America and Costa Rica, but also between the United States and the Central American region, which is the area of energy.

And finally, of course, in our Costa Rican agenda, we included issues having to do with education, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

And please allow me to briefly walk you through these six issues so that you can get to know which has been the central element in each of them.

In the area of institutional strengthening, as you know, the Government of the United States is promoting what is called the alliance of open governments, that basically seeks to strengthen practices that are much more transparent and integral in everything that has to do with the exercise of institutions of public function.

Costa Rica has been an enthusiastic participant in this initiative. We have already proposed our action plan, and we aspire to continue to share initiatives, practices, exchanges of experiences in this issue.

In the area of involvement of Costa Rica in the economic global scenario and some of the issues of international policy, we have taken into account—we have used this session to talk about the involvement of the United States in the area of the fire weapons, and that together, they have been able to get the approval in the recent meeting of the United Nations.

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for having sponsored one of the treaties that is going to contribute the most to the peace in the world. In addition, I would like to recognize, in particular, the efforts of President Obama in the area—in his own country in order to raise awareness concerning the regulation of fire weapons.

Costa Rica, as some of you already know, is trying to play a more protagonistic role, especially in the area of global development. Costa Rica is a small economy, but it's a very open economy. It's a model of success. The inception of global value chains with more and more competitive, attracting—in the attraction based on high technology. And being a middle-income country, we are a country that is not seeking to get more aid. We basically want to have more opportunities to export what our people are producing.

As we have said in the past, we either export our products the people are able to produce or generate, or we're going to end up exporting our own people. And Costa Rica will continue to keep Costa Ricans in Costa Rica, with better opportunities of economic growth and with better opportunities of welfare.

And that is that the aspirations of Costa Rica include to be able to insert itself in the different fora where we will continue to widen the opportunities of trade, investment, and as a consequence, the opportunities to continue to generate employment and welfare in our country.

To this extent, we have talked to President Obama about two important fora where Costa Rica aspires to be present. One is the alliance—the Trans-Pacific alliance, the TPP, where the Government of the United States, and especially the Obama administration, is playing an important leadership to the effect of closing these negotiations. And we would hope that Costa Rica will continue to be the center of attention of the pioneer countries to be able to insert ourselves in the same initiative.

And the other important forum where we have given our best efforts is the forum for the cooperation and development. Costa Rica wants to be there precisely because we want to continue to adopt the best possible practices in matters of development of public policy.

In the area of the using of the CAFTA platform, as you know, this is going to be an issue—a regional issue, an issue of regional scope—but this becomes a bilateral issue to the extent that Costa Rica and the SICA—Costa Rica is one of the economies that has taken the best advantage of the opportunity provided by the economic—by the American market. We have become in the SICA framework the most important partner with the United States. Thanks to CAFTA, the countries in our region have increased by 70 percent the international trade. And what we basically seek is to be able to promote initiatives in the area of facilitation of trade.

Concerning the area of security, this, as I mentioned before, is an obligated issue. As you know, Costa Rica considered this a fundamental issue—has been considering this issue a fundamental one in the recent years. We have been able to do well facing common crime. We have been able to reduce the homicide rates significantly. We have been able to reduce the rates of violent crime, thanks to an integral approach in the area of prevention and sanction, as well as the issues having to do with control. But we also have to admit that the issue of organized crime continues to be important on the institution of stability and the integrity of our nations.

Thus, we talked about this issue. We had a conversation about it. We reiterated the importance of keeping the levels of cooperation that's—that we have had so far. But very particularly, we made the point on the efforts that are being displayed by the SICA countries as well as the United States Government with the purpose of approaching the issue of organized crime and drug smuggling from a much more integral approach, a much more diverse approach, and not only through the instruments of war. Thinking that we're going to be able to overcome this evil, a country like Costa Rica cannot go, of course, to war, but we have to take very seriously the strengthening of those mechanisms and those policies that would allow to prevent the entry of organized crime in our country.

And in that sense, we are celebrating the efforts that we might be able to continue on doing in the matter of prevention of the consumption, with the matter of more opportunities for the younger communities of our country on the subject of strengthening the state of law, of the judicial independence, of the free press that might be able to carry out the necessary investigations, and the accusations without having on them any effect or threat.

The fifth point of the agenda was a subject regarding the energy. As it is well known also for Costa Rica, the energy subject has been a value from the point of view of its sustainable development. Ninety percent of the energy that we consume comes from renewable sources. Nevertheless, Costa Rica, as well as the rest of Central America, have a very big challenge ahead of them from the point of view of the cost of this energy. If we do not solve this in the short, midterm, this will have a tremendous weight on the level of competivity of our region.

Therefore, we have explored with President Obama the possibilities of using the platform of the CAFTA—of the CAFTA platform so that in the future—and once the Government of the United States resolves some of the internal discussions that it might have—to be able to enjoy some preferences in regard to the import of the natural gas, natural liquefied gas, a source of energy to which the Government of

President Obama have put a lot of emphasis on.

We have also commented about the efforts that we are developing here in Costa Rica with the purpose of promoting a group of new energies, especially the energies based on hydrogen, and the initiatives that have already been working on by the private enterprises—both North Americans and Costa Ricans—with the cooperation of the public sector of Costa Rica, to take them into consideration as part of the initiatives that he has promoted in the framework of the alliance of the Americas for the energy and for the climate change.

And I finish by talking about the subject of an interpartnership of innovation and of the education as essential elements of any agenda for the development. For Costa Rica, the education has been a constant in its historical development. And as I was telling President Obama, we were born as one of the poorest provinces of the colony, and we have become, little by little, in—the nation with great opportunities in the subject of economic development and of well-being for the people, and a fundamental factor, an essential factor has been precisely the education.

Much more—much before many other nations of the world, Costa Rica decreed the free and mandatory access to education. And now we dedicate 7 percent of our GDP to finance the public education, and we need, above all, to face the challenge of the reallocation of this education to the demands of the new economy to which we are aspiring to move our country.

In that sense, we have called upon the attention in regard to the possibility of using—with a greater intensity—the very beautiful program that has been characterized by the international policy of the United States, which is the Peace Corps, so that, through them, we might be able to improve even more. They have programs of bilingualism that Costa Rica, for 15 or 20 years, we have already been introducing in our public education.

We believe that through Peace Corps we can achieve training programs with our teachers, with our professors, our English professors, so that that English is a more proficient English, more competitive, with greater quality, and bound precisely to the aspirations of attracting investments and generation of employments—intelligent employments that we are working on.

Finally, also, we have called President Obama's attention to the fact that there is nothing more valuable, that there is nothing more important than anybody to get to know a society from the inside. I am a true example precisely of the benefits of the scholarship programs that the United States in the past have offered the Central American region. As a matter of fact, that is why we have made a summit so that we can continue on promoting those scholarship programs and intensify them so that the youth of the Central American region—and of course, of my country—can continue on also knowing or feeding of not only for knowledge of the best universities, of the quality of education of the United States, but also of the livelihood, the values that have characterized this great nation.

So thank you very much. Mr. President Obama.

President Obama. Buenas tardes. Thank you so much, President Chinchilla, for your kind words and for welcoming me here today. This is my first visit to Costa Rica. And even though it is a brief one, I can already tell the incredible spirit of the people, the natural beauty of the country. I understand that the official slogan for those who are thinking about visiting Costa Rica is *"un pais sin ingredientes artificiales."* So there's nothing artificial about Costa Rica. Everything is genuine. And that's certainly true about the friendship between our two countries.

And President Chinchilla has been so gracious in her hospitality. We are very grateful to her. I want to thank publicly the wonderful schoolchildren who sang for us. And I noticed that, Madam President, you and I didn't sing. We didn't trust our voices. But we certainly enjoyed the spirit that those children delivered.

In the United States, we are so grateful for the contributions that Costa Ricans make to our country every day. You welcome many Americans as tourists, ecotourists, and many

others who have chosen to make Costa Rica a new home. This year we're also marking the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps here, including President John F. Kennedy's visit to Costa Rica and his vision for partnerships that advance development and democracy in the Americas.

I had actually a chance during the bilateral meeting to see a photograph of President Kennedy at the same table that we were meeting at; it had been specially commissioned. And so it shows the longstanding ties between our two countries.

And I'm here because Costa Rica is a great partner not just regionally, but globally. Given Costa Rica's proud democratic traditions, we stand up together for democracy and justice and human rights in Central America and across the hemisphere. And I want to commend Costa Rica for your landmark law against the scourge of human trafficking. I'm proud to be here as you host World Press Freedom Day. So everybody from the American press corps, you should thank the people of Costa Rica for celebrating free speech and an independent press as essential pillars of our democracy.

Costa Rica shows the benefits of trade that is free and fair. Over the last few years, under the Central American Free Trade Agreement, our trade with Costa Rica has doubled, creating more jobs for people in both of our countries. Our partnerships are creating more opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs, including young people and women. As I told President Chinchilla, the United States will continue to be your partner as Costa Rica modernizes its economy so that you're attracting more investment and creating even more trade and more jobs.

Costa Rica, of course, has long been a leader in sustainable development that protects the environment. The President and I agreed to continue deepening our clean energy partnerships. For example, we're moving ahead with our regional efforts to ensure universal access to clean, affordable, sustainable electricity for the people of the Americas, including Costa Ricans. And this is also another way that we can meet our shared commitments to address climate change.

The President and I reaffirmed our determination to confront the growing security concerns that have affected many Costa Rican families and communities. And under the Central America Regional Security Initiative, the United States has committed nearly half a billion dollars to help Costa Rica and its neighbors in this fight. We're disrupting drug cartels and gangs. We're working to strengthen law enforcement and the judicial system. And we're addressing the underlying forces that fuel criminality with prevention programs for at-risk youth and with economic development that gives young people hope and opportunity.

Meanwhile, as I said in Mexico yesterday, the United States recognizes that we've got responsibilities; that much of the violence in the region is fueled by demand for illegal drugs, including in the United States. So we're going to keep on pursuing a comprehensive approach not only through law enforcement, but also through education and prevention and treatment that can reduce demand.

And finally, I updated the President on our efforts in the United States to pass comprehensive immigration reform. I know this is of great interest to the entire region, especially those with families in our country. And I'm optimistic that we're going to achieve reform that reflects our heritage as both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants: men and women and children who need to be treated with full dignity and respect.

So, President Chinchilla, thank you so much for your partnership. Thank you and the people of Costa Rica for your hospitality.

I'm told there's a well-known quote here in Costa Rica: "Where there is a Costa Rican, wherever it is, there's liberty." And in the United States, we're thankful for the many Costa Ricans who contribute to our prosperity and our liberty. And we're grateful for Costa Rica's leadership in this region, as we'll see again when President Chinchilla hosts tonight's SICA meeting.

I'd note that our presence at tonight's meeting with the leaders of Central America and

the Dominican Republic is a sign of the importance that the United States places on this region, as well as our commitment to being a steady and strong and reliable partner, because we believe that no matter where you live, the people of this region deserve security and opportunity and dignity.

So let me, again, say thank you, and in my best Tican: *pura vida. Muchas gracias.*

So I think we're going to go Costa Rican press first, and then I'll call on someone?

Drug Trafficking/Costa Rica

Q. Good afternoon. Welcome, President Obama. The policy of the United States for Central America has centered on drug smuggling and organized crime. Don't you think, for both Presidents, that the time has come to improve our relationships and go on to an agenda that apart from security, we have the subjects of the social aspects of education and health?

And my second question would be, if we're going to be supporting Costa Rica in subjects that were presented today in the organization of the SICA? So thank you, and welcome.

President Obama. Well, thank you very much. First of all, I completely agree with you, and I've tried to emphasize this throughout my trip: So much of the focus ends up being on security. And we understand that in the absence of security, it's very hard to develop. But we also have to recognize that problems like narcotrafficking arise in part when a country is vulnerable because of poverty, because of institutions that are not working for the people, because young people don't see a brighter future ahead.

And so what President Chinchilla and I spoke extensively about are initiatives like education, institution building and capacity, trying to create greater economic opportunity, because the stronger the economies and the institutions for legitimate—for individuals who are seeking legitimate careers, the more those are there, then the less powerful these narcotrafficking operations are going to be.

And so not only are we interested in promoting trade and highlighting the already extensive trade that we're doing, but we also want to see how can we build on the successes to improve education even in our strategies to fight narcotrafficking. We, for example, helped to finance youth centers that can give young people a different vision for their futures. We consider that to be part of our overall effort. So it can't just be law enforcement. It also has to be human development, inclusive economic development. We've got to make sure that everybody feels opportunity.

Now, even if a country is doing well, the scourge of drugs and drug trafficking will still be there, and there still needs to be a strong law enforcement component. But we can do better than we're currently doing. And I know that President Chinchilla is taking a great interest here in Costa Rica around these human development issues.

As far as the issues that you mentioned around international organizations, as I indicated earlier, Costa Rica has shown itself to be a world leader and model around free trade, freedom of the press, democracy, respect for human rights, and that makes it an outstanding candidate for membership in the OECD, for example. And so we will expect that we'll continue to support Costa Rica in expanding its influence.

We enjoy a great partnership on, for example, regional human rights councils, as well as international human rights efforts. Costa Rica has been a real leader, and we appreciate that. And there's something very effective when large countries like the United States, smaller countries like Costa Rica share values. We come in together. And I think it's a great way to make the point that regardless of the country's size, regardless of the language that it speaks, the idea of certain universal rights that are observed for all people is important. And that's why we value this partnership so much.

President Chinchilla. Well, I was just going to add a couple of comments. And I think that it seems to me that I should start by thanking President Obama for his expressed support to the aspirations of Costa Rica for going in—for being a member of OECD. We know that there are tests that we have to comply with,

and we know that we will be able to comply with them.

And also, to add something precisely—a comment in regard to the subject of narcotraffic, organized crime. We believe that there is not a single doubt that President Obama's administration—since his coming to Mexico and now his visit here in Central America—brings along an agenda that is trying to redefine those relationships based on a greater diversity.

As it was being said, our countries are more than just in security and violence and narcotraffic. That doesn't mean that it is not an important problem, but I would like to basically finally add the following. What some other countries have done for a few years now, with the purpose of trying to review some strategies that fall under the fight against the drugs, are based basically on the fact that some of the most immediate experiences we have seen in region are experiences that have had to call upon the extreme fight of the war on drugs. Costa Rica doesn't have an army. And since we don't want to found an army, we do not want to allow ourselves to come to war scenarios to face drug smuggling or organized crime.

Many times, the journalists ask me, how has Costa Rica done to face such a big threat when you don't have an army and precisely the countries next to you do have an army? But curiously enough, Costa Rica has demonstrated that we have been more effective and more successful in fighting against these threats precisely without having an army. And what am I going to with this? That what we're looking for, for a while now, is precisely the signals that the Obama administration is sending in the sense that effective policy for the fight against drugs and narcotraffic goes through the strengthening of the institutions, through prevention, through open society, a more transparent society, and through a citizenship that is much more aware of the problem.

It seems to me that advancing in that direction is precisely advancing in the correct direction.

President Obama. All right. Mark Felsenthal of Reuters. Mark.

Syria

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Madam President. Mr. President, on Syria, you said yesterday that anything the United States does should make the situation better, not worse. How long are you prepared to wait to determine whether chemical weapons were used? What happens when you make your determination? And will you take your case to the United Nations? And have you ruled out putting U.S. troops on the ground in Syria?

President Obama. Well, first all, I emphasized yesterday, so let me reemphasize: We're not waiting. We're not standing by. We are currently the largest humanitarian donor to deal with the crisis in Syria. We are the largest contributor to—of nonlethal aid to the opposition. We've mobilized 80 countries to support the opposition. We are working to apply every pressure point that we can on Syria, working with our international partners.

And so we are actively engaged on a day-to-day basis to try to deal with this crisis and to restore a Syria that is respectful of the rights and aspirations of the Syrian people.

Now, as I've said before, if in fact we see strong evidence that we can present and that allows us to say that the Syrian military and the Syrian Government is using chemical weapons, then that is a game changer for us because, not only is there the prospect of widespread use of chemical weapons inside of Syria, but there's the possibility that it lands in the hands of organizations like Hizballah.

We have evidence that chemical weapons have been used. We don't know when, where, or how they were used. We are initiating on our own to investigate and get a better handle on the facts inside of Syria. We're also working with the international community and our partners to try to get a better handle on what's happening, and we've already gone to the United Nations to say we want a full-blown investigation inside of Syria. So far, for unsurprising reasons, President Asad has resisted.

We will stay on this. Now, if in fact there's the kind of systematic use of chemical weapons inside of Syria, we expect that we're going to

get additional further evidence. And at that point, absolutely, we will present that to the international community, because I think this is, again, not just an American problem, this is a world problem. There are international rules and protocols and norms and ethics. And when it comes to using chemical weapons, the entire world should be concerned.

Now, in terms of what that means in terms of American action, keep in mind, we're already taking a whole range of actions. We're going to continue to take a whole range of actions. Separate and apart from the chemical weapon use, we've got tens of thousands of people who are being killed inside of Syria, and we want to see that stopped for humanitarian reasons, but also for strategic reasons.

But in terms of any additional steps that we take, it's going to be based on, number one, the facts on the ground. Number two, it's going to be based on what's in the interest of the American people and our national security. And as President of the United States, I'm going to make those decisions based on the best evidence and after careful consultation, because when we rush into things, when we leap before we look, then not only do we pay a price, but oftentimes, we see unintended consequences on the ground. So it's important for us to do it right. And that's exactly what we're doing right now. Okay?

Drug Trafficking/Central America-U.S. Relations

Q. Last question on behalf of Costa Rica, from Alvaro—[*inaudible*]. Good afternoon, President Obama. Good afternoon, Madam President. President Obama, 10 years ago, you were about to begin—you were about to come to the Senate. Ten years have gone by and Central America has lost more than 130,000 lives caused by drugs traffic. This has been the sacrifice that the region has had because of this problem. What is the sacrifice that in your 4 years of government you pretend to undertake for this business that feeds on the profit that are produced especially by the consumption in your country? And if the United States also believes that the best option is to use warships to be able to surveil or keep a watch on the seas on the joint antinarcotic drug war?

And, Madam President, you have also expressed the values that the Government of Costa Rica has with the Government of the United States and your point of view with the President Obama, for example, on the subject of the international trade of weapons—of fire weapons. You say that President Obama said the time has come to recognize the rights for the bisexual couples of the United States. When is the time going to come for that in Costa Rica?

President Obama. Well, I think all of us recognize the pain and hardship that's been caused by drug trafficking and transnational drug cartels here in Central America. There's a cost obviously in the United States as well. I mean, it's not as if we don't have tragic drug problems throughout the United States. And when you look at poor communities inside of the United States, including communities in my hometown of Chicago, there are young people who are killed every day as part of the drug trade.

So this is not a situation where we do not feel the effects. There are common effects, and there are common responsibilities, which is why it's so important that we work on this on a regional basis.

Now, since I've been President, we've put our money where our mouth is. I've spent—or my administration has spent approximately $30 billion in reducing drug demand in the United States over the last several years. And we're actually seeing an impact in terms of reduced demand. But the United States is a big country and a big market, and so progress sometimes is slower than we'd like it to be.

There is obviously a role for law enforcement. I'm not interested in militarizing the struggle against drug trafficking. This is a law enforcement problem. And if we have effective law enforcement cooperation and coordination, and if we build up capacity for countries in Central America, then we can continue to make progress.

But the important thing that I've tried to emphasize throughout is that this is a common

problem. This is one where we'll only solve it when we're working together. It has adverse effects in all of our countries. But—last point I'd make—I think it's very important to make sure that our bilateral relationship and the United States relationship with the region as a whole is not solely defined by this problem. Because when it is, we're missing all the opportunities that exist out there.

When I got off the plane, I was greeted by Dr. Chang, obviously a well-known scientist here, who worked at NASA and is working now on developing a whole new vision for clean energy, and he brought along four young people, these incredibly talented young people who are in their last year of high school here. And all four of them, thanks to some of the good work of our Ambassador and others, will be attending universities in the United States next fall.

And when you talk to those young people, there's incredible hope and incredible promise and incredible optimism. And I don't want every story to be about drug traffickers and nobody is writing a story about those four young people and what they represent in terms of the future of Costa Rica and the future of this region.

President Chinchilla. Every nation or every society has its own way of evolving towards the responses that have to be provided to the different demands of the social groups and of the different collectiveness that a country might have.

And when we analyze the evolution of the different nations, we see how some of them have advanced a little more acceleratedly and to subjects maybe of commitment towards the environment, in subjects, for example, for the control of some important aspects in the subject of protection of human life, like for example, the subject of the control of the fire weapons. And others are advancing furthermore in the recognition of certain rights, among them like the one that you have mentioned, the rights of the couples of the same sex.

The important thing, Alvaro, is that we cannot simply pass on or go beyond the rhythm or the evolution of the debates from one nation to another. Each one of the nations has its own rhythm. The important thing here, I believe—and what is of worth here—is that in Costa Rica the framework precisely of democracy that has characterized us, the debate has to be an open debate, a live debate, an active debate—a debate like the one that I have in qualifying it—that has to take place with the greatest of respect without putting a stigmas on the different positions that are proper to the debates that take place in a democracy.

And only the mature, ripened, seasoned debate will end up giving the result that will have to give—be given where it has to be given, which is inside the Parliament. So it seems to me that that is what is important, that the debate in Costa Rica is an open debate, a free debate that has to continue as a debate without restrictions.

That is why I have advocated and restated opportunities in my recent report to the nation that this is a dialogue that has been faced sometimes inconveniently on some positions that take sides. And as long as this is faced in this way, I think that the advancement is going to be very slow. I hope and I trust that the debate might really be a much more balanced, much more mature dialogue, without putting stigmas on it, and that this might eventually generate a decision in the Congress of the Republic.

President Obama. Okay, last question. Lisa [Lisa Lerer, Bloomberg News].

Syria/Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Leahy is pushing for a bill on recognizing same-sex couples as part of the immigration bill. Are you concerned at all that that undermines the success of the package? And given that you made a point throughout your Presidency to make clear that you don't think LGTB Americans should be treated any differently, will you sign a bill that will do exactly that?

And for you, Madam President, is there any concern that the more—that by creating more stringent immigration standards could hamper the ability of Costa Ricans to emigrate to the U.S.? Thanks.

President Obama. Lisa, I hope you don't mind, before I answer your question, I want to get back to Mark because I realize there was one clause in your question—sometimes, you guys have a lot of clauses in your question—that I didn't specifically answer, and I didn't want anybody to extrapolate from that.

You asked about boots on the ground and whether we've ruled boots out on the ground in Syria. As a general rule, I don't rule things out as Commander in Chief, because circumstances change, and you want to make sure that I always have the full power of the United States at our disposal to meet American national security interests.

Having said that, I do not foresee a scenario in which boots on the ground in Syria, American boots on the ground in Syria, would not only be good for America, but also would be good for Syria. And by the way, when I consult with leaders in the region who are very much interested in seeing President Asad leave office and stabilizing the situation in Syria, they agree with that assessment.

So just wanted to make sure that my omission there did not turn into a story.

To your question, Lisa, as I've indicated, I've got four broad criteria for immigration reform. I want to make sure that our border is secure and well regulated, in part so that we can get down to the business of smoothing trade and commerce across our borders and creating jobs in the United States, but also making sure that negative actors aren't able to penetrate the United States.

Number two, cracking down on employers who are breaking the law. Number three, making sure we've got a legal immigration system that works better, smarter, and so that we can continue to attract the best and the brightest to the United States.

And by the way, when it comes to legal immigration, the issue here is not going to be stringency, per se, the issue is do we make the system more rational, more effective, better. If there are smart engineers and young people and scientists who—and students who are looking to emigrate to the United States from Costa Rica, then we want them to know that we're a nation of immigrants. But we want to make sure that the legal process is in place so that it's easier and simpler, but also more effective in managing the legal immigration process.

And finally, that we've got a pathway so that the 11 million or so undocumented workers inside the United States are able to pursue a tough, long, difficult, but fair path to legal status and citizenship.

So those are my broad-based criteria. Now, the provision that you've discussed that Senator Leahy has talked about is one that I support, and I've said in the past that the LGBT community should be treated like everybody else. That's, to me, the essential, core principle behind our founding documents, the idea that we're all created equal and that we're equal before the law and it's applied fairly to everybody.

And so Senator Leahy may present this provision in committee. It may be presented on the floor. It will be one of many amendments and provisions that are presented, some of which I'll support, some of which I'll think are really bad ideas. And I think that the general principle for me is, are we advancing, are we improving the immigration system? Because ultimately, this is an immigration bill.

And we'll evaluate the end product. I think it's premature for me to start talking about what I will or will not do before I get a final product since the road is going to be long and bumpy before I finally see an actual bill on my desk. But I can tell you, I think that the provision is the right thing to do.

I can also tell you that I'm not going to get everything I want in this bill. Republicans are not going to get everything that they want in this bill. But if we keep focused on what our main aim is here, which is creating a smart, effective immigration system that allows us to be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, then we're going to be in a position to not only improve our economy and what's happening inside the United States, I—we're going to, I think, have a much stronger relationship with the region. And that's going to help enhance our economy and jobs and our growth over the long term.

And, last point I'll make, as is true with every bill, if there are things that end up being left out in this bill or things that I want to take out of a bill, but if it's meeting those core criteria around a comprehensive immigration bill that I'm looking for, then we go back at it, and we fix what's not there, and we continually improve what's been presented.

I think that this comprehensive immigration bill has the opportunity to do something historic that we have not done in decades. But I don't expect that, after we're finished with it, that people are going to say, there's not a single problem that we have with our immigration system, any more than is true after any piece of legislation that we pass. All right?

Well, thank you very much everybody. *Muchas gracias*.

President Chinchilla. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:55 p.m. at the National Center for Art and Culture. In his remarks, the President referred to Franklin Chang Diaz, president and chief executive officer, Ad Astra Rocket Company; Bryan Badilla, Katherine Fernandez, John Junier, and Genesis Soto, recipients of the Franklin Chang Scholarship to study in the U.S. as part of the 100,000 Strong in the Americas exchange initiative; and U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica Anne Slaughter Andrew. He also referred to the Central American Integration System (SICA). President Chinchilla and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Dinner for Central American Integration System Leaders in San Jose
May 3, 2013

[*The President's remarks were joined in progress.*]

——during this visit. And I want to thank you for your thoughtful presentation about some of the agenda items that we need to address.

We last met as a group during the Summit of the Americas in 2009. And I was mentioning that at that time, I had less gray hair than you see today. I know that the United States is technically here in our observer status, and sometimes, that means that you observe, but don't speak, so I know that you're all indulging me by allowing to say a few words. But I am here, more than anything, to listen and hear the concerns that all of you have not only individually, but collectively as a region.

This is a region that has more than 40 million people. Every day they work to give their families and children a better life, and we're grateful for the strong bonds between the United States and the people who trace their origins to the countries that are represented at this table.

As governments, our job is to make sure that we're doing everything we can to provide security and opportunity and ladders for success and prosperity for our people: economic growth that creates jobs, security for people so that they can be safe in their own neighborhoods, and development that allows people to live in dignity. And so that's why we're here.

The agenda is a broad-based, socially inclusive agenda that ensures that our entire region and hemisphere are prospering. And in pursuit of that, I think some of the issues that President Chinchilla mentioned are going to be vital.

Number one, we need to think about investments in our infrastructure—roads, bridges, border crossings, customs, electricity grids—all of which can allow for more trade, more growth, more jobs. As I mentioned as we were walking in, this is a very competitive global environment. And it's important for us to recognize that if the hemisphere is working effectively together, all of us benefit. And if we're not, then we will lose in that competition to other regions. And we know that trade and

investment flows to areas where there are strong public institutions, where there's accountability and transparency and effective governance. And I think one of the things that we need to talk about is how we can work together to help each other in those areas.

The second area that has been mentioned is energy. Costa Rica has shown great leadership in clean energy. And as somebody who believes in the challenges of climate change—and I think that everybody in Central America has to be concerned about that given the history of natural disasters and the severe costs that take place here. We want to continue to pursue a whole range of energy strategies for the future: solar, wind, hydropower. It is true that the United States has been making great progress in oil and natural gas development due to new technologies. And I know that's something that's of interest to you, so that's an area that we can discuss.

But the bottom line is, my concern is helping every country at this table reduce its energy costs, making its economy more efficient, because when you have high power costs, that's not only a tax on your citizens effectively, but it's also a situation that impedes growth over the long term. And so that's an area where we're very interested in helping.

Investing in people: In this knowledge-based economy, if we don't have the best workers in the world, the most highly skilled and trained workers in the world, then we're going to lose. And it's important to recognize that we need high-skilled labor throughout the hemisphere, because our economies have become more integrated. And if you look at that global value chain, we want to be not at the bottom, but we want to be nearer to the top because that means more prosperity for our people. So everything we can do to train our young people in math, science, technology, and everything we can do to pool our resources to help achieve those goals, I think, will end up benefiting everybody.

And by the way, I think it's very important, those countries that are succeeding are investing in the development of their young people, not just some young people, but women and girls, indigenous communities. It's important that we don't go onto the field with just half our team. We've got to make sure that the entire team is on the field. That's how we're going to succeed.

And then finally, the issue of citizen security, obviously, that's something that's important. During this trip I've tried to make the point that we are interested in cooperating with every country around issues of citizen security. We know what a major toll it's taken. We are obviously deeply concerned about narcotrafficking and the drug trade.

I was asked a question about this in a press conference that President Chinchilla and I were doing, and the questioner suggested, given all the violence that is taking place in Central America, how does America feel about that? And I had to remind people that we have violence in the United States. If you go to my hometown of Chicago, and you go to some neighborhoods, they're just as violent, if not more violent, than some of the countries at this table, in part because of the pernicious influence of the drug trade.

And so—but what I also believe is that we can't just have a law-enforcement-only approach. We also have to have a prevention approach. We have to have an education approach. We have to think creatively, because obviously, some of the things that we're doing have worked, but some things haven't worked. We've got to think about institution building and capacity in our law enforcement and our judicial systems. Those are all going to be very important, and I know that the work that we've done together has made some progress, but I'm interested in learning more about other things that we can do.

So I've spoken long enough considering I'm an observer, but I just want to again say thank you to all of you for taking the time to come meet with me. I know that all of you are extraordinarily busy and have great demands on your time. So for you to come in is something that I'm very grateful for, and I'm looking forward to a good discussion.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:40 p.m. in the foyer of the National Theater. In his remarks, he referred to President Laura Chinchilla Miranda of Costa Rica.

The President's Weekly Address
May 4, 2013

Hi, everybody. Today I'm speaking to you from the road, a trip to Mexico and Costa Rica. I'm here because Latin America represents an incredible opportunity for the United States, especially when it comes to my top priority as President, which is creating good, middle class jobs.

On Friday, we learned that our businesses created another 176,000 jobs last month. And that's 2.2 million new jobs over the past year and 6.8 million new jobs over the past 38 months. But as I've said before, I won't be satisfied until everyone who wants a job can find one. So I'm going to keep doing everything I can and go everywhere I need to go to help our businesses create jobs.

Now, one of the best ways to grow our economy is to sell more goods and services made in America to the rest of the world. And that includes our neighbors to the south. Right now over 40 percent of our exports go to the Americas. And those exports are growing faster than our trade with the rest of the world. And that's why I visited Latin America this week, to work with leaders to deepen our economic ties and expand trade between our nations.

In Mexico, I also talked about immigration reform because that's an important issue that affects both our countries. The truth is, right now our border with Mexico is more secure than it's been in years. We've put more boots on that border than at any time in our history, and illegal crossings are down by nearly 80 percent from their peak in 2000. But we've got more to do, not just to secure the border, but to fix an immigration system that is badly broken.

In recent weeks, we've seen a commonsense immigration reform bill introduced in the Senate. This bill is a compromise, which means that nobody got everything they wanted, including me. But it's largely consistent with the principles I've laid out from the beginning.

It would continue to strengthen security at our borders and hold employers more accountable if they knowingly hire undocumented workers. It would provide a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million individuals who are already living in this country illegally. And it would modernize our legal immigration system so that we're able to reunite families and attract the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers who will help create good paying jobs and grow our economy.

These are all commonsense steps that the majority of Americans support. So there's no reason that immigration reform can't become a reality this year.

In the meantime, I'll keep working with our neighbors on our common security and our common prosperity. Millions of Americans earn a living right now because of the trade between our nations. And after this week, I'm as confident as ever that we can build on our shared heritage and values to open more markets for American businesses and create more jobs for American workers.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 10:10 a.m. on May 3 at the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, Mexico, for broadcast on May 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 3, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 4.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at INCAE Business School's Central American Forum on Sustainable Economic Development in San Jose, Costa Rica

May 4, 2013

President Obama. Well, thank you so much, Mr. Condo. And once again, I want to thank President Chinchilla and all the people of Costa Rica for their incredible hospitality. I've already been scouting out where I'm going to stay when I come back here for vacation. [*Laughter*] But unfortunately, I'm going to have to leave after this forum.

But Arturo and I were discussing backstage the fact that INCAE, which has such a wonderful reputation throughout the region—I know we have two former alumni who now are Presidents of Panama and Guatemala, respectively—that the origination of this idea was when President Kennedy visited 50 years ago and, I think, recognized at that time the enormous potential for the private sector as a critical ingredient in progress and development for the hemisphere as a whole; that when you combined good government with a thriving free market, then that was an extraordinary recipe for opportunity for all people.

And for me to be able to visit 50 years later and to see how much progress has been made both in the region and in the ties between the United States and Central America, I think, indicates that President Kennedy's vision was sound, and it also speaks to, I think, the importance of us continuing to build these kinds of networks and relationships for the future.

I've been interviewed several times during the course of my travels both in Mexico and Central America, and I've emphasized that, although I understand why there's been a great focus over the last several years on security issues—security is important; it's very hard to create a strong economy when people are personally feeling insecure. There's been a lot of emphasis on immigration, and I understand why that is. Obviously, it's of great importance to this region and to the United States. We shouldn't lose sight of the critical importance of trade and commerce and business to the prospects both for Costa Rica, the United States, and the entire hemisphere.

The United States considers our trading relationships with CAFTA countries, with Mexico, to be of enormous importance. When you look at the scale of business that's being done currently, it's creating jobs in the United States, it's creating jobs here. And what we want to do is to find ways that we can continue to enhance that relationship, how we can get ideas from this region and find ways in which we can improve and foster small-business development, medium-sized business development, make this entire region more competitive.

Because, as I said to the leaders of SICA yesterday, we now live in a very competitive 21st-century world, and if we do not have effective integration in our hemisphere, if we don't have the best education systems, the best regulatory systems, if we don't coordinate our activities, then we're going to fall behind other regions of the world. And given the talents that I've seen on display and that are evident here, I'm confident that we can compete as long as we're cooperating effectively.

So again, I want to thank President Chinchilla for the great hospitality. I want to congratulate INCAE for its wonderful history. And I look forward to taking a few questions, and maybe I'll hear some ideas in this meeting.

INCAE Business School President Arturo Condo. Absolutely. And thanks a lot for your words.

[*At this point, Mr. Condo made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Finally, let me borrow your words, President Obama. Thinking and working for a truly integrated Central America is our "audacity of hope." The United States is literally a union of 50 countries, working together as one. We can dream of Central America as one single mar-

ket, as one single energy system, one single society. We will be bold in working to make that a reality.

Well, thank you very much.

And with that briefing, I would like to open—we have some time for questions and answers. And I would like to take some questions for what is a historic opportunity. Can you please identify yourself and state your question?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Condo. Can you—Alberto, can you wait until we get the microphone close?

Border Security and Efficiency

Q. Good morning. Alberto Aleman, former—[*inaudible*]—both freight and security. Our borders are slow and impede the development and impact of freedom of commerce, creating fewer product options and higher prices for our consumers in the U.S.A. The U.S. appears to have made tremendous advances in maintaining and improving speed, while also ensure security on its land border. What has been the most valuable for the U.S. in advancing safe and efficient border policy? And what will the U.S. recommend to the Central American countries to move towards a safe and efficient borders that we need?

President Obama. Well, there's no doubt that we've made progress. More progress needs to be made in improving border security and facilitating speed and efficiency when it comes to trade and commerce.

And those two things go hand in hand. Both in the United States and on the other side of the border in Mexico, as well as our northern border with Canada, a lot of the press focus is on security and immigration. But one of the arguments that we've made in pursuit of comprehensive immigration reform is that you can't separate out the dangers or challenges or concerns of a border from the enormous opportunities that a well-managed, well-regulated border represents.

And so my administration's focus has been, number one, let's make sure that we've got a sound system of immigration, customs, and a regulatory environment, in cooperation with Canada and Mexico, that as much as possible eases the flow of goods and people and services that are legitimate.

So, for example, in the North America Leadership Summit that I have with the Mexican President and the Canadian President, a lot of our work centers around how can we continue to find ways to synchronize existing regulations so that we can speed up the movement of goods and services. Are there ways in which there are regular, frequent trading practices that are going on between the countries, where we essentially are able to put them on a fast lane, as opposed to the more typical travel for tourists or sporadic visitors? And so that regulatory coordination, I think, is number one.

Number two is infrastructure. The fact of the matter is, is that we have massive borders both to the south and to the north, and in order for us to make sure that we're facilitating trade and commerce, we've got to have the best infrastructure, the best portals through which people can go in a efficient, effective, and systematic way that still allows for us to preserve our security and screen out those problematic elements that might cross our borders.

And one of the things that I've been talking to President Peña Nieto about on our southern border is, are there ways that we can do more joint infrastructure investment at a time when all countries—not just the United States and Mexico, but I'm sure Costa Rica and Guatemala and Panama—we're always trying to find money somewhere. And when it comes to the border, they're shared. Are there ways in which we can share some of the costs for continual infrastructure upgrades?

But the bottom line is, it's both the hardware—the infrastructure—but also the software—the regulation—that's going to make sure that you've got an effective border system.

Comprehensive immigration reform—that I'm hopeful we can pass this year, after 30 years—can make an enormous difference in improving what is already a system that's better than it was.

But I want to echo what Arturo said about the Central American countries. And this is not

unique, by the way, to Central America. You see this in other parts of the world, like in Africa, for example. Sometimes, it's easier to transport goods from parts of Central America to the United States than it is from one Central American country to another. The same is true in parts of Africa, where it's easier to ship something to Europe than it is to the country right next door.

And to think about working with the Inter-American Development Bank, with the United States, with other partners, how do we build the kind of connectivity and emphasize internal integration and trade and markets, that's going to strengthen you. That will put you in a more effective position to compete in world markets, and it will allow you then to interface with Mexico and the United States and Colombia and other parts of the hemisphere. Because what I said to the SICA leaders yesterday was, the more integrated we are, the more effective we're going to compete internationally.

But that's going to require some investment. I just want to emphasize, it's not just building the road or the bridge or the port. It's also having the regulatory structures that make those work.

Mr. Condo. Thank you very much. Another question. Paula.

Early Childhood Education

Q. Good morning. My name is Paula Roberts. And I am a Central American from Costa Rica, and I am also an MBA student from INCAE. My question is in relation with early childhood support. There is strong consensus in Central America that has been validated by the IDB and INCAE that early childhood support is one of the best investments our countries can make. Yet we are still struggling, trying to provide primary and secondary education coverage to the entire population, and even this is pushing the boundaries of our budgets. So my question is, how can—or how should countries invest in this without sacrificing gains in other areas? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, I'll just say very briefly that all the science shows that effective, high-quality early childhood education pays more dividends than almost anything else you can do educationally. Because if children get a good start, if they're read to and their vocabulary is expanding and they're taught their numbers and their colors and all the basic building blocks, then they're much more likely to succeed. And that's true in the United States; that's true here in Central America.

So the way we think about early childhood education is not just as an add-on to our overall education policy. What we're trying to argue in my administration is, this is part of our entire education strategy. It starts when the child is born, and increasingly, in this knowledge-based economy, it's going to continue even after people have graduated from college; they're going to have to continue learning.

You're right that paying for it is difficult and quality control is difficult. Good-quality early childhood education is not just babysitting. It's having trained professionals who know how to stimulate very young children to give them the preparation that they need, which means setting up training programs and making sure they're adequately paid.

And in terms of financing, in my State of the Union—because in the United States, by the way, we don't have the kind of early childhood education system that I think we should have. And when you compare what we do to some of the more advanced countries in the OECD, we're not where I want us to be. So what I did in the State of the Union was propose that we impose an additional Federal tax on cigarettes in order to pay for an expansion for high-quality, universal, early childhood education. You get the dual benefit of reducing smoking, which saves on our health care costs at the same time as we're able to improve early childhood education.

Now, whether we're going to be able to get that passed or not, I don't know. It's always a struggle to get new revenue for worthy endeavors, but there's no bigger bang for the buck that you can get than making this investment in early childhood education. So I'm going to keep on arguing for it forcefully.

[*President Laura Chinchilla Miranda of Costa Rica made brief remarks.*]

Mr. Condo. Thank you very much, Madam President. The youth, we have a businessman from the energy sector.

Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources and Technologies/Energy Infrastructure/Regional Integration

Q. Hello. Thank you. Hi. My name is Alejandro Brenes. I'm the founder of an energy company, Central American, a global shaper. Central America has significant renewable energy resources. Our economies are bashed by the volatility of oil energy prices, because our renewables take longer to put on line, also delays and local oppositions are taking us in a defaultist state that we're using more fossil fuel, taking us farther from our original goal of a more sustainable energy mix.

And on top of that, we have earthquakes and frequent severe weather that makes our electrical system vulnerable. Saying that, how can we accelerate investment in more sustainable energy? And what are the opportunities and possible role of the U.S. and U.S. companies to work with Central America and to advance in a more sustainable energy mix that the region needs and to reduce the volatility of our electrical system? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, I have to say that all of the SICA leaders that I met with yesterday emphasized this issue of energy. President Perez, President Martinelli, and President Chinchilla all focused on the fact that electricity costs here in Central America may cost three times as much as they do in Washington, DC, and that's a huge structural disadvantage for businesses and families in the region. So this is something you're going to have to fix.

Now, the good news is that you've already made enormous progress in renewable energies in ways that, in fact, are well in advance of what other parts of the world are doing. The fact that Costa Rica is already getting 90 percent of your energy from renewable sources is a great achievement, and it means that you've got technology and expertise and a tradition of renewable energy in the region that you need to build on.

And what the United States can do, I think the most helpful thing we can do is work with you—because we have a common goal of creating more renewable energy sources—let's collaborate on research, technology. Let's network companies that are advancing new renewable energy strategies and see if we can have more joint ventures and projects. Because it's my view that if any of us find good answers to renewable energy, that will spread like wildfire, and everybody will ultimately benefit. It almost doesn't matter where the innovations occur, because they'll be readily transferable around the world.

What I also understand is, is that we're not going to immediately be able to transition off of traditional sources of energy—fossil fuels like oil and gas—and even Costa Rica, it's getting a lot of renewable energy, but it's still got to make up that difference, and that's going to be a transition for all countries over the next 20, 30 years.

And it's true that because of the extraordinary advances in technology that we've made in the United States, we are likely to be a net natural gas exporter as soon as 2020. And so one of the things that I've discussed with your Presidents is, how can we potentially use that as a bridging mechanism? I've got to make a decision—an executive decision broadly about whether or not we export liquefied natural gas at all. But I can assure you that once I make that decision, then factoring in how we can use that to facilitate lower costs in the hemisphere and in Central America will be on my agenda.

The last point—which Arturo mentioned, but I can't emphasize enough—whether you're talking about traditional energy sources, renewable energy, setting up structures and regulatory regimes for creating economies of scale and efficiencies are critical.

I was mentioning that in California, the utilities, when they produce energy during nonpeak hours, they ship it across the border down to Mexico. When they have peak hours, they bring that energy back to California. And because of not only the technology, but also the

laws that are in place, that saves consumers money on both sides of the border.

And given the small size of many Central American countries, it's critical to create a regional market. And that's not just transmission lines. It's also having the rules in place that allow the free flow of energy back and forth.

People get nervous about that, because they're worried, well, Panama is going to steal my electricity, and then Costa Rica, I don't know, maybe they're going to poach some of our power. But the truth of the matter is, is that everybody stands to benefit.

And we'll work with the Inter-American Development Bank. We put forward—I think it was last year—maybe it was the year before, when we initiated Connect 2022—and so our goal is to use whatever convening power we have to network with the private sector as well as the public sector to find ways to enhance that integration. If you can solve this problem, it will free up resources for early childhood education, it will put money in the pockets of consumers, and the economic benefits will be extraordinary.

So we look forward to partnering with you on that issue.

[*President Chinchilla made brief remarks.*]

Education/Budgetary Priorities/Opportunities for Women and Girls

Mr. Condo. Let me take advantage of my position now. Let me ask you—both of you—a follow-up question to—on the early childhood point; we all agree it's critical. As you mentioned in—that what was called a *consulta* in San Jose in 2008, that was the top social investment that could have been made for Latin America in general: early childhood.

You mentioned, President Obama, it's hard for everyone to gather the fiscal resources to invest in these innovative, very valuable—socially valuable—programs. How do you go about, in both of your experiences, creating such social demand or social support for missions like that that imply greater resources and the need for greater resources?

President Obama. Well, first of all, at least in the United States, and I'm almost certain—I haven't looked at the polling, but I'm sure it's true in Central America—selling people on the importance of education is not difficult. People understand—even those who don't have an education understand—that in this economy, if we don't have a highly skilled, highly trained workforce, then we'll lose. And I think every parent has aspirations for their children to do even better than they did. And the only way that's going to happen is, is if they're getting an excellent education.

So I think generally, the issue is not going to be, will there be social demand. I think, number one, it's making sure that education reforms are in place so that we are using the money that we have as effectively as possible.

In the United States, what we found is, is that sometimes, money in schools are not well spent. And our schools—we've had public schools for a very long time, but many of them were designed back in the 1800s in a largely agricultural society; now the needs are different, and we've got to adapt. We also have new tools, like the use of technology and distance learning, that can reduce costs and improve outcomes.

We have to spend a lot of time focusing on teacher quality and training teachers so that they're up to speed on the best practices to improve learning.

And—but I think it is actually easy to get public support around education. What's harder is to, A, make sure that the money is well spent, and B, recognize that, as is true for businesses, it's also true for governments, you have to prioritize, and you have to decide, all right, if we're going to spend more money on early education, then we're going to have to either increase revenue through taxation or we're going to have to stop doing some other things that are less important. And that's part of what democracy is about, is having that debate.

But one last point I want to make about education: A lot of studies have shown that the single best indicator of a country's development and advancement is how does it treat its girls. If you are not educating half the population, if

you're not using all the opportunities—or providing opportunities for all the girls in your country, you will fall behind. And it's been said before, the advantage of when you're giving a good education to girls is you're also going to be educating the children of the moms.

And so making sure that social equity and gender equity is built into our education agenda—especially around things like math and science and engineering, where traditionally, a lot of times, young girls are discouraged because it's viewed somehow as not their subjects—that's something that we're spending a lot of time on. And we'd be happy to collaborate with SICA and other organizations to find ways that we can make sure that we're encouraging young women are getting the exact same opportunities as young men are getting.

Mr. Condo. Thank you. Well, we need to wrap up due to our short time constraints. But I'd like to hear from President Chinchilla first and then President Obama maybe some closing remarks and parting words.

[*President Chinchilla made brief remarks*.]

President Obama. Well, again, I just want to thank this wonderful institution and the people of Costa Rica, as well as President Chinchilla, for giving me this wonderful opportunity to interact with outstanding business leaders and civil society leaders.

The main message that I have is that the United States recognizes, our fates are tied up with your success. We want to be a partner. I've said this before—and I will repeat—we don't think there are senior partners or junior partners in that partnership. I think it's a partnership based on equality and mutual respect and mutual interest. If you are doing well, we will do better. And if we're doing well, we think your situation improves.

And so, through all the various forums that we have, let's continue to build. And let's recognize that in this global economy that we now live in that for us to be successful, we're going to have to further integrate, and it's—we're going to have to use not just the powers of governments—government-to-government relations—it's going to be people to people, business to business. It's going to be networks. It's going to be private sector, public sector, nonfor-profits all working together around common goals.

And I think this forum is a extraordinary opportunity to build on the talents of a lot of people from a lot of sectors around the region. We look forward to working with you. We look forward to partnering with you. And I have to say, this visit has made me extraordinarily optimistic about not just the future of the United States and the future of Central America, but the entire hemisphere.

So thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at the Old Customs House. In his remarks, he referred to Arturo Condo, president, Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE); President Ricardo Berrocal Martinelli of Panama; President Otto Fernando Perez Molina of Guatemala; President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico; and Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada. He also referred to the Central American Integration System (SICA). A participant referred to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). President Chinchilla spoke in Spanish, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter, but no transcript was provided.

Statement on the Observance of Orthodox Easter
May 4, 2013

This weekend, Michelle and I extend our best wishes to members of the Orthodox Christian community here in America and around the world as they observe Holy Friday and the Feast of the Resurrection.

For millions of Orthodox Christians, this is a joyful time. But it's also a reminder of the sacrifice Christ made so that we might have eternal life. His decision to choose love in the face of hate, hope in the face of despair, is an

example we should always strive to follow. But it's especially important to remember this year, as members of the Orthodox community have been confronted with persecution and violence, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. For centuries, the region and the world has been enriched by the contributions of Orthodox communities in countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

As a nation, we reaffirm our commitment to protecting universal human rights, including the freedom of religion. And in this season of hope and restoration, we celebrate the transformational power of sacrificial love.

Commencement Address at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio
May 5, 2013

The President. Thank you. Hello, Buckeyes! O–H!

Audience members. I–O!

The President. O–H!

Audience members. I–O!

The President. O–H!

Audience members. I–O!

The President. Well, thank you so much. Everybody, please be seated. Thank you, Dr. Gee, for the wonderful introduction. I suspect the good president may have edited out some other words that were used to describe me. [*Laughter*] I appreciate that. But I'm going to let Michelle know of all the good comments.

To the Board of Trustees, Congresswoman Beatty, Mayor Coleman, and all of you who make up the Ohio State University for allowing me to join you: It is an incredible honor.

And most of all, congratulations, class of 2013. And of course, congratulations to all the parents and family and friends and faculty here in the Horseshoe. This is your day as well. I've been told to ask everybody, though, please be careful with the turf. Coach Meyer has big plans for this fall. [*Laughter*]

I very much appreciate the president's introduction. I will not be singing today. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Aww. [*Laughter*]

The President. Aww. [*Laughter*] It is true that I did speak at that certain university up north a few years ago. But to be fair, you did let President Ford speak here once, and he played football for Michigan. [*Laughter*] So everybody can get some redemption.

In my defense, this is my fifth visit to campus in the past year or so. One time, I stopped at Sloppy's to grab some lunch. Many of you—Sloopy's—I know. [*Laughter*] It's Sunday, and I'm coming off a foreign trip. [*Laughter*] Anyway, so I'm at Sloopy's, and many of you were still eating breakfast. At 11:30. [*Laughter*] On a Tuesday. [*Laughter*] So to the class of 2013, I will offer my first piece of advice: Enjoy it while you can. [*Laughter*] Soon, you will not get to wake up and have breakfast at 11:30 on Tuesday. [*Laughter*] And once you have children, it gets even earlier. [*Laughter*]

But, class of 2013, your path to this moment has wound you through years of breathtaking change. You were born as freedom forced its way through a wall in Berlin, tore down an Iron Curtain across Europe. You were educated in an era of instant information that put the world's accumulated knowledge at your fingertips. And you came of age as terror touched our shores and a historic recession spread across the Nation and a new generation signed up to go to war.

So you've been tested and you've been tempered by events that your parents and I never imagined we'd see when we sat where you sit. And yet, despite all this—or perhaps because of it—yours has become a generation possessed with that most American of ideas: that people who love their country can change it for the better. For all the turmoil, for all the times you've been let down or frustrated at the hands that you've been dealt, what I have seen—what we have witnessed from your generation—is that perennial, quintessentially American value of optimism, altruism, empathy, tolerance, a sense of community, a sense of service, all of which makes me optimistic for our future.

Consider that today, 50 ROTC cadets in your graduating class will become commissioned officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force,

and Marines. A hundred and thirty of your fellow graduates have already served: some in combat, some on multiple deployments. Of the 98 veterans earning bachelor's degrees today, 20 are graduating with honors, and at least one kept serving his fellow veterans when he came home by starting up a campus organization called Vets4Vets. And as your Commander in Chief, I could not be prouder of all of you.

Consider that graduates of this university serve their country through the Peace Corps and educate our children through established programs like Teach for America, startups like Blue Engine, often earning little pay for making the biggest impact. Some of you have already launched startup companies of your own. And I suspect that those of you who pursue more education or climb the corporate ladder or enter the arts or science or journalism, you will still choose a cause that you care about in your life and you will fight like heck to realize your vision.

There is a word for this. It's citizenship. And we don't always talk about this idea much these days—citizenship—let alone celebrate it. Sometimes, we see it as a virtue from another time, a distant past, one that's slipping from a society that celebrates individual ambition above all else, a society awash in instant technology that empowers us to leverage our skills and talents like never before, but just as easily allows us to retreat from the world. And the result is that we sometimes forget the larger bonds we share as one American family.

But it's still out there, all the time, every day, especially when we need it most. Just look at the past year. When a hurricane struck our mightiest city and a factory exploded in a small town in Texas, we saw citizenship. When bombs went off in Boston and when a malevolent spree of gunfire visited a movie theater, a temple, an Ohio high school, a first-grade classroom in Connecticut, we saw citizenship. In the aftermath of darkest tragedy, we have seen the American spirit at its brightest.

We've seen the petty divisions of color and class and creed replaced by a united urge to help each other. We've seen courage and compassion, a sense of civic duty, and a recognition, we are not a collection of strangers: We are bound to one another by a set of ideals and laws and commitments and a deep devotion to this country that we love.

And that's what citizenship is. It's at the heart of our founding, that as Americans, we are blessed with God-given talents and inalienable rights, but with those rights come responsibilities: to ourselves and to one another and to future generations.

Now, if we're being honest with ourselves, as you've studied and worked and served to become good citizens, the fact is that all too often, the institutions that give structure to our society have, at times, betrayed your trust. In the runup to the financial crisis, too many on Wall Street forgot that their obligations don't end with what's happening with their shares. In entertainment and in the media, ratings and shock value often trump news and storytelling.

In Washington—well, this is a joyous occasion, so let me put it charitably—I think it's fair to say our democracy isn't working as well as we know it can. It could do better. And so those of us fortunate enough to serve in these institutions owe it to you to do better every single day.

And I've been thinking a lot lately about how we can keep this idea of citizenship in its fullest sense alive at the national level, not just on election day, not just in times of tragedy, but all the days in between. And perhaps because I spend a lot of time in Washington, I'm obsessed with this issue, because that sense of citizenship is so sorely needed there. And I think of what your generation's traits—compassion and energy and a sense of selflessness—might mean for a democracy that must adapt more quickly to keep up with the speed of technological and demographic and wrenching economic change.

I think about how we might perpetuate this notion of citizenship in a way that another politician from my home State of Illinois, Adlai Stevenson, once described patriotism: not as "short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime." That's what patriotism is. That's what citizenship is.

Now, I don't pretend to have all the answers. I'm not going to offer some grand theory on a beautiful day like this. You guys all have celebrating to do. I'm not going to get partisan, either, because that's not what citizenship is about. In fact, I'm asking the same thing of you that President Bush did when he spoke at this commencement in 2002. "America needs more than taxpayers, spectators, and occasional voters," he said. "America needs full-time citizens." And as graduates from a university—as a graduate from a university whose motto is, "Education for Citizenship," I know all of you get that this is what you've signed up for. It's what your country expects of you.

So, briefly, I'll ask for two things from the class of 2013: to participate and to persevere. After all, your democracy does not function without your active participation. At a bare minimum that means voting, eagerly and often—not having somebody drag you to it at 11:30 when you're having breakfast. [*Laughter*] It means knowing who's been elected to make decisions on your behalf and what they believe in and whether or not they delivered on what they said they would. And if they don't represent you the way you want or conduct themselves the way you expect, if they put special interests above your own, you've got to let them know that's not okay. And if they let you down often enough, there's a built-in day in November where you can really let them know it's not okay.

But participation, your civic duty, is more than just voting. You don't have to run for office yourself, but I hope many of you do, at all levels, because our democracy needs you. And I promise you, it will give you a tough skin. I know a little bit about this. President Wilson once said, "If you want to make enemies, try to change something."

And that's precisely what the Founders left us: the power—each of us—to adapt to changing times. They left us the keys to a system of self-government, the tools to do big things and important things together that we could not possibly do alone: to stretch railroads and electricity and a highway system across a sprawling continent; to educate our people with a system of public schools and land-grant colleges, including the Ohio State University; to care for the sick and the vulnerable and provide a basic level of protection from falling into abject poverty in the wealthiest nation on Earth; to conquer fascism and disease; to visit the Moon and Mars; to gradually secure our God-given rights for all of our citizens, regardless of who they are or what they look like or who they love.

We, the people, chose to do these things together because we know this country cannot accomplish great things if we pursue nothing greater than our own individual ambition.

Unfortunately, you've grown up hearing voices that incessantly warn of government as nothing more than some separate, sinister entity that's at the root of all our problems, some of these same voices also doing their best to gum up the works. They'll warn that tyranny is always lurking just around the corner. You should reject these voices because what they suggest is that our brave and creative and unique experiment in self-rule is somehow just a sham with which we can't be trusted.

We have never been a people who place all of our faith in government to solve our problems; we shouldn't want to. But we don't think the government is the source of all our problems either. Because we understand that this democracy is ours. And as citizens, we understand that it's not about what America can do for us, it's about what can be done by us, together, through the hard and frustrating, but absolutely necessary work of self-government. And, class of 2013, you have to be involved in that process.

The Founders trusted us with this awesome authority. We should trust ourselves with it too. Because when we don't, when we turn away and get discouraged and cynical and abdicate that authority, we grant our silent consent to someone who will gladly claim it. That's how we end up with lobbyists who set the agenda and policies detached from what middle class families face every day, the well connected who publicly demand that Washington stay out of their business and then whisper in government's ear for special treatment that you don't get.

That's how a small minority of lawmakers get cover to defeat something the vast majority of their constituents want. That's how our political system gets consumed by small things when we are a people called to do great things, like rebuild a middle class and reverse the rise of inequality and repair the deteriorating climate that threatens everything we plan to leave for our kids and our grandkids.

Class of 2013, only you can ultimately break that cycle. Only you can make sure the democracy you inherit is as good as we know it can be. But it requires your dedicated and informed and engaged citizenship. And that citizenship is a harder, higher road to take, but it leads to a better place. It's how we built this country: together.

It's the question that President Kennedy posed to the Nation at his Inauguration. It's the dream that Dr. King invoked. It does not promise easy success or immediate progress, but it has led to success, and it has led to progress, and it has to continue with you.

Which brings me to the second thing I ask of all of you: I ask that you persevere. Whether you start a business or run for office or devote yourself to alleviating poverty or hunger, please remember that nothing worth doing happens overnight. A British inventor named Dyson went through more than 5,000 prototypes before getting that first really fancy vacuum cleaner just right. We remember Michael Jordan's six championships; we don't remember his nearly 15,000 missed shots. As for me, I lost my first race for Congress, and look at me now: I'm an honorary graduate of the Ohio State University.

The point is, if you are living your life to the fullest, you will fail, you will stumble, you will screw up, you will fall down. But it will make you stronger, and you'll get it right the next time or the time after that or the time after that. And that is not only true for your personal pursuits, but it's also true for the broader causes that you believe in as well.

So you can't give up your passion if things don't work right away. You can't lose heart or grow cynical if there are twists and turns on your journey. The cynics may be the loudest voices, but I promise you, they will accomplish the least. It's those folks who stay at it, those who do the long, hard, committed work of change that gradually push this country in the right direction and make the most lasting difference.

So whenever you feel that creeping cynicism, whenever you hear those voices saying you can't do it, you can't make a difference, whenever somebody tells you to set your sights lower, the trajectory of this great Nation should give you hope. What generations have done before you should give you hope, because it was young people just like you who marched and mobilized and stood up and sat in to secure women's rights and voting rights and workers' rights and gay rights, often at incredible odds, often at great danger, often over the course of years, sometimes over the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime. And they never got acknowledged for it, but they made a difference.

And even if their rights were already secured, there were those who fought to secure those same rights and opportunities for others. And that should give you some hope.

Where we're going should give you hope, because while things are still hard for a lot of people, you have every reason to believe that your future is bright. You're graduating into an economy and a job market that is steadily healing. The once-dying American auto industry is on pace for its strongest performance in 20 years, something that means everything to many communities in Ohio and across the Midwest. Huge strides in domestic energy, driven in part by research at universities like this one, have us on track to secure our own energy future. Incredible advances in information and technology, spurred largely by the risk takers of your generation, have the potential to change the way we do almost everything.

There is not another country on Earth that would not gladly change places with the United States of America, and that will be true for your generation just as it was true for previous generations.

So you've got a lot to look forward to, but if there's one certainty about the decade ahead,

it's that things will be uncertain. Change will be a constant, just as it has been throughout our history. And yes, we still face many important challenges. Some will require technological breakthroughs or new policy insights. But more than anything, what we will need is political will: to harness the ingenuity of your generation and encourage and inspire the hard work of dedicated citizens; to repair the middle class; to give more families a fair shake; to reject a country in which only a lucky few prosper, because that's antithetical to our ideals and our democracy. All of this is going to happen if you are involved, because it takes dogged determination, the dogged determination of our citizens.

To educate more children at a younger age and to reform our high schools for a new time and to give more young people the chance to earn the kind of education that you did at the Ohio State University and to make it more affordable so that young people don't leave with a mountain of debt, that will take the care and concern of citizens like you.

To build better roads and airports and faster Internet and to advance the kinds of basic research and technology that's always kept America ahead of everybody else, that will take the grit and fortitude of citizens.

To confront the threat of climate change before it's too late, that requires the idealism and the initiative of citizens.

To protect more of our kids from the horrors of gun violence, that requires the unwavering passion, the untiring resolve of citizens. It will require you.

Fifty years ago, President Kennedy told the class of 1963 that "our problems are manmade—therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants." We're blessed to live in the greatest nation on Earth. But we can always be greater. We can always aspire to something more. That doesn't depend on who you elect to office. It depends on you as citizens, how big you want us to be, how badly you want to see these changes for the better.

And look at all that America has already accomplished. Look at how big we've been. I dare you, class of 2013, to do better. I dare you to dream bigger.

And from what I've seen of your generation, I'm confident that you will. And so I wish you courage and compassion and all the strength that you will need for that tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. at Ohio Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to E. Gordon Gee, president, and Urban Meyer, head football coach, Ohio State University; Richard Hayek, founder, Vets4Vets; former President George W. Bush; James Dyson, founder, Dyson Co.; and Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls.

Statement on Cinco de Mayo
May 5, 2013

Today we honor the victory of the Mexican people in their fight for freedom at the Battle of Puebla 151 years ago. On Cinco de Mayo, we celebrate the contributions and heritage of Mexican Americans and we recognize the strong cultural, familial, and economic ties that bind the United States and Mexico.

This week, I was proud to visit Mexico to reaffirm our vision for the Americas as a region of shared opportunity and prosperity. I left even more convinced that we have historic opportunities to expand trade and make our economies even more competitive so that we continue creating good jobs in both of our countries.

In Mexico, I also emphasized the need to pass commonsense immigration reform that lives up to our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, including generations of Mexican Americans who have enriched our country. Fixing our immigration system is one of my top legislative priorities, and I am hope-

ful that we can make immigration reform a reality this year.

Cinco de Mayo reminds us that America's diversity is America's strength. Today, as we celebrate the contributions and history of Mexican Americans and Hispanics in America, let us celebrate the larger story of America and our unique immigrant heritage.

The President's News Conference With President Park Geun-hye of South Korea
May 7, 2013

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat.

Let me begin by saying it is a great pleasure to welcome President Park and our friends from the Republic of Korea. Madam President, we are greatly honored that you've chosen the United States as your first foreign visit. This, of course, reflects the deep friendship between our peoples and the great alliance between our nations, which is marking another milestone. I'm told that in Korea, a 60th birthday is a special celebration of life and longevity, a *hwangab*. [*Laughter*] Well, this year, we're marking the 60th anniversary of the defense treaty between our nations.

Yesterday President Park visited Arlington National Cemetery and our memorial to our Korean war veterans. Tonight she's hosting a dinner to pay tribute to the generation of American veterans who have served in the defense of South Korea. And tomorrow she'll address a joint session of Congress, an honor that is reserved for our closest of friends.

And in this sense, this visit also reflects South Korea's extraordinary progress over these six decades: from the ashes of war to one of the world's largest economies, from a recipient of foreign aid to a donor that now helps other nations develop. And of course, around the world, people are being swept up by Korean culture, the Korean Wave. And as I mentioned to President Park, my daughters have taught me a pretty good Gangnam Style. [*Laughter*]

President Park, in your first months in office, South Korea has faced threats and provocations that would test any nation. Yet you've displayed calm and steady resolve that has defined your life. Like people around the world, those of us in the United States have also been inspired by your example as the first female President of South Korea. And today I've come to appreciate the leadership qualities for which you are known: your focus and discipline and straightforwardness. And I very much thank you for the progress that we've already made together.

Today we agreed to continue the implementation of our historic trade agreement, which is already yielding benefits for both our countries. On our side, we're selling more exports to Korea: more manufactured goods, more services, more agricultural products. Even as we have a long way to go, our automobile exports are up nearly 50 percent, and our Big Three—Ford, Chrysler, and GM—are selling more cars in Korea. And as President Park and I agreed to make sure that we continue to fully implement this agreement, we believe that it's going to make both of our economies more competitive. It will boost U.S. exports by some $10 billion in support of tens of thousands of American jobs. And obviously, it will be creating jobs in Korea as they are able to continue to do extraordinary work in expanding their economy and moving it further and further up the value chain.

We agreed to continue the clean energy partnerships that help us to enhance our energy security and address climate change. Given the importance of a peaceful nuclear energy industry to South Korea, we recently agreed to extend the existing civilian nuclear agreement between our two countries, but we also emphasized in our discussions the need to continue to work diligently towards a new agreement. As I told the President, I believe that we can find a way to support South Korea's energy and

commercial needs even as we uphold our mutual commitments to prevent nuclear proliferation.

We agreed to continuing modernizing our security alliance. Guided by our joint vision, we're investing in the shared capabilities and technologies and missile defenses that allow our forces to operate and succeed together. We are on track for South Korea to assume operational control for the alliance in 2015. And we're determined to be fully prepared for any challenge or threat to our security. And obviously, that includes the threat from North Korea.

If Pyongyang thought its recent threats would drive a wedge between South Korea and the United States or somehow garner the North international respect, today is further evidence that North Korea has failed again. President Park and South Koreans have stood firm, with confidence and resolve. The United States and the Republic of Korea are as united as ever. And faced with new international sanctions, North Korea is more isolated than ever. In short, the days when North Korea could create a crisis and elicit concessions, those days are over.

Our two nations are prepared to engage with North Korea diplomatically and, over time, build trust. But as always—and as President Park has made clear—the burden is on Pyongyang to take meaningful steps to abide by its commitments and obligations, particularly the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

And we discussed that Pyongyang should take notice of events in countries like Burma, which, as it reforms, is seeing more trade and investment and diplomatic ties with the world, including the United States and South Korea.

For our part, we'll continue to coordinate closely with South Korea and with Japan. And I want to make clear: The United States is fully prepared and capable of defending ourselves and our allies with the full range of capabilities available, including the deterrence provided by our conventional and nuclear forces. As I said in Seoul last year, the commitment of the United States to the security of the Republic of Korea will never waver.

More broadly, we agreed to continue expanding our cooperation globally. In Afghanistan—where our troops serve together and where South Korea is a major donor of development assistance—we're on track to complete the transition to Afghan-led operations by the end of next year. We discussed Syria, where both our nations are working to strengthen the opposition and plan for a Syria without Bashar Asad. And I'm pleased that our two nations—and our Peace Corps—have agreed to expand our efforts to promote development around the world.

Finally, we're expanding the already strong ties between our young people. As an engineer by training, President Park knows the importance of education. Madam President, you've said—and I'm quoting you—"We live in an age where a single individual can raise the value of an entire nation." I could not agree more. So I'm pleased that we're renewing exchange programs that bring our students together. And as we pursue commonsense immigration reform here in the United States, we want to make it easier for foreign entrepreneurs and foreign graduate students from countries like Korea to stay and contribute to our country, just as so many Korean Americans already do.

So again, thank you, President Park, for making the United States your first foreign trip. In your Inaugural Address, you celebrated the can-do spirit of the Korean people. That is a spirit that we share. And after our meeting today, I'm confident that if our two nations continue to stand together, there's nothing we cannot do together.

So, Madam President, welcome to the United States.

President Park. Let me start by thanking President Obama for his invitation and his gracious hospitality.

During my meeting with the President today, I was able to have a heart-to-heart talk with him on a wide range of common interests. I found that the two us of have a broad common view about the vision and roles that should guide the Korea-U.S. alliance as it moves forward, and I was delighted to see this.

First of all, the President and I shared the view that the Korea-U.S. alliance has been faithfully carrying out its role as a bulwark of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia and that the alliance should continue to serve as a linchpin for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Asia. In this regard, I believe it is significant that the joint declaration on the 60th anniversary of our alliance we adopted spells out the direction that our comprehensive strategic alliance should take.

Next, the President and I reaffirmed that we will by no means tolerate North Korea's threats and provocations, which have recently been escalating further, and that such actions would only deepen North Korea's isolation. The President and I noted that it is important that we continue to strengthen our deterrence against North Korea's nuclear and conventional weapons threat and shared the view that in this respect, the transition of wartime operational control should also proceed in a way that strengthens our combined defense capabilities and preparations being made toward that way as well.

We also shared the view that realizing President Obama's vision of a world without nuclear weapons should start on the Korean Peninsula, and we stated that we would continue to strongly urge North Korea—in close concert with the other members of the six-party talks and the international community—to faithfully abide by its international obligations under the September 19 joint statements and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Korea and the U.S. will work jointly to induce North Korea to make the right choice through multifaceted efforts, including the implementation of the Korean Peninsula trust-building process that I had spelled out.

I take this opportunity to once again send a clear message: North Korea will not be able to survive if it only clings to developing its nuclear weapons at the expense of its people's happiness. Concurrently pursuing nuclear arsenals and economic development can by no means succeed.

This is the shared view of the other members of the six-party talks and the international community. However, should North Korea choose the path to becoming a responsible member of the community of nations, we are willing to provide assistance, together with the international community.

We also had meaningful discussions on the economy and ways to engage in substantive cooperation. The President and I welcome the fact that the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, which went into effect 1 year ago, is contributing to our shared prosperity. We also said we will make efforts to enable our people to better feel the benefits of our free trade agreement for them.

I highlighted the importance of securing high-skilled U.S. work visas for Korean citizens and asked for executive branch support, to the extent possible, to see to it that the relevant legislation is passed in the U.S. Congress.

Moreover, we arrived at the view that the Korea-U.S. civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement should be revised into an advanced and mutually beneficial successor agreement. We said we would do our best to conclude our negotiations as soon as possible.

The President and I also had in-depth discussions on ways to enhance our global partnership. First, we noted together that Northeast Asia needs to move beyond conflict and divisions and open a new era of peace and cooperation and that there would be synergy between President's Obama's policy of rebalancing to Asia and my initiative for peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia as we pursue peace and development in the region. We shared the view about playing the role of coarchitects to flesh out this vision.

Furthermore, we decided that the Korea-U.S. alliance should deal not just with challenges relating to the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, but confronting the broader international community.

I am very delighted that I was able to build personal trust with President Obama through our summit meeting today and to have laid a framework for cooperation.

Thank you.

Syria/North Korea

President Obama. All right, we've got a couple of questions from each side, so we'll start with Stephen Collinson of AFP.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Does the United States have a core national security interest in stopping the slaughter in Syria or merely a strong moral desire to see the violence end? And at what point does the cost of not intervening in a more direct way than you have done so far outweigh the cost of doing so?

And if I may ask, President Park, President Obama's critics have warned that failing to act on perceived violations of U.S. red lines in Syria could embolden U.S. enemies elsewhere, including in North Korea. Are you convinced that Kim Jong Un has taken the U.S. and South Korean warnings seriously, and do you see the withdrawal of two missiles from a test site as a sign that he's willing to deescalate the situation?

President Obama. Well, Stephen, I think that we have both a moral obligation and a national security interest in, A, ending the slaughter in Syria, but, B, also ensuring that we've got a stable Syria that is representative of all the Syrian people and is not creating chaos for its neighbors. And that's why for the last 2 years, we have been active in trying to ensure that Bashar Asad exits the stage and that we can begin a political transition process.

That's the reason why we've invested so much in humanitarian aid. That's the reason why we are so invested in helping the opposition and why we've mobilized the international community to isolate Syria. That's why we are now providing nonlethal assistance to the opposition, and that's why we're going to continue to do the work that we need to do.

And in terms of the costs and the benefits, I think there'd be severe costs in doing nothing. That's why we're not doing nothing. That's why we are actively invested in the process. If what you're asking is, are there continuing reevaluations about what we do, what actions we take in conjunction with other international partners to optimize the day when—or to hasten the day when we can see a better situation in Syria, we've been doing that all along and we'll continue to do that.

I think that, understandably, there is a desire for easy answers. That's not the situation there. And my job is to constantly measure our very real and legitimate humanitarian and national security interests in Syria, but measuring those against my bottom line, which is what's in the best interest of America's security and making sure that I'm making decisions not based on a hope and a prayer, but on hardheaded analysis in terms of what will actually make us safer and stabilize the region.

I would note—not to answer the question that you lobbed over to President Park—that you suggested even in your question a perceived crossing of a red line. The operative word there, I guess, Stephen, is "perceived." And what I've said is that we have evidence that there has been the use of chemical weapons inside of Syria, but I don't make decisions based on "perceived." And I can't organize international coalitions around "perceived." We've tried that in the past, by the way, and it didn't work out well.

So we want to make sure that we have the best analysis possible. We want to make sure that we are acting deliberately. But I would just point out that there have been several instances during the course of my Presidency where I said I was going to do something, and it ended up getting done. And there were times when there were folks on the sidelines wondering why hasn't it happened yet and what's going on and why didn't it go on tomorrow? But in the end, whether it's bin Laden or Qaddafi, if we say we're taking a position, I would think at this point the international community has a pretty good sense that we typically follow through on our commitments.

President Park. With regard to actions towards Syria, what kind of message would that communicate to North Korea? That was the question. And recently, North Korea seems to be deescalating its threats and provocations. What seems to be behind that? You asked these two questions. In fact, North Korea is isolated at the moment, so it's hard to find anyone that could really accurately fathom the sit-

uation in North Korea. Its actions are all so very unpredictable. Hence, whether the Syrian situation would have an impact is hard to say for sure.

Why is North Korea appearing to deescalate its threats and provocations? There's no knowing for sure. But what is clear and what I believe for sure is that the international community with regard to North Korea's bad behavior, its provocations, must speak with one voice, a firm message, and consistently send a firm message that they will not stand and that North Korea's actions in breach of international norms will be met with so-and-so sanctions and measures by the international community. At the same time, if it goes along the right way, there will be so-and-so reward. So if we consistently send that message to North Korea, I feel that North Korea will be left with no choice but to change.

And instead of just hoping to see North Korea change, the international community must also consistently send that message with one voice to tell them and communicate to them that they have no choice but to change and to shape an environment where they are left with no choice but to make the strategic decision to change. And I think that's the effective and important way.

North Korea/International Diplomatic Efforts

Q. My question goes to President Park. You just mentioned that North Korea—in order to induce North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons, what is most important is the concerted actions of the international community. With regard to this, during your meeting with President Obama today, I would like to ask what was said and the views that you shared. And with regard to this, what Russia and China—the role that they're playing in terms of inducing North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons, how do you feel about that?

My next question is to President Obama. Regarding the young leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, I would appreciate your views about the leader of North Korea. And if you were to send a message to him today, what kind of message would you send to him?

President Park. With regard to the North Korea issue, Korea and the United States, as well as the international community, the ultimate objective that all of us should be adopting is for North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and to induce it to become a responsible member of the international community. This serves the interest of peace on the Korean Peninsula and the world, and it also serves the interest of North Korea's own development as well. That is my view.

And so in order to encourage North Korea to walk that path and change its perceptions, we have to work in concert. And in this regard, China's role, China's influence can be extensive, so if—so China taking part in these endeavors is important. And we shared views on that.

With regard to China and Russia's stance, I believe that China and Russia—not to mention the international community, of course—share the need for a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and are cooperating closely to induce North Korea to take the right path. In the case of China, with regard to North Korea's missile fire and nuclear testing, China has taken an active part in adopting U.N. Security Council resolutions and is faithfully implementing those resolutions.

And with regard to Russia, Russia is also firmly committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And with regard to the adoption of U.N. Security Council resolutions on North Korea, it has been very active in supporting them. And they've also sent a very—and they've also worked very hard to include a stern message to North Korea in the joint statement of the G–8 Foreign Ministers meeting. Such constructive efforts on the part of China and Russia are vital to sending a unified message to North Korea that their nuclear weapons will not stand, and encouraging and urging North Korea to make the right decision.

President Obama. Obviously, I don't know Kim Jong Un personally. I haven't had a conversation with him, can't really give you an opinion about his personal characteristics. What we do know is the actions that he's taken

that have been provocative and seem to pursue a dead end.

And I want to emphasize, President Park and myself very much share the view that we are going to maintain a strong deterrent capability, that we're not going to reward provocative behavior. But we remain open to the prospect of North Korea taking a peaceful path of denuclearization, abiding by international commitments, rejoining the international community, and seeing a gradual progression in which both security and prosperity for the people of North Korea can be achieved.

If what North Korea has been doing has not resulted in a strong, prosperous nation, then now is a good time for Kim Jong Un to evaluate that history and take a different path. And I think that, should he choose to take a different path, not only President Park and myself would welcome it, but the international community as a whole would welcome it.

And I think that China and Russia and Japan and other key players that have been participants in six-party talks have made that clear. But there's going to have to be changes in behavior. And we have an expression in English: Don't worry about what I say; watch what I do. And we're—so far at least, we haven't seen actions on the part of the North Koreans that would indicate they're prepared to move in a different direction.

Christi Parsons [Chicago Tribune].

Sexual Assault in the U.S. Armed Forces/North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Pentagon said today that there may be as many as 70 sexual assaults a day in the military—up by 35 percent during your term in office—and also that many sexual assaults may not be reported, in fact. Given what we know about an Air Force officer in charge of preventing sexual assault recently being charged with sexual assault and also the recent cases of a couple of Air Force generals who've set aside convictions of instances of sexual assault, can you speak to the culture in the U.S. military that may be at play here and talk about your response to that and what you can do going forward to improve things?

And if I may, President Park, I would ask you, yesterday you said that if North Korea does not change its behavior, we will make them pay. I wondered if you could elaborate on that comment a little bit. Thank you.

President Obama. Well, let's start with the principle that sexual assault is an outrage; it is a crime. That's true for society at large. And if it's happening inside our military, then whoever carries it out is betraying the uniform that they're wearing. And they may consider themselves patriots, but when you engage in this kind of behavior, that's not patriotic, it's a crime. And we have to do everything we can to root this out.

Now, this is not a new phenomenon. One of the things that we've been trying to do is create a structure in which we're starting to get accurate reporting. And up and down the chain, we are seeing a process, a system of accountability and transparency so that we can root this out completely.

And this is a discussion that I had with Secretary Panetta. He had begun the process of moving this forward. But I have directly spoken to Secretary Hagel already today and indicating to him that we're going to have to not just step up our game, we have to exponentially step up our game, to go at this thing hard.

And for those who are in uniform who have experienced sexual assault, I want them to hear directly from their Commander in Chief that I've got their backs. I will support them. And we're not going to tolerate this stuff, and there will be accountability. If people have engaged in this behavior, they should be prosecuted.

And anybody in the military who has knowledge of this stuff should understand this is not who we are. This is not what the U.S. military is about. And it dishonors the vast majority of men and women in uniform who carry out their responsibilities and obligations with honor and dignity and incredible courage every single day.

So bottom line is, I have no tolerance for this. I have communicated this to the Secretary of Defense. We're going to communicate this

again to folks up and down the chain in areas of authority, and I expect consequences.

So I don't want just more speeches or awareness programs or training, but ultimately, folks look the other way. If we find out somebody is engaging in this stuff, they've got to be held accountable: prosecuted, stripped of their positions, court-martialed, fired, dishonorably discharged. Period. It's not acceptable.

President Park. Regarding North Korea's provocations and bad behavior, we will make them pay. With regard to that, for instance, what I meant was that if they engage in military provocations and harm the lives of our people and the safety of our people, then naturally, as a President who gives the top priority to ensuring the safety of our people, it is something that we can't just pass over.

So if North Korea engages in provocations, I will fully trust the judgment of our military. So if our military makes a judgment which they feel is the right thing, then they should act accordingly. And this is the instruction that I had made.

And North Korea has to pay a price when it comes not only with regard to provocations, but also with regard to the recent Kaesong industrial complex issue, where, based on agreements between the two sides, companies had believed in the agreement that was made and actually went to invest in the Kaesong industrial complex, but they suddenly completely dismiss and disregard this agreement overnight and deny various medical supplies and food supplies to Korean citizens left in that industrial complex, refusing to accept our request to allow in those supplies, which is what prompted us to withdraw all of our citizens from that park. This situation unfolded in the full view of the international community.

So who would invest, not to mention Korean companies, but also companies of other countries, who would invest in North Korea in a place that shows such flagrant disregard for agreements, and how could they, under those circumstances, actually pull off economic achievement? So I think, in this regard, they're actually paying the price for their own misdeeds.

North Korea/South Korea

Q. I am—[*inaudible*]—from Seoul newspaper. My question goes to President Obama. President Park has been talking about the Korean Peninsula trust-building process as a way to promote peace on Korean Peninsula. I wonder what you feel about this trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula?

President Obama. Well, as I indicated before, President Park's approach is very compatible with my approach and the approach that we have been taking together for several years now. And as I understand it, the key is that we will be prepared for a deterrence that we will respond to aggression, that we will not reward provocative actions, but that we will maintain an openness to an engagement process when we see North Korea taking steps that would indicate that it is following a different path. And that's exactly the right approach.

All of us would benefit from a North Korea that transformed itself. Certainly, the people of North Korea would benefit. South Korea would be even stronger in a less tense environment on the Peninsula. All the surrounding neighbors would welcome such a transition, such a transformation. But I don't think either President Park or I are naive about the difficulties of that taking place. And we've got to see action before we can have confidence that that, in fact, is the path that North Korea intends to take.

But the one thing I want to emphasize just based on the excellent meetings and consultation that we had today, as well as watching President Park over the last several months dealing with the provocative escalations that have been taking place in North Korea, what I'm very confident about is, President Park is tough. I think she has a very clear, realistic view of the situation, but she also has the wisdom to believe that conflict is not inevitable and is not preferable. And that's true on the Korean Peninsula. That's true around the world.

And we very much appreciate her visit and look forward to excellent cooperation not only on this issue, but on the more positive issues of

economic and commercial ties between our two countries, educational exchanges, work on energy, climate change, helping other countries develop.

I've had a wonderful time every time I've visited the Republic of Korea. And what is clear is that the Republic of Korea is one of the great success stories of our lifetime. And the Republic of Korea's leadership around the globe will be increasingly important. And what underpins that in part has been the extraordinary history of the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea. And we want to make sure that that remains a strong foundation for progress in the future.

So thank you so much, Madam President.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Supreme Commander Kim Jong Un of North Korea; and former Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta. A reporter referred to Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krusinski, USAF, chief, Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program; Lt. Gen. Susan J. Helms, USAF, commander, U.S. Strategic Command's Joint Functional Component Command for Space and 14th Air Force; and Lt. Gen. Craig A. Franklin, USAF, commander, 3d Air Force and 17th Expeditionary Air Force. President Park and some reporters spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Park Geun-hye of South Korea

May 7, 2013

For six decades, the U.S.-ROK Alliance has served as an anchor for stability, security, and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula, in the Asia-Pacific region, and increasingly around the world. President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Park Geun-hye of the Republic of Korea, meeting in Washington, D.C. on May 7, 2013, present this Joint Declaration in celebration of sixty years of bilateral partnership and shared prosperity. The two leaders affirm that the Alliance is well-placed to address the opportunities and challenges of the future.

The U.S.-ROK Alliance, forged in the Korean War and founded on the 1953 United States-Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty, has evolved into a comprehensive strategic alliance with deep cooperation extending beyond security to also encompass the political, economic, cultural, and people-to-people realms. The freedom, friendship, and shared prosperity we enjoy today rest upon our shared values of liberty, democracy, and a market economy.

Building on the past sixty years of stability on the Korean Peninsula, we continue to strengthen and adapt our Alliance to serve as a linchpin of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and to meet the security challenges of the 21st century. The United States remains firmly committed to the defense of the Republic of Korea, including through extended deterrence and the full range of U.S. military capabilities, both conventional and nuclear.

This year also marks another milestone for our two nations—the first anniversary of the entry into force of the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA). This agreement embodies the positive evolution of our partnership and demonstrates how deeply the United States and the Republic of Korea are committed to a shared future of growth and prosperity. We are pleased to note the positive results of the KORUS FTA, including increased trade and investment between our two countries, and recognize its potential for expanding bilateral cooperation and business opportunities, including in the energy sector. Our two countries will fully implement the KORUS FTA to ensure that the agreement serves as an economic growth engine in both our countries.

We are pleased with the significant progress made in realizing the 2009 Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, which lays out a blueprint for the future development of our strategic Alliance. We pledge to continue to build a better and more secure future for all Korean people, working on the basis of the Joint Vision to foster enduring peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and its peaceful reunification based on the principles of denuclearization, democracy and a free market economy. In this context, the United States and the Republic of Korea will continue to work through the Alliance to bring North Korea in to compliance with its international obligations and promote peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula, including through the trust-building process initiated by President Park.

We share the deep concern that North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missiles programs and its repeated provocations pose grave threats to the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. Both the United States and the Republic of Korea are determined to achieve the peaceful denuclearization of North Korea and are working with other Six-Party Talks partners and the international community to insist that North Korea adheres to its international obligations and commitments. While we invite North Korea to take the path that leads out of isolation and to join the community of nations as a responsible member, we are resolved to continue to defend our citizens against North Korea's provocations by strengthening our comprehensive, interoperable, and combined defense capabilities, to include shared efforts to counter the missile threat posed by North Korea and integrated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems. Because both the United States and the Republic of Korea share a deep concern for the well-being of the North Korean people, we encourage North Korea to invest in, and improve, the conditions for its citizens and to respect their basic human rights.

The peace and prosperity of both our nations are inextricably linked to regional and global security and economic growth. Based on the solid U.S.-ROK Alliance, we are prepared to address our common challenges and seek ways to build an era of peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia. The U.S.-ROK Alliance is an increasingly global partnership, and the United States welcomes the Republic of Korea's leadership and active engagement on the world stage, including in international fora. We will strengthen our efforts to address global challenges such as climate change and to promote clean energy, energy security, human rights, humanitarian assistance, development assistance cooperation, counter-terrorism, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear safety, non-proliferation, cybersecurity, and counter-piracy.

Our sixty years of partnership and shared prosperity have demonstrated that the strength of our Alliance stems from the close relationships between our peoples. The large Korean-American community in the United States not only serves as a significant link between our two countries, but also makes countless contributions to the strength and vitality of American society. We pledge to continue programs and efforts to build even closer ties between our societies, including cooperation among business, civic, academic, and other institutions.

As allies and Asia-Pacific nations, we look forward to shaping together the future of Asia for generations to come.

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

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria
May 7, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions of the Government of Syria declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004—as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13399 of April 25, 2006, Executive Order 13460 of February 13, 2008, Executive Order 13572 of April 29, 2011, Executive Order 13573 of May 18, 2011, Executive Order 13582 of August 17, 2011, Executive Order 13606 of April 22, 2012, and Executive Order 13608 of May 1, 2012—is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2013.

While the Syrian regime has reduced the number of foreign fighters bound for Iraq, the regime's brutal war on the Syrian people, who have been calling for freedom and a representative government, endangers not only the Syrian people themselves, but could yield greater instability throughout the region. The Syrian regime's actions and policies, including pursuing chemical and biological weapons, supporting terrorist organizations, and obstructing the Lebanese government's ability to function effectively, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions to address this national emergency.

In addition, the United States condemns the Asad regime's use of brutal violence and human rights abuses and calls on the Asad regime to stop its violent war and step aside to allow a political transition in Syria that will forge a credible path to a future of greater freedom, democracy, opportunity, and justice.

The United States will consider changes in the composition, policies, and actions of the Government of Syria in determining whether to continue or terminate this national emergency in the future.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 7, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at Manor New Technology High School in Manor, Texas
May 9, 2013

Hello, Texas. Well, howdy, Manor. Go Titans! Now, I hear that there's a rule that anyone who gives a presentation in front of the class has to dress up, so I made sure to wear a tie. [*Laughter*] I didn't want to lose points.

I want to thank Tevyn for the very generous introduction. Give Tevyn a big round of applause. I want to thank Principal Zipkes for his great work. I want to thank Dylan and Jahman for showing me around. Great job.

We've got a number of other luminaries here today. First of all, we've got Acting Secretaries of Commerce and Labor, Becky Blank and Seth Harris. There they are right there. Becky is going to be leaving us to become the president of the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

So the—if you all are interested in cold weather, you can apply. [*Laughter*] You've got the hookup right here. And she's going to do a great job.

We've got Congressman Lloyd Doggett, who's here. We've got Mayor Jeff Turner, who's here. And it is Teacher Appreciation Week. So all the teachers, raise your hands. Everybody give them a big round of applause. We appreciate you. Teachers work hard every single day, and they don't do it for the money. They do it because of the love of learning and the love of their students. And so we could not be prouder of them, and we are grateful to all of them. And I want to thank all of you for a Texas-sized welcome.

Now, those of you who have seats, feel free to sit down. Those of you who don't, you're out of luck. [*Laughter*] So you've got to keep standing.

The—so this is the first stop that I'm making on a tour of the Austin area today. And I chose Austin, partly because I just love Austin, but also because there are some terrific things going on in this area, in communities like Manor. And there are terrific things going on in communities all across the country that are good models for all of America to follow.

You might not know this, because if you listen to all the doom and gloom in Washington, in politics, and you're watching cable TV sometimes, you might get kind of thinking, nothing is going right. But the truth is, there's a lot of reasons for us to feel optimistic about where we're headed as a country, especially after all the tough times that we've been through over the last several years. And that should encourage us to roll up our sleeves and work even harder and work together to take on the challenges that are still holding back parts of our economy.

Now, in a little over 3 years, our businesses have now created more than 6.5 million new jobs. And while our unemployment rate is still too high, it's actually the lowest that it's been since 2008. But that's not good enough. Now we've got to create even more good, middle class jobs, and we've got to do it faster so that by the time you guys graduate from college the job market is strong.

Corporate profits have skyrocketed to all-time highs. But that's not good enough. We've got to make sure that middle class wages and incomes are also going up, because most families haven't seen their take-home pay rise for years now. Our housing market is healing, but that's not good enough. We still need to help a lot more families stay in their homes or refinance to take advantage of historically low interest rates.

Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in years. But now we've got to budget in a smarter way so it doesn't hurt middle class families or prevent us from making the critical investments that we need for your future.

So a lot of sectors of our economy are doing better. The American auto industry is thriving. American energy is booming. American ingenuity in our tech sector continues to be the best in the world and has the potential to change almost everything that we do. And thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, we've cleared away the rubble of the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes.

So we're poised for progress. All across America, Americans are working harder and they're living up to their responsibilities, both to themselves and to one another and to their communities, every single day. Part of our challenge, though, is you've got to try to see the same kind of seriousness of purpose in your leaders. From Washington to Wall Street, all of us have to commit ourselves to doing better than we're doing now.

And all of us have to rally around the single greatest challenge that we face as a country right now, and that's reigniting the true engine of economic growth: a rising, thriving middle class, where if you work hard—no matter what you look like, where you come from—you can succeed. That's what we're fighting for.

Now, there are three things that we've got to focus on to create more jobs and opportunity for the middle class. First of all, we've got to make America a magnet for good jobs. Second, we've got to help people earn the education

and develop the skills they need to do those jobs. And number three, we've got to make sure that people who are working hard are able to achieve a decent living. All right? That's what we've got to focus on.

And I've sent Congress proposals on a whole range of ideas that will help in these three areas: creating jobs, helping families stay in their homes, lifting wages, helping more young people get a good education and afford college. But some of them have been blocked in Congress for frankly political reasons. And I'm going to keep on trying. I'm a very—I'm an optimistic guy, so I'm just going to keep on talking to Members of Congress, because I believe that America does best when we work together. I believe that.

Every once in a while, I'm going to need your help to lean on your elected representatives and say, hey, let's do something about this; even if don't like it politically, if it's a good idea, let's go ahead and support it. So sometimes, I'm going to need constituents to pressure their Members of Congress to do the right thing.

But where I can, I'm just going to go ahead and take action on my own, including some executive actions that I'm taking today that I'm convinced will spur innovation and help businesses create more jobs, because we know what's possible when Americans—whether they're Republicans or Democrats or Independents—are working together and when parents and teachers and business owners and local leaders come together.

And that's what we're seeing here in Austin. We're seeing people working together, not because of politics, not because of some selfish reason, but because folks here understand that when we're all working together, everybody does better, everybody succeeds.

So, over the last 3 years in the Austin area, businesses have created 85,000 new jobs. And companies like Apple and Visa are getting ready to open new offices. General Motors is already hiring at its new innovation center. According to one report, the tech sector now drives more than one-quarter of Austin's economy. And all of this has helped to make Austin one of the fastest growing cities in America.

So folks around here are doing something right, and I think the rest of the country can learn from what you're doing because I've always believed that the best ideas usually don't start in Washington, they trickle up to Washington. So I've come to listen and learn and highlight some of the good work that's being done.

This afternoon I'm going to go visit a local factory where workers are building the equipment that makes cutting-edge microchips. All those smartphones and iPads and—that you guys are using, a lot of this stuff is made there. I'm going to have lunch with some local families to talk about what they're facing, the challenges that they're facing, and figure out how we can make sure that people's hard work pays off.

But as you can see, my first stop was Manor New Tech. [*Applause*] That's my first stop. And the reason is because our economy can't succeed unless our young people have the skills that they need to succeed. And that's what's happening here, right at Manor New Tech. There's a reason why teachers and principals from all over the country are coming down to see what you're up to. Because every day, this school is proving that every child has the potential to learn the real-world skills they need to succeed in college and beyond.

And you all are doing it together. At Manor, a history teacher might get together with a math teacher and develop a project about the impact of castles on world history and the engineering behind building castles. Or a group of students might be in charge of putting together a multimedia presentation about the moral dilemmas in literature as applied to World War II. Internships help students get even more hands-on experience. And while most high school students in America give a handful of speeches by the time they graduate, a student at this school might give as many as 200. Now, that's a lot of speeches. I can relate. [*Laughter*]

And I just had a chance to see some of the incredible work that some of the young people here are doing: folks who used mathematical

equations to build musical instruments, and tests on bungee jumping with rubber bands and weights, and robots that were being built, and all kinds of great stuff. And you're doing things a little differently around here than a lot of high schools, and it's working. [*Applause*] It's working.

And by the way, the majority of students at Manor don't come from wealth or privilege. Some folks here might have come from some pretty tough backgrounds. And yet the vast majority of students here stay in school, they graduate. Your test scores in most subjects have been higher than the State average. Almost every member of the recent graduating class went on to college, and about 60 percent of them were the first in their families to do so. You should be proud of that.

And you can see it when I was talking to some of your classmates on the projects they were working on. There were a couple of your classmates who were studying how earthworms regenerate when they're injured. I saw solar cars. Your championship regional "TEXplosion" robotics team competed in the world championships a couple of weeks ago. And this program has only been around for 5 years.

So this is an impressive group. And the teachers here, you can tell, are passionate about what they do and couldn't be more impressive, although, some of them look like they were in high school. [*Laughter*] There were a couple of them I met, I said, are you sure you're a teacher? [*Laughter*] No, not you. You look like you're—[*laughter*]—I'm teasing. You really are a student. I know. [*Laughter*]

But it's important to remember that, every year, schools like Manor New Tech hold blind lotteries to determine who gets in, because there just aren't enough spots for all the students who want to go to a school like this one. There are too many kids in America who are not getting the same kinds of opportunities through no fault of their own, and we can do better than that. [*Applause*] We can do better than that.

Every young person in America deserves a world-class education. We've got an obligation to give it to them. And by the way, that helps the whole economy. Every business in America, we want to draw from the world's highest skilled and most educated workforce. We can make that happen. But we're going to have to put our shoulder against the wheel and work a little harder than we're doing right now as a nation.

So, number one, we've got to start educating our kids at the earliest possible age. And that means giving every child in America access to high-quality, public preschool, something that I'm pushing for.

Every dollar that we put into early childhood education can save $7 down the road because it boosts graduation rates, reduces things like teen pregnancy and violent crime, helps young people succeed not just in high school, but beyond. So let's make that happen. Let's make every child's early success a recipe for long-term success. We can do that.

We've also got to make sure that we help more students at more schools get the kinds of skills they're getting here at Manor Tech to compete in a high-tech economy. So that's why we're working to recruit and train 100,000 new teachers in science and technology, engineering and math; helping our most talented teachers serve as mentors for their colleagues so that they can help to push the great stuff that's going on here out to other schools throughout the State and throughout the country.

We've also got to start rethinking and redesigning America's high schools. That's part of what's happening here is, there's innovation going on that equip graduates for the demands of a high-tech economy. There's a lot of hands-on learning here. People aren't just sitting at a desk reading all the time. Reading is important. I'm a big reader. But part of what makes this place special is, is that there's all this integration of various subjects and actual projects and young people doing and not just sitting there listening, so we've got to reward schools like this one that focus on the fields of the future—schools that focus on the fields of the future, use technology effectively to help students learn, and are also developing partnerships with local colleges and businesses so that a diploma here leads directly to a good job.

And finally, we know that even with better high schools, if you want a good job and work your way into the middle class, most young people are going to need some higher education. Unfortunately, in recent years, college costs have skyrocketed, and that's left too many students and their families saddled with a mountain of debt. So we've worked to make college more affordable for millions of students already and families through tax credits and grants, more access to student loans that go farther than before. We've reformed the student loan process by putting students ahead of big banks, providing options to make it easier for young people to repay these loans.

But even if we do all that, if the price of higher education keeps going up, then eventually, there's not going to be enough money to help young people. So we've got to figure out how to reduce college costs. And that's why my administration has released what we're calling a college scorecard that gives parents and students the clear, concise information that you'll need to find a school that best fits your needs, but also gives you the best value. Gives you the best value. It's like a consumer report for colleges, because you don't want a lemon, and you don't want too much debt.

And going forward, colleges that don't do enough to keep costs down, I think, should get less taxpayer support. We want to support the schools that are doing a great job giving good value to students. That's what we want. And young people and families, you shouldn't have to subsidize skyrocketing costs if the colleges aren't trying hard enough to keep costs down and provide a high-quality education.

So I could not be prouder of what's happening here at Manor. That's why I wanted to come. Last month, students in a digital media class made a YouTube video describing why this school was so special. Some students talked about how they're looking forward to being the first in their family to go to college. Others talked about learning new skills, taking on more responsibility. And one sophomore summed it up nicely when she said: "This school is a lot more than just a school. It's a family. And it's filled with people that are going to care about you and are going to help you."

Well, Manor, that's what every school should be. That's what our country should be: caring for each other, helping each another, being invested in each other's success. We're not just a collection of individuals, we're one American family. And if we follow Manor's example, if we give every child the chance to climb new ladders of opportunity, if we equip every American with the skills and education they need to succeed in the jobs of the future, if we make sure that hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded, and if we fight to keep America a place where you can make it if you try, then you're not just going to be the ones who prosper, we'll all prosper. And together, we'll write the next great chapter in America's history.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:38 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Tevyn Washington, Jahman B. Harden, Dylan Randolph, Mason Tyler-Nyman, D'Angelo Miller, Charisma Vanderpuye, Gabriela Guadarrama, Alexis Rubio, Jorge Flores, and Epiphany B. Harden, students, and Steven M. Zipkes, principal, Manor New Technology High School.

Remarks at Applied Materials, Inc., in Austin, Texas
May 9, 2013

Hello, Austin! How you doing? Well, it is wonderful to see all of you here today. First of all, give Nicole an outstanding round of applause for the great job that she did.

It is wonderful to be here at Applied Materials. I want to thank Mike and everybody who helped out hosting us and a wonderful tour of the facility. It was incredible. Rick was showing

me some of your clean rooms where you are building the equipment that makes the chips that is basically powering—[*laughter*]—that's basically powering everything that you guys are taking pictures with right now. [*Laughter*] Smartphones, computers, iPads, laptops. And it is just remarkable to see. Every time I walk through these kinds of facilities, I'm thinking: now, this is just magic. I don't know how they do it.

Somebody was explaining to me that—I guess one of the wafers was being cleaned, and he said, this would be the equivalent—it was Alex who told me this; Alex is around here somewhere—the equivalent of, if you were mowing the South Lawn, but every blade of grass was exactly cut at the same height within a single human hair. That's how precise things are. That sounds pretty precise to me. And if that's, by the way, the precision that you operate on, if that's how you define a clean room, then Sasha and Malia are going to have to step up their game at home. [*Laughter*] Because it is not that clean. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your mayor, Lee Leffingwell, and—who's doing a great job. Lee is doing outstanding work every day and helping to bring the Austin community together. Congressman Lloyd Doggett is here. They've been great hosts. We actually have a special guest: The mayor of San Antonio in the house, my friend Julian Castro is here.

Now, I've spent the day in Austin talking with folks about what we can do to reignite the true engine of America's economic growth: a thriving, rising middle class and a dynamic, cutting-edge economy. That's our priority. That should be Washington's top priority. And I see three things that we need to focus on to do it.

Number one, we've got to make America a magnet for good jobs. Number two, we've got to help people earn the skills they need to do those jobs. Number three, we've got to make sure people's hard work is rewarded so that they can make a decent living doing those jobs.

And if you watch the news sometimes, you may think that there's just doom and gloom out there. But the truth is, there's incredible stuff going on all across America and right here in Austin that I think can be good models for the rest of America to follow.

This morning I visited Manor New Tech High School where students are learning high-tech skills that companies like Applied are looking for right now. They are getting excited, working with math and science and technology and engineering. And it's a hands-on high school, where subjects are integrated and kids are building things and conducting experiments at very early ages. And it's sparking their imagination in ways that may lead them to start up the next Applied or come here and work at Applied.

And then I joined a few local families for lunch to talk about how we can make sure that hard work pays off with wages you can live on and raise a family, with health care that you can count on and the chance to put away some money for retirement. And we also had good barbecue—[*laughter*]—which is necessary for economic growth. [*Laughter*] Some good barbecue once in a while. And then I came to Applied Materials to talk about what we can do to make America a magnet for new jobs in manufacturing.

And after shedding jobs for a decade, our manufacturers have added now about 500,000 new manufacturing jobs over the past 3 years. [*Applause*] That's good news. Caterpillar is bringing jobs back from Japan, and Ford is bringing jobs back from Mexico. And after placing plants in other countries like China, Intel is opening its most advanced plant right here at home. This year, Apple started making Macs in America again.

So there are some good trend lines there, but we've got to do everything we can to strengthen that trend. We've got to do everything we can to help the kind of high-tech manufacturing that you're doing right here at Applied. And we want to make sure it takes root here in Austin and all across the country. And that means, first of all, creating more centers of high-tech manufacturing.

Last year, we launched our first manufacturing innovation institute in Youngstown, Ohio, to develop new technologies and equip

workers with the skills required to master 3–D printing techniques. And in my State of the Union Address, I called on Congress to set up 15 more of these manufacturing hubs all across America, and I said that my administration was going to go ahead and move forward with three new hubs on our own, even without congressional action.

Well, today we're launching a competition for those hubs. We are looking for businesses and universities that are willing to partner together to help their region—help turn their region into global centers of high-tech jobs. Because we want the next revolution in manufacturing to be made in America. [*Applause*] We're going to do that.

The truth is, over the past couple decades, too many communities have been hit hard when plants closed down and jobs dried up. The economy obviously is changing all the time. Nobody knows that better than folks here at Applied. I was talking to somebody who's—after showing me the wafer and some chips, and then they showed me a smartphone, they pointed to the smartphone, and they said, 40 years ago, there'd be about $3 billion just trying to get this much computing power in this little thing, except it would fill up a whole room.

And so the economy is dynamic. Technology is constantly changing. That means we've got to adapt as well. And even as we're working to reverse the trend of communities that have been hard hit with old manufacturing leaving, we've got to propose partnerships with local leaders in manufacturing communities to help attract new investment in the infrastructure and the research that will attract new jobs and new businesses so that communities that have been knocked down can get back up and get back on their feet.

And we should help our workers get the training they need to compete for the industries of tomorrow. No job in America should go unfilled just because we don't have anybody with the right skills. And that's a priority. Now, some of your colleagues that I met, some of them have advanced degrees. Some of them came to apply basically right out of high school. But all of you, whether it was in some cases through a university education, in some cases the military, in some cases just on-the-job training, all of you have specialized skills that are exactly what we need to continue to grow our economy. But we've got a whole bunch of folks out there who don't have those skills, either because the education system failed them or because their skills have been rendered obsolete.

And that's why I want to rethink how our high school kids are prepared. I want to make sure that we're training 2 million Americans at our community colleges for skills that will lead directly to a job. We—and that's also why we've got to make sure that college is affordable and people aren't burdened by a mountain of debt so that they can continue to upgrade their skills as well.

Now, if we want to manufacture the best products, we've also got to invest in and cultivate the best ideas. All right? Innovation, ingenuity, that's the constant of the American economy. That's one of the constants of our character. It's what keeps America on the cutting edge.

And just before I came here, I visited the Capital Factory, which, as some of you know, is a place that helps startups take off. And everywhere you turn, somebody has got a new idea. They're all thinking big. They're taking risks. It's exciting.

There was a young woman who is in a wheelchair and physically disabled, but is just incredibly inspired to make sure that she's not in any way confined by that situation. And she's basically designed and is now manufacturing a car that people in wheelchairs can just drive their wheelchair right into the car and start driving.

And then, you had a young man who had a 3–D camera—it was about this big—and basically, from filming either a static image or in the round, can basically download that immediately and create a 3–D image and then use that for 3–D manufacturing—3–D printing and manufacturing. And what currently costs about $80,000, costs about $3,000—the tech-

nology that he's developed. So they're doing amazing stuff.

And one of the things we're doing to fuel more inventiveness like this—to fuel more private sector innovation and discovery—is to make the vast amounts of America's data open and easy to access for the first time in history. So talented entrepreneurs are doing some pretty amazing stuff with data that's already being collected by Government.

So, over at the Capital Factory, I met with folks behind the startup called Stormpulse, which uses Government data on weather to help businesses anticipate disruptions in service. And then you've got a Virginia company called Opower, that's used Government data on trends in energy use to save its customers $200 million on their energy bills. There's an app called iTriage, founded by a pair of ER doctors that uses data from the Department of Health and Human Services to help users understand medical symptoms and find local doctors and health care providers.

And today I'm announcing that we're making even more Government data available and we're making it easier for people to find and to use. And that's going to help launch more startups. It's going to help launch more businesses. Some of them undoubtedly will be using this data powered by chips that essentially started right here at Applied Materials. It's going to help more entrepreneurs come up with products and services that we haven't even imagined yet.

This kind of innovation and ingenuity has the potential to transform the way we do almost everything. One-third of jobs in Austin are now supported by the tech sector. And we should do all that we can to encourage this kind of innovation economy all across America, in ways that produce new jobs and new opportunities for the middle class.

And we're poised for a time of progress if we're willing to seize it. Not even 5 years after the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes, our jobs market and our housing market are steadily healing. Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in decades. The American auto industry has made a comeback; it's thriving. American energy is booming. But we've got to keep on moving forward, and we've got to make sure that Washington is not administering self-inflicted wounds when we're making progress.

So Mike and I were talking about the fact that if we can reform our tax system to eliminate some of these loopholes, potentially, we could lower some rates. That would make our businesses more competitive.

Basic research, you'll hear people talk about how government is not going to do anything for us. Well, we all understand that the private sector powers and drives our economy. On the other hand, most of the private sector right now has a lot of trouble financing basic research. And that basic research is the foundation for everything that's done at this company, and everything that's done for most of your customers. And we can't afford to fall behind when it comes to basic research. So there's some key things that we can do that shouldn't be ideological. They're not Democratic ideas or Republican ideas or Independent ideas, they're just good ideas that allow the government to help create the foundation, the platform, the environment in which companies like Applied Materials can thrive. And that's what we've got to constantly champion.

And when you're talking to your Members of Congress or you're talking to elected officials, you've got to remind them we don't want government to do everything for us, but it's got a role to play on infrastructure, basic research, making sure that we've got a fair—a tax system that's fair, making sure that we've got some basic stability in our budget so people aren't always guessing what's going to happen around the corner.

Think about how this company was built. Back in 1967, when Applied Materials was just getting off the ground, there were five employees. They worked out of this small industrial unit in California. And I suppose they had a clean room in there, but I don't know what it looked like. [*Laughter*] But what they lacked in size, they made up with ingenuity and imagination and risk-taking. And over the years, as you grew to become a leader in high-tech manufacturing, that ingenuity never faltered. Whether

you've been with this company for decades—as I know some of you have—or just for a year, you're all focused on the future. Every day, you're pushing the limits of technology a little bit further.

And you're not alone, because somewhere over at the Capital Factory, there's an entrepreneur mapping out a new product on a whiteboard that may be the next big thing. Somewhere over at Manor New Tech High School, there's a kid scribbling down an idea for a new invention that one day may turn into an entirely new industry. That's America.

And when you look out across this room, what you also notice is there's talent drawn from every segment of our society. We don't care what you look like, where you come from, what your last name is. We just want to make sure we're all working together to create a better future for our kids.

That's America. We innovate. And we adapt. We move forward. That's what Austin is all about. That's what's going on in this city. And that's what I want to keep on promoting as your President of the United States of America.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:57 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Michael R. Splinter, chairman of the board of directors and chief executive officer, Rick G. Gesing, corporate vice president of global operations manufacturing, Nicole C. Wayman, ETCH program manager, and Alex B. Alexander, engineering technician, Applied Materials, Inc.; Stacy Zoern, chief executive officer, Community Cars Inc.; Chris Slaughter, chief executive officer, Longhorn Startup's Lynx Laboratories; Matthew Wensing, cofounder and chief executive officer, and Brad Wiemerslage, cofounder and chief technology officer, Stormpulse; and Peter Hudson, cofounder and chief executive officer, and Wayne Guerra, cofounder and chief medical officer, iTriage. He also referred to Executive Order 13642, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
May 10, 2013

Thank you so much, everybody, and welcome to the White House. I want to thank Carol for the wonderful introduction.

And let me just start off with a public service announcement to dads, partners, kids of America—[*laughter*]—Sunday is Mother's Day. [*Laughter*] You should not forget. [*Laughter*] You can't go wrong with flowers, a homemade card, giving some mom—giving mom some relief, some quiet time. That is appreciated. [*Laughter*]

So it's a day when we put moms first. And I still remember one time I said to Michelle—this is back when we had just gotten married, and I think Malia had just been born, and we were fussing around Mother's Day, and I said, but you know, how come we do so much stuff on Mother's Day? She says, because every other day is Man's Day. [*Laughter*] So this is, like, one day. And there was, as usual, profound insight in Michelle's remarks, because moms so often put themselves last. So often they put everything else before themselves.

And that's particularly true when it comes to things like health care. Moms take care of us.

[*At this point, a baby in the audience cried.*]

Yes, see? [*Laughter*] Case in point. Sick kids, aging parents, grumpy husbands. And I know there are lots of moms out there who often go without the care that they need or the checkups they know they should get, because they're worrying that copay that has to go to gas or groceries or the new soccer uniform instead. Or worse, they know the unfairness of being charged more for their health care just because they're a woman or the stress of trying to manage a family budget when health care costs are impinging on it or trying to insure a sick child only to be told no over and over again.

So we decided that needed to change. In a country as wealthy as this one, there was no reason why a family's security should be determined by the chance of an illness or an accident. We decided to do something about it.

Thanks to the women in this room and people all across the country, we worked really hard, and it's now been more than 3 years since Congress passed the Affordable Care Act and I signed it into law. It's been nearly a year since the Supreme Court upheld the law under the Constitution. And by the way, 6 months ago, the American people went to the polls and decided to keep going in this direction. So the law is here to stay.

And those of us who believe that every American deserves access to quality, affordable health care have an obligation to now make sure that full implementation moves forward the way it needs to.

Basically, there are two main things that the American people need to know about this law and what it means. First, if you're one of the nearly 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance—whether it's through your employer or Medicare or Medicaid—you don't have to do a thing. This law already provides you with a wide array of new benefits, tough new consumer protections, stronger cost control measures than existed before the law passed. And those things are already in place; you're benefiting from them, you just may not know it: making sure that insurers can't take advantage of you, making sure that your child can stay on your health insurance until they're 27 years old. So a lot of those provisions are already in place providing help and assistance to people all across the country.

Now, second, if you're one of the tens of millions who don't have health insurance, beginning this fall, you'll finally be able to compare and buy quality, affordable private plans that work for you. So that's what you need to know. If you've already got health insurance, this has just enhanced it. And if you don't, you're going to be able to get it.

For 3 years now, this law has provided real and tangible benefits to millions of Americans. Women, in particular, now have more control over their own care than ever before. And I'm pleased to be joined today by many women who wrote in to tell us what the Affordable Care Act means to them.

Carol Metcalf told us: "My oldest child is 22, recent college grad, a traumatic brain injury survivor, with a rare genetic lung disease. Without the Affordable Care Act, he would have been removed from our family health insurance policy this year. And his health is excellent, but the cost of maintenance is overwhelming. And given his history, he would be virtually uninsurable under the old set of rules. Instead of contemplating law school, all of his resources would have been channeled into somehow, somewhere, finding health insurance." That's what Carol wrote.

So Carol and her son Justin are why the Affordable Care Act lets young people stay on their parent's plan until they turn 26. And today, as she put it, "now Justin's future is governed by what he wants to achieve, not what health insurance mandates." And by the way, Justin is here, fine-looking young man right here. Sunday is Mother's Day. [*Laughter*]

Justin Metcalf. Yes.

The President. Just wanted to make sure you remembered that.

Alycia is the mother of Avey, who is a beautiful, sweet, 3-year-old girl who also happens to have leukemia. Imagine what that's like for a parent. While you're just figuring out how to take care of a baby, you've got to figure out how you're going to pay for expensive treatment that could save your baby's life.

Any parent knows that there is nothing we won't do to take care of our kids. And it's nice to have somebody getting your back. And that's why the Affordable Care Act made it illegal for bad actors in the insurance industry to discriminate against kids like Avey. And today, Avey is doing just great. She was here just a second ago. Where is she? There's Avey. Hey, sweetie! So Alycia wrote in, she said: "The health care law is about people like me. It's Alyciacare." [*Laughter*]

And because of Alyciacare—the Affordable Care Act—insurance companies can no longer impose lifetime limits on the amount of care

you receive or drop your coverage if you get sick or discriminate against children with preexisting conditions. And women now have access to free preventive care like checkups and mammograms and cancer screenings so you can catch preventable illness on the front end. And that provision has already helped more than 70 million Americans with private insurance. That's already happening. A lot of people don't know it, but you've got those protections.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, young adults under the age of 26, as we talked about, are able to stay on their parent's health insurance plan, and that's already helping more than 6 million young adults.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, seniors on Medicare receive free checkups and preventive care with no copay or deductible and get a discount on their prescription drugs. That has already saved over 6 million seniors more than $700 each. That's already been happening. Seniors may not know that they've been getting $600 discounts, but it's there.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, insurers now have to justify double-digit rate increases publicly, for everybody to see. And most States have new authority—thanks to incentives under this law—to reject unjustifiable rate increases. Insurers are now required to spend at least 80 percent of the money you pay in premiums on actual health care, not on profits, not on overhead, but on you. And if they fail to meet that target, they actually have to reimburse you, either with a rebate or lower premiums. Millions of Americans discovered this last year. They opened an envelope from their insurance company that wasn't a bill, it was a check. That's already happened. A lot of people don't know it, but that's what's—that's what the Affordable Care Act is all about.

Beginning this week, as part of the law's price transparency tools, we made public the prices that different hospitals charge you for most common services so you can see if you're getting what you pay for. And soon, bad actors in the insurance industry will never again be able to discriminate you—discriminate against you just because you've gotten sick in the past. [*Applause*] They can't discriminate against you because you've got a preexisting condition. And by the way, they can't charge you more just for being a woman. Pregnancy will no longer be considered a preexisting condition.

And finally, beginning this fall, if you're one of the millions of Americans who don't have health insurance, you'll finally have the chance to buy quality, affordable care just like everybody else.

So here's how this is going to work. We're setting up a new online marketplace, where beginning October 1, you can go online or talk to organizations in every State that are going to have this set up, and you can then comparison shop an array of private health insurance plans. You can look at them side by side, just like you'd go online and compare cars. And because you'll now be part of a new pool of millions of other Americans—part of this exchange—insurance companies will actually want to compete for your business the same way they compete for the business of a big company with a lot of employees.

So once these marketplaces are up and running, no one can be turned away from private insurance plans. Period. If you're sick, you'll finally have the same chance to buy quality, affordable health care as everybody else. If you can't afford to buy private insurance, if it's still too expensive—even though you're getting much better prices through these exchanges than you would in the individual market, going out there by yourself, or if you work for just a small company that doesn't have a lot of leverage with insurance companies, you're going to have a better deal through these exchanges—but if you still can't afford it, then you're going to get help reducing your out-of-pocket premiums with the largest health care tax cut for working families and small businesses in our history. All right?

So what does all this mean? It means that if you lose your job or you change your job or you start that new business, you'll still be able to purchase quality, affordable health care that's yours, and you'll have the security and peace of mind that comes with it. If you're a young person expecting to try many different jobs and careers until you find one that suits you, you'll

be able to buy insurance that goes with you, travels with you, that gives you the freedom to pursue whatever you want without the fear that illness or accident somehow derails your dreams.

So there's a lot that this law is already doing for Americans with insurance, and there is a lot more that is going to happen for folks who don't have insurance. But we've still got a lot of work to do in the coming months to make sure more Americans can buy affordable coverage. And with something as personal as health care, I realize there are people who are anxious, people who are nervous, making sure that we get this done right.

So I'm here to tell you, I am 110-percent committed to getting it done right. It's not an easy undertaking, but if it were easy, it would have already been done long time ago. Undoubtedly, there will be some mistakes and hiccups as the thing gets started up, but we're learning already from them. For example, when the prototype of the application to join the marketplace came in at 21 pages—the initial, first cut at it—we said, you know what, we can do better than that. It's now three pages long. Three pages. By the way, the industry standard is actually about 17 pages. So three pages is good. [*Laughter*] That's a lot shorter than the application you generally have to fill out now for private insurance.

But this is going to be a lot of work. And obviously, there is still a lot of political bickering over this law. The same folks who fought tooth and nail 4 years ago and tried to make political hay out of Obamacare, they're still telling tall tales about its impact. Some small businesses are being told their costs are going to go up, even though they're exempted from the law or they actually stand to benefit from it. And whenever insurance premiums go up, you're being told it's because of Obamacare, even though there's no evidence that that's the case. So right now there are a whole bunch of folks out there, their insurance company decided to jack up rates, and they're automatically assuming, well, somehow the law had something to do with it. No, that had to do with an insurance company—a decision the insurance company made. In some cases, employers may be shifting more costs onto employees because they think that will help their bottom line. Now, it's convenient to somehow say, well, it must be the new law. It's not the case.

So, precisely because there're been so much misinformation, sometimes, people may not have a sense of what the law actually does. And that misinformation will continue, at least through the next election day.

But what all the people on this stage understand is this is too important for political games. Most moms and dads don't think about politics when their kid gets sick. They're thinking about doing whatever it takes to make sure that child is well. This is an issue of personal security. This is personal to Carol and Alycia and anybody who's ever known the injustice and anxiety of a broken health care system. That's what this is about. That's why we fought so hard to make this happen. And that's why we're determined to get it done right.

And we're going to need everybody out there to make sure—get the right information. Don't just read a blog—[*laughter*]—or some commentary from some pundit that has a political agenda. Make sure you know what the actual facts are, because you stand to benefit if you're not already benefiting from this thing. Don't let people confuse you. Don't let them run the okeydoke on you. [*Laughter*] Don't be bamboozled. [*Laughter*]

Now, there's one more person I want to mention here today, somebody who I've spoken of several times over the past few years. When I first received a letter from Natoma Canfield, she was a self-employed cancer survivor from Ohio; she'd always done the responsible thing by buying her own insurance on the private market, even though it was very expensive.

A few years ago, her insurance company charged her over $6,000 in premiums, paid for only $900 worth of care, told her they'd jack up her rates another 40 percent anyway, even though she'd been cancer-free for more than a decade. Despite her desire to keep her health insurance—despite her fears that she would get sick again—she finally just had to

surrender her coverage, couldn't afford it, hung her fortunes on chance. And just a few weeks later, she fell ill and was diagnosed with leukemia, just days before health care reform became a reality.

And I kept Natoma's story with me as we fought to pass this law, and I hung her letter on one of my walls in the Oval Office. And while she couldn't be there the day I signed the Affordable Care Act into law, Natoma is here today. And because of this law—here's Natoma right here. Give her a big round of applause. Because of this law, there are millions of other Americans—moms and dads and daughters and sons—who no longer have to hang their fortunes on chance.

Because we are not going to inflict that hardship on the American people again. The United States of America does not sentence its people to suffering just because they don't make enough to buy insurance on the private market, just because their work doesn't provide health insurance, just because they fall sick or suffer an accident—that could happen to anybody. And regular access to a doctor or medicine or preventive care, that's not some earned privilege, it is a right.

So I understand the politics of this stuff sometimes, but there are times where I just want people to step back and say, are you really prepared to say that 30 million Americans out here shouldn't have health insurance? Are you really prepared to say that's not a worthy goal? Because of politics?

That's why we're going to keep fighting with everything we've got to secure that right, to make sure that every American gets the care that they need when they need it at a price that they can afford. That's what our families deserve. That's what the vast majority of Americans believe in. That's what we're going to make sure that we deliver. And we're going to do it with your help.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:49 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Herndon, VA, resident Carol Metcalf; Towson, MD, resident Alycia Steinberg; and Medina, OH, resident Natoma Canfield.

The President's Weekly Address
May 11, 2013

Hi, everybody. Our top priority as a nation is reigniting the true engine of our economic growth: a rising, thriving middle class. And few things define what it is to be middle class in America more than owning your own cornerstone of the American Dream: a home.

Today, 7 years after the real estate bubble burst, triggering the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and costing millions of responsible Americans their jobs and their homes, our housing market is healing. Sales are up. Foreclosures are down. Construction is expanding. And thanks to rising home prices over the past year, 1.7 million more American families have been able to come up for air, because they're no longer underwater on their mortgages.

From the day I took office, I've made it a priority to help responsible homeowners and prevent the kind of recklessness that helped cause this crisis in the first place.

My housing plan has already helped more than 2 million people refinance their mortgages, and they're saving an average of $3,000 per year.

My new consumer watchdog agency is moving forward on protections like a simpler, shorter mortgage form that will help to keep hard-working families from getting ripped off.

But we've still got more work to do. We've got more responsible homeowners to help: folks who have never missed a mortgage payment, but aren't allowed to refinance; working families who have done everything right, but

still owe more on their homes than they're worth.

Last week, I nominated a man named Mel Watt to take on these challenges as the head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Mel's represented the people of North Carolina in Congress for 20 years, and in that time, he helped lead efforts to put in place rules of the road that protect consumers from dishonest mortgage lenders and give responsible Americans the chance to own their own home. He's the right person for the job, and that's why Congress should do its job and confirm him without delay.

And they shouldn't stop there. As I said before, more than 2 million Americans have already refinanced at today's low rates, but we can do a lot better than that. I've called on Congress to give every responsible homeowner the chance to refinance and, with it, the opportunity to save $3,000 a year. That's like a $3,000 tax cut. And if you're one of the millions of Americans who could take advantage of that, you should ask your representative in Congress why they won't act on it.

Our economy and our housing market are poised for progress, but we could do so much more if we work together. More good jobs. Greater security for middle class families. A sense that your hard work is rewarded. That's what I'm fighting for, and that's what I'm going to keep on fighting for as long as I hold this office.

Thank you, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:15 p.m. on May 10 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on May 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 10, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 11.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring the National Association of Police Organizations TOP COPS

May 11, 2013

Thank you so much, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, good morning, and welcome to the White House for what's one of my favorite events all year.

I want to start by thanking Gil Kerlikowske, a former police officer: police chief in Seattle, police commissioner in Buffalo, police officer in St. Petersburg, Florida; now serves as the head of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. He is doing outstanding work every day, helping to make sure that our young people are safe and not exposed to some of the worst drugs out there. And so we very much want to give him a big round of applause. Thank you, Gil. We've got NAPO President Tom Nee right here next to me. Tom is doing an outstanding job every day. And of course, we've got our 2013 TOP COPS. Hey!

Now, as President, I get to meet and work with a lot of extraordinary law enforcement officers every single day, from men and women who protect me and my family—the folks in the Secret Service—to local police who help out on motorcades and events around the country. And I'm incredibly grateful that all these law enforcement officers are doing such outstanding work.

And then, just a few weeks ago, obviously, in Boston, our entire country saw once again the strong stuff that these men and women in uniform are made of: police officers, first responders who were running towards explosions, not knowing if there was something more on the way; law enforcement from different agencies and different parts of the country working together as one united team to identify suspects and bring them to justice; and in a moment that few of us will ever forget, the citizens of Watertown, Massachusetts, lining their streets to cheer on and high-five and hug the officers as they headed home after a job well done.

We don't always get that opportunity to stand and applaud the men and women who keep us safe. But they're out there, hundreds

of thousands of you, patrolling our streets every single day. And we know that when we need you most, you'll be ready to dash into danger, to protect our lives even if it means putting your lives on the line. That's what these folks are all about. That's what the men in standing—the men and women standing behind me have proven: their heart, their courage, their dedication.

And of course, as always, they're a humble group. They'll tell you they're not heroes. They'll say they were just doing their jobs. And today we honor them as TOP COPS because they're half right. It's true: They were just doing their jobs. From the moment they swore an office—swore an oath to serve with honor, from the first time they put on a uniform and pinned on a badge, they knew they might be called upon to do some really tough stuff. But I think that makes them more heroic, not less heroic, because they signed up for this. They volunteered and yet continued, day in, day out, to dedicate themselves. And when the moment came, they were ready to respond.

I already talked about one of this year's TOP COPS, Brian Murphy, in my State of the Union Address. When a gunman opened fire on a temple in Wisconsin and Brian was the first to arrive, he did not consider his own safety. He fought back until help arrived and ordered his fellow officers, who are here today, to protect the safety of the Americans worshiping inside, even though he was lying there, bleeding from 12 bullet wounds. When he was asked how he did it, he said, "That's just the way we're made."

That's what you've got to do. That's what you've got to be made of to take down homicide suspects in Los Angeles or Vegas or shooters in Miami or Indiana or Chicago or Iowa, saving untold numbers of lives. That's what you've got to be made of to dodge live power lines during Hurricane Sandy to free your partner pinned down by a tree, all the while saying, I've got you, pal.

So yes, this is their job. But it's not just about the uniform that they wear. It's about who they are, what they're made of. When a gunman entered a restaurant in Pasadena, Texas, it was three off-duty cops who put themselves in harm's way so that others could escape.

Detective Ivan Marcano didn't care that he was off duty when he saw two muggers attacking a cab driver in the Bronx. He got out of his girlfriend's car to stop them and was shot point blank in the chest, a bullet inches from his heart. But his story doesn't end there. As his girlfriend was driving him to the hospital, I'm sure not very happy with him—where's Ivan? There he is. Yes. [*Laughter*] By total coincidence, they ran into the shooter's getaway car.

So what does Detective Marcano do? He jumps out of the car. He's getting—he's been shot—keeps pressure on his chest with his left hand, holding a service weapon with his right, runs after the suspects. Took one of them down, which led to the capture of the others. He wasn't on the clock when any of this happened. This was his date night. You know? It's unbelievable. [*Laughter*] Hey, by the way, did you invite your girlfriend down here?

New York Police Department Detective Ivan Marcano. Yes. She's over there—[*inaudible*].

The President. Where are you? Stand up. All right. She has got to get a big round of applause. She deserves a really nice dinner—[*laughter*]—after putting her through that.

The cab driver who Detective Marcano rescued put it simply. He said, I will be thankful to him for the rest of his life—or for the rest of my life. So today, to all our TOP COPS, let me say that our Nation shares that sense of gratitude. You embody America at its best and at its bravest. And you set an example, because if TOP COPS can risk their lives to do their jobs, the rest of us should just be able to summon some tiny fraction of courage and the same sense of responsibility. And certainly, that applies for those of us responsible for supporting law enforcement and first responders here in Washington.

Even during tough economic times, we've got to make sure they've got the resources that they need, whether that's supporting the COPS program or helping you hire new officers or preventing layoffs or giving you the most advanced crime-fighting tools and the

mobile technology and critical data, all of which you need in this 21st century, when it comes to crime fighting. And we also need to take some commonsense steps that protect our rights, protect our children, protect officers in the line of duty by making it harder for dangerous criminals to get their hands on lethal weapons.

These officers represent the best of us, and they deserve the best from us. And that begins with being thankful to them not just today, but for the rest of their lives, and recognizing the sacrifices not only they make, but their parents and spouses and kids who watch their loved ones go off and serve every day knowing that there's real danger out there. So I'd ask all Americans, everybody who is watching all across the country, when you see a police officer, you meet an officer's family, let them know how much you appreciate it. It's the least we can do for the men and women who give us so much and help keep us safe.

All right. So with that in mind, let me give another huge thank you to our TOP COPS of 2003 [2013],* our entire law enforcement community, all the families who are here. All the kids who are here, thanks for being patient and listening to me. [*Laughter*] And now what we want to do is get a picture. So I think we're going to strike this podium, and I'm going to line up. I think there's a spot left for us. Everybody, say cheese.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to suspected April 15 Boston Marathon bombers Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who was killed in a shootout with police on April 19, and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; Lt. Brian Murphy, Oak Creek Police Department in Oak Creek, WI; Jason Levia and Rodain Ortega, suspects in the shooting of New York City police officer Ivan Marcano; Mario Abarca, a New York City taxi driver whose alleged robbery and assault were disrupted by Mr. Marcano; and Hilda Miolan Forteza, girlfriend of Mr. Marcano.

Statement on Elections in Pakistan
May 12, 2013

I congratulate the people of Pakistan on the successful completion of yesterday's parliamentary elections. The United States stands with all Pakistanis in welcoming this historic peaceful and transparent transfer of civilian power, which is a significant milestone in Pakistan's democratic progress. By conducting competitive campaigns, freely exercising your democratic rights, and persevering despite intimidation by violent extremists, you have affirmed a commitment to democratic rule that will be critical to achieving peace and prosperity for all Pakistanis for years to come.

The United States and Pakistan have a long history of working together on mutual interests, and my administration looks forward to continuing our cooperation with the Pakistani Government that emerges from this election as equal partners in supporting a more stable, secure, and prosperous future for the people of Pakistan.

* White House correction.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom

May 13, 2013

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. And to all our moms out there, I hope you had a wonderful Mother's Day.

It's always a great pleasure to welcome my friend and partner, Prime Minister David Cameron. Michelle and I have wonderful memories from when David and Samantha visited us last year. There was a lot of attention about how I took David to March Madness—we went to Ohio. And a year later, we have to confess that David still does not understand basketball. I still do not understand cricket.

As we've said before, the great alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom is rooted in shared interests and shared values, and it's indispensable to global security and prosperity. But as we've seen again recently, it's also a partnership of the heart. Here in the United States, we joined our British friends in mourning the passing of Baroness Margaret Thatcher, a great champion of freedom and liberty and of the alliance that we carry on today. And after the bombings in Boston, we Americans were grateful for the support of friends from around the world, particularly those across the Atlantic. At the London Marathon, runners paused in a moment of silence and dedicated their race to Boston. And David will be visiting Boston to pay tribute to the victims and first responders.

So, David, I want to thank you and the British people for reminding us that in good times and in bad, our two peoples stand as one.

Now, David is here, first and foremost, as he prepares to host the G–8 next month. I appreciate him updating me on the agenda as it takes shape, and we discussed how the summit will be another opportunity to sustain the global economic recovery with a focus on growth and creating jobs for our people. Michelle and I are looking forward to visiting Northern Ireland, and I know that the summit is going to be a great success under David's fine leadership.

We discussed the importance of moving ahead with the EU towards negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Our extensive trade with the U.K. is central to our broader transatlantic economic relationship, which supports more than 13 million jobs. And I want to thank David for his strong support for building on those ties, and I look forward to launching negotiations with the EU in the coming months. I believe we've got a real opportunity to cut tariffs, open markets, create jobs, and make all of our economies even more competitive.

With regard to global security, we reviewed progress in Afghanistan, where our troops continue to serve with extraordinary courage alongside each other. And I want to commend David for his efforts to encourage greater dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is critical to regional security.

As planned, Afghan forces will take the lead for security across the country soon, this spring. U.S., British, and coalition forces will move into a support role. Our troops will continue to come home, and the war will end by the end of next year, even as we work with our Afghan partners to make sure that Afghanistan is never again a haven for terrorists who would attack our nations.

Given our shared commitment to Middle East peace, I updated David on Secretary Kerry's efforts with Israelis and Palestinians and the importance of moving towards negotiations. And we reaffirmed our support for democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa, including the economic reforms that have to go along with political reforms.

Of course, we discussed Syria and the appalling violence being inflicted on the Syrian people. Together, we're going to continue our efforts to increase pressure on the Asad regime, to provide humanitarian aid to the long-suffering Syrian people, to strengthen the moderate opposition, and to prepare for a democratic Syria without Bashar Asad.

And that includes bringing together representatives of the regime and the opposition in Geneva in the coming weeks to agree on a transitional body, which would allow a transfer of power from Asad to this governing body. Meanwhile, we'll continue to work to establish the facts around the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and those facts will help guide our next steps.

We discussed Iran, where we agreed to keep up the pressure on Tehran for its continued failure to abide by its nuclear obligations. The burden is on Iran to engage constructively with us and our P–5-plus-1 partners in order to resolve the world's concerns about its nuclear program.

And finally, today we're reaffirming our commitment to global development. Specifically, we're encouraged by the ambitious reforms underway at the Global Fund To Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, where both of our nations are stepping up our efforts. And David's made it clear that the G–8 summit will be another opportunity to make progress on nutrition and food security.

So, David, thank you very much, as always, for your leadership and your partnership. As we prepare for our work in Northern Ireland, as we consider the challenges we face around the world, it's clear we face a demanding agenda. But if the history of our people show anything, it is that we persevere. As one of those London runners said at the marathon, "We're going to keep running, and we're going to keep on doing this." And that's the spirit of confidence and resolve that we will continue to draw upon as we work together to meet these challenges.

So, David, thank you very much. And welcome.

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you very much, Barack. And thank you for the warm welcome. It's great to be back here with you in the White House. Thank you for what you said about Margaret Thatcher. It was a pleasure to welcome so many Americans to her remarkable funeral in the U.K.

I absolutely echo what you said about the appalling outrage in Boston. I look forward to going there to pay my tribute to the people of that remarkable city and their courage. And we will always stand with you in the fight against terrorism.

Thank you for the remarks about the cricket and the basketball. I haven't made much progress; I made a bit of progress on baseball; I actually read a book about it this year, so maybe next time, we'll get to work on that one.

It's good to be back for the first time since the American people returned you to office. And as you said, the relationship between Britain and the United States is a partnership without parallel. Day in, day out, across the world, our diplomats and intelligence agencies work together, our soldiers serve together, and our businesses trade with each other.

In Afghanistan, our armed forces are together defending the stability that will make us all safer. And in the global economic race, our businesses are doing more than $17 billion of trade across the Atlantic every month of every year. And in a changing world, our nations share a resolve to stand up for democracy, for enterprise, and for freedom.

We've discussed many issues today, as the President has said. Let me highlight three: the economy, the G–8, and Syria.

Our greatest challenge is to secure a sustainable economic recovery. Each of us has to find the right solutions at home. For all of us, it means dealing with debt, it means restoring stability, getting our economy growing, and together seizing new opportunities to grow our economies.

President Obama and I have both championed a free trade deal between the European Union and the United States. And there is a real chance now to get the process launched in time for the G–8. So the next 5 weeks are crucial. To realize the huge benefits this deal could bring will take ambition and political will. That means everything on the table, even the difficult issues, and no exceptions. It's worth the effort. For Britain alone, an ambitious deal could be worth up to £10 billion a year, boosting industries from car manufacturing to financial services.

We discussed the G–8 Summit in some detail. When we meet on the shores of Loch Erne in Northern Ireland 5 weeks from today, I want us to agree ambitious action for economic growth. Open trade is at the heart of this, but we have a broader agenda too: to make sure everyone shares in the benefits of this greater openness, not just in our advanced economies, but in the developing world too. I'm an unashamedly probusiness politician, but as we open up our economies to get business growing, we need to make sure that all companies pay their taxes properly and enable citizens to hold their governments and businesses to account.

Today we've agreed to tackle the scourge of tax evasion. We need to know who really owns a company, who profits from it, whether taxes are paid. And we need a new mechanism to track where multinationals make their money and where they pay their taxes so we can stop those that are manipulating the system unfairly.

Finally, we discussed the brutal conflict in Syria: 80,000 dead, 5 million people forced from their homes. Syria's history is being written in the blood of her people, and it is happening on our watch. The world urgently needs to come together to bring the killing to an end. None of us have any interest in seeing more lives lost, in seeing chemical weapons used or extremist violence spreading even further.

So we welcome President Putin's agreement to join an effort to achieve a political solution. The challenges remain formidable, but we have an urgent window of opportunity before the worst fears are realized. There is no more urgent international task than this. We need to get Syrians to the table to agree a transitional government that can win the consent of all of the Syrian people. But there will be no political progress unless the opposition is able to withstand the onslaught and put pressure on Asad so he knows there is no military victory. So we will also increase our efforts to support and to shape the moderate opposition.

Britain is pushing for more flexibility in the EU arms embargo, and we will double nonlethal support to the Syrian opposition in the coming year. Armored vehicles, body armor, and power generators are right to be shipped. We're helping local councils govern the areas that they liberate, and we're supporting Lebanon and Jordan to deal with the influx of refugees. We'll also do more for those in desperate humanitarian need: care for trauma injuries, helping torture victims to recover, getting Syrian families drinking clean water, having access to food, to shelter.

There is now, I believe, common ground between the U.S., U.K., Russia, and many others that whatever our differences, we have the same aim: a stable, inclusive, and peaceful Syria, free from the scourge of extremism. There is real political will behind this. We now need to get on and do everything we can to make it happen.

Barack, thank you once again for your warm welcome and for our talks today.

President Obama. Thank you. All right, we've got time for a couple of questions. We're going to start with Julie Pace [Associated Press].

Internal Revenue Service/Attack on U.S. Mission in Benghazi, Libya

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask about the IRS and Benghazi. When did you first learn that the IRS was targeting conservative political groups? Do you feel that the IRS has betrayed the public's trust? And what do you think the repercussions for these actions should be? And on Benghazi, newly public e-mails show that the White House and the State Department appear to have been more closely involved with the crafting of the talking points on the attack than first acknowledged. Do you think the White House misled the public about its role in shaping the talking points? And do you stand by your administration's assertions that the talking points were not purposely changed to downplay the prospects of terrorism? And, Prime Minister Cameron, on Syria, if the EU arms embargo that you mentioned is amended or lapses, is it your intention to send the Syrian opposition forces weapons? And are you encouraging President Obama to take the same step? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, let me take the IRS situation first. I first learned about it from the same news reports that, I think, most people learned about this. I think it was on Friday. And this is pretty straightforward.

If in fact IRS personnel engaged in the kind of practices that had been reported on and were intentionally targeting conservative groups, then that's outrageous, and there's no place for it. And they have to be held fully accountable, because the IRS, as an independent agency, requires absolute integrity, and people have to have confidence that they're applying it in a nonpartisan way—applying the laws in a nonpartisan way.

And you should feel that way regardless of party. I don't care whether you're a Democrat, Independent, or a Republican. At some point, there are going to be Republican administrations. At some point, there are going to be Democratic ones. Either way, you don't want the IRS ever being perceived to be biased and anything less than neutral in terms of how they operate. So this is something that I think people are properly concerned about.

The IG is conducting its investigation. And I am not going to comment on their specific findings prematurely, but I can tell you that if you've got the IRS operating in anything less than a neutral and nonpartisan way, then that is outrageous; it is contrary to our traditions. And people have to be held accountable, and it's got to be fixed. So we'll wait and see what exactly all the details and the facts are. But I've got no patience with it. I will not tolerate it. And we will make sure that we find out exactly what happened on this.

With respect to Benghazi, we've now seen this argument that's been made by some folks, primarily up on Capitol Hill, for months now. And I've just got to say, here's what we know: Americans died in Benghazi. What we also know is clearly they were not in a position where they were adequately protected. The day after it happened, I acknowledged that this was an act of terrorism. And what I pledged to the American people was that we would find out what happened, we would make sure that it did not happen again, and we would make sure that we held accountable those who had perpetrated this terrible crime.

And that's exactly what we've been trying to do. And over the last several months, there was a review board headed by two distinguished Americans—Mike Mullen and Tom Pickering—who investigated every element of this. And what they discovered was some pretty harsh judgments in terms of how we had worked to protect consulates and Embassies around the world. They gave us a whole series of recommendations. Those recommendations are being implemented as we speak.

The whole issue of this—of talking points, frankly, throughout this process, has been a sideshow. What we have been very clear about throughout was that immediately after this event happened, we were not clear who exactly had carried it out, how it had been—how it had occurred, what the motivations were. It happened at the same time as we had seen attacks on U.S. Embassies in Cairo as a consequence of this film. And nobody understood exactly what was taking place during the course of those first few days.

And the e-mails that you allude to were provided by us to congressional committees. They reviewed them several months ago, concluded that, in fact, there was nothing afoul in terms of the process that we had used. And suddenly, 3 days ago, this gets spun up as if there's something new to the story. There's no "there" there.

Keep in mind, by the way, these so-called talking points that were prepared for Susan Rice 5, 6 days after the event occurred pretty much matched the assessments that I was receiving at that time in my Presidential daily briefing. And keep in mind that 2 to 3 days after Susan Rice appeared on the Sunday shows—using these talking points, which have been the source of all this controversy—I sent up the head of our National Counterterrorism Center, Matt Olsen, up to Capitol Hill and specifically said it was an act of terrorism and that extremist elements inside of Libya had been involved in it.

So if this was some effort on our part to try to downplay what had happened or tamp it

down, that would be a pretty odd thing that 3 days later, we end up putting out all the information that in fact has now served as the basis for everybody recognizing that this was a terrorist attack and that it may have included elements that were planned by extremists inside of Libya.

Who executes some sort of coverup or effort to tamp things down for 3 days? So the whole thing defies logic. And the fact that this keeps on getting churned out frankly has a lot to do with political motivations. We've had folks who have challenged Hillary Clinton's integrity, Susan Rice's integrity, Mike Mullen and Tom Pickering's integrity. It's a given that mine gets challenged by these same folks. They've used it for fundraising.

And frankly, if anybody out there wants to actually focus on how we make sure something like this does not happen again, I am happy to get their advice and information and counsel. But the fact of the matter is, these 4 Americans, as I said right when it happened, were people I sent into the field, and I've been very clear about taking responsibility for the fact that we were not able to prevent their deaths. And we are doing everything we can to make sure we prevent it, in part because there are still diplomats around the world who are in very dangerous, difficult situations. And we don't have time to be playing these kinds of political games here in Washington. We should be focused on what are we doing to protect them.

And that's not easy, by the way. And it's going to require resources and tough judgments and tough calls. And there are a whole bunch of diplomats out there who know that they're in harm's way. And there are threat streams that come through every so often, with respect to our Embassies and our consulates. And that's not just us, by the way; the British have to deal with the same thing.

And we've got a whole bunch of people in the State Department who consistently say, you know what, I'm willing to step up, I'm willing to put myself in harm's way because I think that this mission is important in terms of serving the United States and advancing our interests around the globe.

And so we dishonor them when we turn things like this into a political circus. What happened was tragic. It was carried out by extremists inside of Libya. We are out there trying to hunt down the folks who carried this out, and we are trying to make sure that we fix the system so that it doesn't happen again. David.

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you. On the issue of the opposition in Syria, I mean, we have not made the decision to arm opposition groups in Syria. What we've done is we have amended the EU arms embargo in order that we can give technical assistance and technical advice. And as I said in my statement, that's exactly what we're doing.

We're continuing to examine and look at the EU arms embargo and see whether we need to make further changes to it in order to facilitate our work with the opposition. I do believe that there's more we can do, alongside technical advice, assistance, help, in order to shape them, in order to work with them. And to those who doubt that approach, I would just argue that, look, if we don't help the Syrian opposition—who we do recognize as being legitimate, who have signed up to a statement about a future for Syria that is democratic, that respects the rights of minorities—if we don't work with that part of the opposition, then we shouldn't be surprised if the extremist elements grow.

So I think being engaged with the Syrian opposition is the right approach, and that is an approach I know I share with the President and with other colleagues in the European Union.

James Landale from the BBC.

United Kingdom-European Union Relations/Syria/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. James Landale, BBC. Prime Minister, you're talking here today about a new EU-U.S. trade deal, and yet members of your party are now talking about leaving the European Union. What is your message to them and to those pushing for an early referendum? And if there were a referendum tomorrow, how would you vote?

And, Mr. President, earlier this year, you told David Cameron that you wanted a strong U.K. in a strong EU. How concerned are you that members of David Cameron's Cabinet are now openly contemplating withdrawal?

And on Syria, if I may, a question to both of you: What gives you any confidence that the Russians are going to help you on this?

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, first of all, on the issue of a referendum, look, there's not going to be a referendum tomorrow. And there's a very good reason why there's not going to be a referendum tomorrow, is because it would give the British public, I think, an entirely false choice between the status quo, which I don't think is acceptable. I want to see the European Union change. I want to see Britain's relationship with the European [Union]* change and improve. So it would be a false choice between the status quo and leaving. And I don't think that is the choice the British public want or the British public deserve.

Everything I do in this area is guided by a very simple principle, which is, what is in the national interests of Britain? Is it in the national interests of Britain to have a transatlantic trade deal that will make our countries more prosperous, that will get people to work, that will help our businesses? Yes, it is. And so we will push for this transatlantic trade deal.

Is it in our interests to reform the European Union to make it more open, more competitive, more flexible, and to improve Britain's place within the European Union? Yes, it is in our national interest. And it's not only in our national interest, it is achievable, because Europe has to change because the single currency is driving change for that part of the European Union that is in the single currency. And just as they want changes, so, I believe, Britain is quite entitled to ask for and to get changes in response.

And then, finally, is it in Britain's national interest, once we have achieved those changes, but before the end of 2017, to consult the British public in a proper, full-on, in-out referendum? Yes, I believe it is. So that's the approach that we take: everything driven by what is in the British national interest.

That is what I'm going to deliver. It's absolutely right for our country. It has very strong support throughout the country and in the Conservative Party, and that's exactly what I'm going to do.

On the Syrian issue, you asked the question, what are the signs of Russian engagement? Well, I had very good talks with President Putin in Sochi on Friday. And look, we had a very frank conversation in that we have approached this—and in some extent, still do approach this—in a different way. I have been very vocal in supporting the Syrian opposition and saying that Asad is—has to go, that he is not legitimate, and I continue to say that. And President Putin has taken a different point of view.

But where there is a common interest is that it is in both our interests that at the end of this there is a stable, democratic Syria, that there is a stable neighborhood, and that we don't encourage the growth of violent extremism. And I think both the Russian President, the American President, and myself, I think we can all see that the current trajectory of how things are going is not actually in anybody's interests, and so it is worth this major diplomatic effort, which we are all together leading this major diplomatic effort to bring the parties to the table to achieve a transition at the top in Syria so that we can make the change that country needs. Go ahead.

President Obama. With respect to the relationship between the U.K. and the EU, we have a special relationship with the United Kingdom. And we believe that our capacity to partner with a United Kingdom that is active, robust, outward looking, and engaged with the world is hugely important to our own interests as well as the world. And I think the U.K.'s participation in the EU is an expression of its influence and its role in the world, as well as obviously a very important economic partnership.

Now, ultimately, the people of the U.K. have to make decisions for themselves. I will

* White House correction.

say this, that David's basic point that you probably want to see if you can fix what's broken in a very important relationship before you break it off makes some sense to me. And I know that David has been very active in seeking some reforms internal to the EU. Those are tough negotiations. You've got a lot of countries involved; I recognize that. But so long as we haven't yet evaluated how successful those reforms will be, I at least would be interested in seeing whether or not those are successful before rendering a final judgment. Again, I want to emphasize these are issues for the people of the United Kingdom to make a decision about, not ours.

With respect to Syria, I think David said it very well. If you look objectively, the entire world community has an interest in seeing a Syria that is not engaged in sectarian war, in which the Syrian people are not being slaughtered, that is an island of peace as opposed to potentially an outpost for extremists. That's not just true for the United States, that's not just true for Great Britain, that's not just true for countries like Jordan and Turkey that border Syria, but that's also true for Russia.

And I'm pleased to hear that David had a very constructive conversation with President Putin shortly after the conversation that had taken place between John Kerry and President Putin. I've spoken to President Putin several times on this topic. And our basic argument is that as a leader on the world stage, Russia has an interest, as well as an obligation, to try to resolve this issue in a way that can lead to the kind of outcome that we'd all like to see over the long term.

And look, I don't think it's any secret that there remains lingering suspicions between Russia and other members of the G–8 or the West. It's been several decades now since Russia transformed itself and the Eastern Bloc transformed itself. But some of those suspicions still exist.

And part of what my goal has been, John Kerry's goal has been, and I know that David's goal has been to try to break down some of those suspicions and look objectively at the situation.

If in fact we can broker a peaceful political transition that leads to Asad's departure, but a state in Syria that is still intact; that accommodates the interests of all the ethnic groups, all the religious groups inside of Syria; and that ends the bloodshed, stabilizes the situation—that's not just going to be good for us, that will be good for everybody. And we're going to be very persistent in trying to make that happen.

I'm not promising that it's going to be successful. Frankly, sometimes, once sort of the Furies have been unleashed in a situation like we're seeing in Syria, it's very hard to put things back together. And there is—there are going to be enormous challenges in getting a credible process going even if Russia is involved, because we have still other countries like Iran and we have nonstate actors like Hizballah that have been actively involved. And frankly, on the other side we've got organizations like al-Nusra that are essentially affiliated to Al Qaida that have another agenda beyond just getting rid of Asad.

So all that makes a combustible mix, and it's going to be challenging, but it's worth the effort. And what we can tell you is that we're always more successful in any global effort when we've got a strong friend and partner like Great Britain by our side and strong leadership by Prime Minister David Cameron.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:41 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration J. Russell George; former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Michael G. Mullen, USN (Ret.), and former Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, in their capacity as Cochairs of the Accountability Review Board for the attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City
May 13, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Well, first of all, I have to thank Harvey and Georgina for once again extending incredible hospitality to us. We are so grateful for their friendship and support, and for the amazing movies that they've made. And it is wonderful to see all of you. I see old friends, new friends, and people who, when I have time to watch movies or TV, I very much appreciate. So thank you for the great work that you guys do.

I'm going to spend most of this time in a conversation with everybody, so I'm not going to give a long speech at the front end. Over the last 3 weeks, month, the country has gone through some tough times. Obviously, we had the Boston bombing and the incredible tragedy that marred what is one of the greatest sporting events in the world and an iconic event here in America. We went out to West, Texas, to a tiny town that had been devastated by an explosion there.

And I remember, I was with Deval Patrick, a wonderful Governor—the Governor of Massachusetts—as we were driving to a memorial in Boston shortly after the attack. And we talked about that in the midst of tragedy, the incredible strength and courage and resolve of the American people just comes out and the neighborliness and the sense of willing to support strangers and neighbors and friends during tough times. And that same spirit, which I would later see when I visited West, Texas—you can't get two places more different than Boston and West, Texas. So it's a pretty good representative sampling of America.

And part of what Deval and I talked about was what do we need to do to make sure that that same spirit is reflected in our politics and our Government, because it's there every day for people to see. It doesn't matter whether people are Democrats or Republicans or Independents. If you go into schools, you go to Little League games, you talk to people at the workplace, everybody has the same sense that we live in the greatest country on Earth, that we've gone through some tough times, but we're resilient and we can overcome whatever challenges are thrown at us. And there's a desire to get outside of the constant squabbling and bickering and positioning and gamesmanship and get to the business of figuring out how do we make sure that the next generation does better than this generation.

And as I think about my second term, and people have asked me, what's different about your second term, well, other than me being grayer—[*laughter*]—and my girls being taller, the main thing about a second term is, A, I don't have to run for office again, but, B, you also start just thinking about history, and you start thinking about—in longer sweeps of time, and you start saying to yourself that the 3½ years that I've got is not a lot, and so I've got to make sure that I use everything I've got to make as much of a difference as I can.

And more than anything, what I will be striving for over the next 3½ years is to see if that spirit that I saw in Boston and West, Texas, if we can institutionalize that, if we can create a framework where everybody is working together and moving this country forward.

Now, the good news is that if we do that, we've got the best cards of any country on Earth, and that's the truth. Look, there's no American politician, much less American President, who's not going to say that we're not the greatest country on Earth. So that's a cliche. On the other hand, objectively, when you look at where we are right now, we are poised for a 21st century that is as much the American century as the 20th century was.

We have recovered from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and yet the economy is growing: millions of jobs have been created, the stock market has hit record highs, the housing market has begun to recover. When you look at our companies, innovation, dynamism, inventiveness still take root here in the United States more than anyplace else on Earth.

When it comes to energy, not only have we been able to double our production of clean

energy, but even in terms of traditional energy, we will probably be a net exporter of natural gas in somewhere between 5 and 10 years. And so the idea of the United States being energy independent—which seemed farfetched as recently as 10 years ago—now is actually a possibility.

When you travel around the world, people still look to the United States for leadership. I went down to Mexico and then Costa Rica, and I met with Central American leaders down there, and each and every one of them, including Daniel Ortega, who was at one of the meetings—and some of you are too young to remember, I guess, Daniel Ortega, and I'm not—[*laughter*]—all of them talked about how can we trade, how can we work more effectively together. And so the possibilities for us to shape a world that is more peaceful, more prosperous, more innovative, more environmentally conscious, more tolerant, more open, that opportunity exists, but there are just a few things that we're going to have to do to make sure that we realize those opportunities, that potential.

We've got to continue to revamp our education system so it's meeting the demands of the 21st century. We've got to rebuild our infrastructure so we don't have the worst airports in the world. We've got to make sure—and ports and roads and bridges and broadband lines. We've got to make sure that we continue to focus on putting people back to work, because jobs are not just a matter of income, they're a matter of dignity and stitching the fabric of a community together.

We've got to deal with climate change in an honest, realistic way. We're not going to reverse the trends overnight, but we have to start now for the sake of our kids, and in fact, the tools are available to us to make huge strides in the coming years if we make the smart investments. We've got to keep on investing in research and development. And we've got to get our fiscal house in order in a way that is sensible so that everybody is paying their fair share; everybody understands that we have to—if we want a first-class education system, for example, then we've got to pay for it. If we want first-class infrastructure, we've got to pay for it. But we also want a government that is lean and effective and efficient and not bloated.

And these are all things that we can accomplish. What's blocking us right now is sort of hyperpartisanship in Washington that, frankly, I was hoping to overcome in 2008. And in the midst of crisis, I think the other party reacted, rather than saying now is the time for us all to join together, decided to take a different path.

My thinking was, after we beat them in 2012, well, that might break the fever—[*laughter*]—and it's not quite broken yet. [*Laughter*] But I am persistent. And I am staying at it. And I genuinely believe that there are actually Republicans out there who would like to work with us, but they're fearful of their base, and they're concerned about what Rush Limbaugh might say about them. And as a consequence, we get the kind of gridlock that makes people cynical about government and inhibits our progress.

So the bottom line is this: Everybody is here to support the DNC, and I very much appreciate that. But I want everybody to understand that my intentions over the next 3½ years are to govern, because I don't have another race left. If we've got folks on the other side who are prepared to cooperate, that is great, and we are ready to go. On the other hand, if there are folks who are more interested in winning elections than they are thinking about the next generation, then I want to make sure that there are consequences to that.

And what you all are here today to facilitate is our ability to make sure that the values and concerns that we all have for Dash and all the other babies that are out there—Steve has got a new one, and I'm starting to feel like the old man around here because mine are this tall and everybody else has these little babies. But I want to make sure that that generation is getting everything and more that we can give them. And that's going to require us to work hard. It's going to require persistence. There are going to be ups and downs in this whole process.

But one of the benefits of a second term is you start taking the long view. And what I know is, is that as long as we are pointing towards that

true north, that eventually we'll get there. That's what this country has always done. That's what I expect will happen this time as well.

So with that, I'm going to stop, and I'm just going to open it up for questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:24 p.m. at the residence of Harvey Weinstein and Georgina Chapman. In his remarks, he referred to President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of Nicaragua; radio show host Rush Limbaugh; and Dashiell Weinstein, son of Mr. Weinstein and Ms. Chapman. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City
May 13, 2013

Well, first of all, I want to make sure everybody has got their food—[*laughter*]—because I don't want to get in the way of dinner here, because it looks delicious.

I want to thank Alexandra and Sam for their wonderful hospitality. It is not easy opening up your house for an event with the President, between all the tables and then the Secret Service and this and that. But you guys have been great friends, and this means so much to us, so we are very, very grateful. [*Applause*] Yes, absolutely.

I see a lot of friends and supporters in the room. So many of you were active during the course of the campaign. I could not be more grateful for it and more humbled. One person I do want to acknowledge—because not only was he active in the campaign, but he has now been volunteered to head up the DNC Finance Committee—Henry Muñoz is here from the great State of Texas. So I want to say thank you to Henry.

This is a pretty rambunctious group, so I want to use most of my time for questions and answers. But let me just make a few comments at the top. Obviously, this last month, America faced some enormous challenges. We had the Boston bombing, the explosion in West, Texas. And I was mentioning at an event before I came here, I was driving with Deval Patrick to the memorial service in Boston, and we remarked on how when tragedy strikes, when a crisis occurs, there's something about the American spirit: The resilience, strength, but most of all, that sense of community and neighborliness just shines through.

And even in our darkest hours, you can't help but come away incredibly optimistic about the country. Now, the question Deval and I asked ourselves is, how do we sustain that beyond moments of crisis and tragedy, and how do we translate that into our politics and our institutions? Because obviously, that spirit isn't always in evidence in Washington. [*Laughter*] But having said that, one of the virtues of a second term is it gives you some perspective. And I don't have another race to run. And what I've learned from my first term in office—and probably, what I've learned during the course of my life—is things that are worth doing don't happen right away. And it requires persistence and just the steady, constant application of hard work and tenacity and the ability to maintain a vision about where you want to go.

So here, domestically, our work is not yet done. And I am absolutely confident that if we stay with it, we are going to be able to get immigration reform done this year. We're going to be able to continue some of the incredible education work that's being done all around the country, and Randi has been an incredible partner in that process. We're going to be able to continue to work to make sure that we're rebuilding our infrastructure in our country, putting people back to work, helping the housing market continue to recover, putting people all across the country in a position where if they're willing to work hard, they can succeed and achieve their own American dreams.

So we've got a big agenda here at home. But we also have a big agenda internationally. Obviously, all of us are deeply concerned about

what's happening in Syria. And my administration has worked with international partners to mobilize humanitarian aid, nonlethal assistance to the opposition, isolating Asad, and continuing to press for political transition that ends the slaughter and brings about an end to the Asad regime.

We also have a lot of unfinished business with respect to Afghanistan. Our troops are coming home, and we're transitioning out. But it's still a very dangerous place. And we have to make sure that the gains that have been made are sustained. And we've got to make sure that we're being vigilant when it comes to dealing with Al Qaida and other terrorist elements.

And then, something that so many people in this room are knowledgeable about, the peace process and reinvigorating a sense of hope and possibility for both Israelis and Palestinians. One of the highlights obviously of this early second term was the trip that I was able to take to Israel and to the Palestinian Authority and to the West Bank. And what made the trip so incredible was not only the capacity to see the incredible progress that Israel has made on so many fronts—we looked at science exhibitions and to see how the economy is transforming itself into a high-tech, entrepreneurial center and to have a chance to talk to young people who are doing so many incredible things.

But what was also encouraging was the sense that for all the difficulties, for all the setbacks, for all the false starts, deep down, there's still this incredible desire for peace. It exists in Israel; it exists among the Palestinians. And the question is, can we create a framework in which to actually finally deliver on that promise, particularly because the window of opportunity is growing smaller by the day? And in some ways, it's more difficult because of the incredible tumult that's taking place throughout the Middle East.

When change is happening so fast—and in some cases, so chaotically and sometimes violently—it makes people tend not to take risks. On the other hand, precisely because those changes are taking place all around the region, Israel's security and the prospect of Palestinian statehood all requires that those risks are taken and they're taken now.

And in order for us to achieve that, it's going to be important that John Kerry and my administration continue to work this thing very hard. But part of what's going to be required is also that those who are committed to peace here in this country continue to make their voices heard and continue to speak out. So many of you already have and are already making a difference, but I urge you to continue. And it's going to have to happen not just in interactions with the State Department or my administration, you're going to have to be vocal on Capitol Hill as well.

And if we sustain that, then, in fits and starts—it will be difficult, it will be tough, there will be times where it feels like we're going backwards instead of forwards—I believe that in the end, peace can be achieved. I am a big believer in a quote that I took from Dr. King, but I think describes my general perspective about both America and our future, but also our role in the world, and that is that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." It requires persistence, it requires tenacity, but in the end, I think that good overcomes evil and light overcomes darkness. And that's what we have to strive for every single day, and that's how I intend to spend the 3½ years that I have remaining as President, and I couldn't have done that without the help of all of you.

So thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:52 p.m. at the residence of Alexandra Stanton and Samuel Natapoff. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts; Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Yemen
May 13, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 of May 16, 2012, with respect to Yemen is to continue in effect beyond May 16, 2013.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Yemen and others continue to threaten Yemen's peace, security, and stability, including by obstructing the implementation of the agreement of November 23, 2011, between the Government of Yemen and those in opposition to it, which provided for a peaceful transition of power that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people for change, and by obstructing the political process in Yemen. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 with respect to Yemen.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in New York City
May 13, 2013

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat.

Well, first of all, thank you so much, Steve Israel, not only for the wonderful introduction, but I love the story of your grandparents. And so often we spend time thinking about how we got into this strange business—[*laughter*]—but so often it traces back to the values that were passed on generation through generation. And to hear that story, I think, affirms not only why you're such an outstanding Congressman, but also the kind of man you are. And so we're thrilled to have you here and just the great job you're doing on behalf of the DCCC. So give Steve a big round of applause.

I want to say thank you to somebody who has been a great friend. If you are in a foxhole, this is the person you want with you: the soon-to-be-again Speaker of the House, Leader Nancy Pelosi. We love Nancy.

And one of my favorite Senators, just a guy who everybody who meets him says, that guy, he's just solid, sincere, hard-working, a wonderful family, and has really helped to transform politics in Colorado: Michael Bennet. Give Michael a big round of applause.

And of course, I want to acknowledge all the outstanding members of the New York delegation who are here. But I've got to give a special shout-out to somebody who is helping to engineer some of the most important legislative agendas—items that we've got in my second term, could not be prouder of him: Chuck Schumer. Give Chuck a big round of applause.

So, over the last month, we've gone through some tough times in this country. Obviously, we saw the horrific bombing of the Boston Marathon. I had traveled down to a tiny town of West, Texas, to deal with the aftermath of a

terrible explosion there that had such a devastating impact on the city. It's hard to find two communities more different than Boston, Massachusetts, and West, Texas, I assure you. And yet what was striking about that very difficult, challenging week was the consistency of spirit from Boston all the way to West, Texas.

And I remember being in a car with Deval Patrick, the outstanding mayor of—Governor of Massachusetts, and we were driving to a memorial service, and we were talking about the emergency response and how first responders who were actually running in the race all ran to the site of the explosion, and how the hospitals and doctors responded magnificently to sort through who would go where to maximize their ability to care for the victims, and the people who were driving runners to their homes, complete strangers, because of everything that had happened. And what Deval and I agreed on was that in times of tragedy, in the midst of just terrible pain, there's something about the American spirit that just rises up.

And it's not just resilience. There is a generosity and a sense of neighborliness and an insistence on doing the right thing and thinking about others. And Deval and I talked about how this is a constant in America, and it's not just during tragedies, not just during crises. You can see it out on a Little League field where parents are out there volunteering. You see it in churches and synagogues and mosques and temples all across the country. You see it in neighbors helping neighbors, and you see it in workplaces where workers are taking pride of great American products and services that they're creating, helping to build a Nation.

But the one thing Deval and I agreed on was that we're not seeing enough of it in our politics, and we're certainly not seeing enough of it in Washington. And one of the things that a second term affords you is a little bit of perspective, because I don't have to run again, as Michelle happily reminds me. [*Laughter*] And I've been through some tough battles over the last 4 years and then my time in the Senate before that. And you're able to project out a little bit into the future.

And precisely because of that spirit that was evident in West, Texas, and in Boston, I've probably never been more optimistic about America. Having gone through these extraordinary hardships—worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, the financial system on the verge of meltdown, dealing with two wars and all the losses associated with that and the enormous strains on our budget—we are now in the process of having cleared out the rubble.

And although we are nowhere near where we need to be, given everything that we've gone through, we have seen job growth for almost 3 consecutive years now. We have seen the economy growing. We have seen people's 401(k)s and investments on Wall Street restored. We've seen health care costs grow at a slower pace over the last 3 years than any time in the last 50 years. We are in the process of implementing and making sure that millions of people all across the country finally get affordable health care that they've never had before.

We have doubled the production of clean, renewable energy, and our traditional, national—natural gas and oil deposits have been tapped with new technology in ways that will probably lead us to be a net exporter of natural gas within the next 5 to 10 years.

And housing, which was probably the biggest drag on our economy, is steadily beginning to recover. And so, across the board, there are all these signs of progress. And that's the American spirit at work. That's the American people—through grit and determination and a vision of possibility, just brick by brick, neighborhood by neighborhood, city by city, State by State—rebuilding.

And when I travel internationally—I took a trip down to Mexico and met with not only the new Mexican President, but also leaders of Central American countries. What was striking is that in a part of the world where in the past there had been times where there had been suspicions directed at the United States and what our motives were, there's an enormous hunger to engage in trade and commerce and cooperation to deal with these transnational drug networks and a genuine sense of the—not just the desire, but the need for American

leadership. Not a leadership that dictates, not a leadership that seeks simply to impose our will on others, but a leadership in which we are convening and collaborating and partnering, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

And so the bottom line is, when I canvas the world, there is no nation that we would want to trade hands with. And there's no nation that secretly—they couldn't admit it—wouldn't mind having the hand that we're holding. And the only thing that's holding us back—the only thing that's holding us back—is a spirit in Washington that isn't reflective of the spirit of the American people, a spirit in Washington that's more interested in game-playing than getting things done, a spirit in Washington that is more concerned about the next election than the next generation. And that has to change. And that's why you're here tonight, because you know it has to change.

We've got more work to do. And I spelled out in my Inauguration and I spelled out in my State of the Union exactly what we need to do. We need to continue to build on the tremendous progress we've made in reforming our education system and make sure that every child in America is prepared before they start school with universal pre-K for every kid, which can make an enormous difference in achievement levels all across the country; modernize our high schools so they're adapted to the 21st century; make sure that our community colleges are linking up with businesses to prepare our young people for the jobs of tomorrow; make college more affordable. We know that we need to do that. There's no credible argument for not doing it.

We know we've got to rebuild our infrastructure. We've got $2 trillion worth of deferred maintenance. There was a list a few months back of the top airports in the world, not one out of the top 25 were in the United States of America. Not one. Imagine that. Roads, bridges, airports, ports, broadband lines, smart grids.

We know what we've got to do. And by the way, if we are rebuilding our infrastructure, we're putting people back to work right now. So it's strengthening our economy now and for the future. We know what we need to do.

We know that we have to control our energy future. And as promising as these new technologies are to tap into new sources of energy, we also know that climate change is real. And if we want to leave a world for our children and our grandchildren that is as beautiful as the one that we inherited, then we're going to have to double down on our investments in basic research and science around clean energy and discover not just the energy source of the past, but also the energy source of the future. We've got to win that race. We know that. We know that.

We know we've got to get immigration reform done, because we want America to attract the best and the brightest. We want the message of the Statue of Liberty to be resonating around the world, that flame to continue to shine as a beacon, not just for freedom, but also for people who are ambitious and have drive and who are unconstrained by the past, because they believe in the future. We know we've got to do that.

And we know that we've got to have a sensible budget, a budget that invests in education and invests in research and is true to our commitment to keeping our seniors out of poverty and is true to our investment in the infrastructure that's going to continue to make this a growing, dynamic economy. And we can do all that. We don't have to do anything radical. We know what the basic plan is.

And with just some modest steps, with the deficit already coming down quicker than at any time since World War II, at a faster pace, we know that if we just make a few smart decisions both on the revenue side and on the spending side—not through automatic, mindless spending cuts that are slashing our commitments to research and our investments in our kids, but through smart, targeted spending cuts and revenue—that we can stabilize our budget for decades to come, just open field running from there on out. America cannot be stopped if we make some smart decisions.

Internationally, as I said, people are looking for our leadership. But what they're not

looking for is us simply seeing every problem as a military problem. They're looking for us to be proponents of peace and work on its behalf.

They are looking for us for us to show leadership in helping make sure that children around the world aren't dying of malnutrition and that they get a decent education and that people in extreme poverty making less than $2 a day, that they're put in a position in which they can succeed because they understand that if they succeed, then America will succeed as well. And they don't understand exactly sometimes what's holding us back.

So the promise of America is alive and well, and I could not be more optimistic. But that spirit that we saw in Boston, that spirit that we saw in West, Texas, we're going to have to unleash that. And the only way we unleash that is to make sure that Washington, our elected leadership, that they start reflecting that spirit as well. And I can tell you that the Democratic leaders in that room—in this room, they reflect that spirit, because I see them every single day. I know their values and I know what they care about, and I know what they're working for.

And truth be told, there are folks on the other side of the aisle who have that spirit as well. It's not a Democratic or a Republican spirit. It's not a partisan spirit. It's an American spirit.

But what is also true is that the dynamic on the other side of the aisle right now runs contrary to what we need in order to succeed, that they've got a different point of view right now, reinforced by some folks around the country that don't share our vision for America as a place where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share.

And now, I'm going to do everything I can over the next 3½ years to continue to reach out to my Republican friends on the other side of the aisle, because I sure want to do some governing. I want to get some stuff done. I don't have a lot of time. I've got 3½ years left, and it goes by like that. And if any of you doubt that 3½ years goes by quick, try having some teenage or close-to-teenage girls. [*Laughter*] Because you look up, and you don't know what happened. [*Laughter*]

So I want to get moving. And any time that the other side is ready and willing and prepared to work on the things that Chuck Schumer has been working on, like immigration and making sure that we're reducing gun violence in this country; any time that somebody is willing to work on the kinds of things that Michael Bennet has been working on, like improving our education system and making sure that we've got world-class research; any time that somebody is willing to cooperate with Nancy Pelosi to make sure that our budget reflects our commitment to not just the folks at the very top, but a broad-based prosperity for all Americans; and that we're making sure that we're rebuilding our manufacturing base in this country—any time those folks want to get to work, we are ready to work.

But what I also say is that during those 2 years that Nancy Pelosi was Speaker, man, we got a lot of stuff done. And what I also know is that unless we had a Democratic Senate, we would not have ended "don't ask, don't tell." Unless we had had a Democratic Senate, we would not have been able to make sure that everybody in this country is able to access affordable health care. What I know is, is that if we hadn't had a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate, college would be a lot less affordable for our young people.

We know that. So I want to be clear: I am President of all Americans, not just the leader of a party. And my top priority is to make sure that when I leave this office, I can honestly say that America is in a stronger position and a more secure position and a more promising position than it was before I took office.

But what I also know is, is that with leaders like Nancy Pelosi and Steve Israel and Michael Bennet and Chuck Schumer and all the New York delegation here, with them as partners, this country will take off like we haven't seen in a very long time. That's what you're investing in. You're investing in people who share your values and your vision for the future.

And that's why, even though I've run my last race, I'm going to be working as hard as I can to make sure that that their vision is one

that is dominant on Capitol Hill. It's that spirit that we saw in West, Texas. It's the spirit we saw in Boston. It's the spirit that we see here in New York City. And as I was driving up and saw the new Freedom Tower rising, it reminded me of just what it is that we're fighting for.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:29 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria New York hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico.

Statement on the Internal Revenue Service
May 14, 2013

I have now had the opportunity to review the Treasury Department watchdog's report on its investigation of IRS personnel who improperly targeted conservative groups applying for tax-exempt status. And the report's findings are intolerable and inexcusable. The Federal Government must conduct itself in a way that's worthy of the public's trust, and that's especially true for the IRS. The IRS must apply the law in a fair and impartial way, and its employees must act with utmost integrity. This report shows that some of its employees failed that test.

I've directed Secretary Lew to hold those responsible for these failures accountable and to make sure that each of the Inspector General's recommendations are implemented quickly so that such conduct never happens again. But regardless of how this conduct was allowed to take place, the bottom line is, it was wrong. Public service is a solemn privilege. I expect everyone who serves in the Federal Government to hold themselves to the highest ethical and moral standards. So do the American people. And as President, I intend to make sure our public servants live up to those standards every day.

NOTE: The statement referred to Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration J. Russell George.

Remarks at the National Peace Officers Memorial Service
May 15, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you, Chuck, for that introduction and, more importantly, for your leadership as National President of the Fraternal Order of Police. I want to recognize the entire order and all its leaders, including Jim Pasco, for everything that you do on behalf of the fine officers who walk the beat or answer the call and do the difficult work of keeping our communities safe all across the country.

I want to also acknowledge FOP Auxiliary President Linda Hennie for the good work that she and all her members do to support the families of police officers. We are very grateful to you. To Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Members of Congress, members of my administration who are here, to all the law enforcement officials who are here, and most of all, to the survivor families: Scripture tells us, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself." None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. The brave officers we gather to remember today devoted themselves so fully to others—to serve and to protect others—that in the process they were willing to give their lives.

And so today let us not remember them just for how they died, but also for how they lived.

Officer Bruce St. Laurent of the Jupiter, Florida, police department was, according to a friend, "just what a cop should be: tough, compassionate, caring, and brave." But to his community, he was more than a cop. He was a cancer survivor. He was a guest teacher at Jupiter

High School who used the laws of traffic to help kids learn physics. He was an amateur snake charmer of sorts, eagerly taking panicked calls about snakes on the loose. And at Christmastime, he loved being Santa Claus for the kids in the local Head Start program.

I have the privilege of working with some of the Nation's finest law enforcement officers and professionals every day. And I'm perpetually mindful of the sacrifices they make for me and for my family and for other leaders and visiting dignitaries, but never more so than when I was told that Officer St. Laurent was struck and killed by another vehicle while driving his motorcycle as part of my motorcade.

Bruce was a loving husband to Brenda, a doting father to Larry and Albert and Lenny and Chartelle. And he will be missed so deeply by his family at home and by his family in the force. And the police officers who came from all over the country to attend Bruce's funeral, some bringing their motorcycles as far away as California, they're a testimony to how much he'll be missed.

Like Bruce, Deputy Sheriff Barbara Ann Pill of Brevard County Sheriff's Office in Florida was a force for good in her community, remembered as a behind-the-scenes hero by those who knew her. Because for Barbara, helping others was never a question. Before joining the force, she counseled abused children and helped families struggling with domestic abuse. That passion served her and led her to a career in law enforcement and inspired her two sons to follow. So when Barbara was shot while investigating a suspicious vehicle last spring, not only did her husband Steve lose his partner of more than 30 years, the town of Melbourne, and the Nation itself, lost one of its most dedicated citizens.

All of you in law enforcement, you devote your lives to serving and protecting your communities. Many of you have done it for your country as well. After serving two tours in Iraq as a marine, Bradley Michael Fox retired with honor and followed his dream to becoming a police officer. He had been with the Plymouth Township Police Department in Pennsylvania for 5 years when he was shot and killed pursuing a suspect last September. It was the day before his 35th birthday and 6 months before the birth of his son.

Nothing will replace the enthusiasm that he brought to his job or the tremendous pride he had in his family. But today, Brad's wife Lynsay and daughter Kadence and baby Brad Jr. having—have a living reminder of their fallen hero; that's Brad's K–9 partner, a trusty shepherd named Nick, who Lynsay adopted into the family when he retired from the force last fall.

Deputy Sheriff Scott Ward also defined service. He was a former officer in the Air Force, a deputy in the Baldwin County, Alabama, sheriff's office for 15 years, and finished a tour in Afghanistan last year as a reservist in the Coast Guard.

Last November, Deputy Sheriff Ward was shot and killed in the line of duty while trying to settle a domestic dispute. And he died as he lived: serving his community and his country. And the fact that his funeral procession stretched for miles demonstrated the thanks of a grateful nation to Scott's wife Andrea and his family.

At Scott's funeral, Baldwin Country Sheriff Huey Mack said: "Tomorrow we will continue to grieve Scott, but we will have to move on. That's what Scott would want us to do because our mission does not stop."

That message, I think, rings true in every police department across the country. As difficult as times may be, as tough as the losses may be, your mission does not stop. You never let down your guard. And those of us who you protect should never let slide our gratitude either. We should not pause and remember to thank first responders and police officers only in the wake of tragedy. We should do it every day. And those of us who have the privilege to lead should all strive to support you better, whether it's making sure police departments and first responders have the resources they need to do their jobs or the reforms that are required to protect more of our officers and their families from the senseless epidemics of violence that all too often wrack our cities and haunt our neighborhoods.

Bobby Kennedy once said that the fight against crime "is a fight to preserve that quality of community which is at the root of our greatness."

The 143 fallen officers we honor today put themselves on the front lines of that fight, to preserve that quality of community and to protect the roots of our greatness. They exemplified the very idea of citizenship: that with our God-given rights come responsibilities and obligations to ourselves and to others. They embodied that idea. That's the way they died. That's how we must remember them. And that's how we must live.

We can never repay our debt to these officers and their families, but we must do what we can, with all that we have, to live our lives in a way that pays tribute to their memory. That begins, but does not end, by gathering here, with heavy hearts, to carve their names in stone so that all will know them and that their legacy will endure. We are grateful to them, and we are grateful to you.

May God bless the memory of those we lost, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. on the West Front Lawn at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to K. Charles Canterbury, Jr., national president, and James O. Pasco, Jr., executive director, Fraternal Order of Police; and Jeremy and Ryan Pill, sons of Barbara A. Pill. The related proclamation of May 10 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Internal Revenue Service
May 15, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. I just finished speaking with Secretary Lew and senior officials at the Treasury Department to discuss the investigation into IRS personnel who improperly screened conservative groups applying for tax-exempt status. And I look forward to taking some questions at tomorrow's press conference, but today I wanted to make sure to get out to all of you some information about what we're doing about this and where we go from here.

I've reviewed the Treasury Department watchdog's report, and the misconduct that it uncovered is inexcusable. It's inexcusable, and Americans are right to be angry about it, and I am angry about it. I will not tolerate this kind of behavior in any agency, but especially in the IRS, given the power that it has and the reach that it has into all of our lives. And as I said earlier, it should not matter what political stripe you're from; the fact of the matter is, is that the IRS has to operate with absolute integrity. The Government generally has to conduct itself in a way that is true to the public trust. That's especially true for the IRS.

So here's what we're going to do. First, we're going to hold the responsible parties accountable. Yesterday I directed Secretary Lew to follow up on the IG audit to see how this happened and who is responsible and to make sure that we understand all the facts. Today Secretary Lew took the first step by requesting and accepting the resignation of the Acting Commissioner of the IRS, because given the controversy surrounding this audit, it's important to institute new leadership that can help restore confidence going forward.

Second, we're going to put in place new safeguards to make sure this kind of behavior cannot happen again. And I've directed Secretary Lew to ensure the IRS begins implementing the IG's recommendations right away.

Third, we will work with Congress as it performs its oversight role. And our administration has to make sure that we are working hand in hand with Congress to get this thing fixed. Congress—Democrats and Republicans—owe it to the American people to treat that authority with the responsibility it deserves and in a way that doesn't smack of politics or partisan agendas. Because I think one thing that you've seen is, across the board, everybody believes what happened in—as reported in the IG's report is an outrage. The good news is, it's

fixable, and it's in everyone's best interest to work together to fix it.

I'll do everything in my power to make sure nothing like this happens again: by holding the responsible parties accountable; by putting in place new checks and new safeguards; and going forward, by making sure that the law is applied as it should be, in a fair and impartial way. And we're going to have to make sure that the laws are clear so that we can have confidence that they are enforced in a fair and impartial way and that there's not too much ambiguity surrounding these laws.

So that's what I expect. That's what the American people deserve. And that's what we're going to do.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:21 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration J. Russell George; and Steven T. Miller, former Deputy Commissioner for Services and Enforcement, Internal Revenue Service.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey
May 16, 2013

President Obama. Please be seated, everybody. Good afternoon.

It is a great pleasure to welcome my friend, Prime Minister Erdogan, back to the White House. This visit is also another opportunity for me to return the extraordinary hospitality that the Prime Minister and the Turkish people showed me on my visit to Turkey 4 years ago. And that included my visit to the Prime Minister's beautiful hometown of Istanbul.

This visit reflects the importance that the United States places on our relationship with our ally, Turkey, and I value so much the partnership that I've been able to develop with Prime Minister Erdogan.

Today we discussed the many areas in which our countries cooperate, including Afghanistan, where our troops serve bravely together; the G–20, where we promote our shared prosperity; and Iran, where we agree it is critical that we do not see that country acquire a nuclear weapon and potentially trigger an arms race throughout the region.

Given our shared interest in peace, I want to note the Prime Minister's efforts to normalize relations with Israel. This will benefit both the Turkish and Israeli people and can also help us make progress on a two-state solution, including an independent Palestinian state.

Today we focused on three areas that I want to highlight. First, we agreed to keep expanding trade and investment. Over the past 4 years, our trade has surged, and U.S. exports to Turkey have more than doubled. As the United States pursues a new trade and investment partnership with the EU, I want to make sure that we also keep deepening our economic ties with Turkey. So we're creating a new high-level committee that will focus on increasing trade and investment between our two countries and will help fuel Turkish innovation. And the progress that Turkey's economy has made over the last several years, I think, has been remarkable, and the Prime Minister deserves much credit for some of the reforms that are already taking place.

Second, as NATO allies we're reaffirming our solemn commitment to our mutual security. Now, Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of the American people, I want to express our condolences to the Turkish people and the victims of the outrageous bombings that took place in Reyhanli. As always, the United States stands with you as you defend your nation against terrorism. We want to thank you for the cooperation that you provided us in threats against the United States.

And I want to take this opportunity to commend you and the Turkish people for your

courage in seeking an historic and peaceful resolution of the PKK violence that has plagued Turkey for so long. And just as the United States has stood with you in your long search for security, we will support efforts in Turkey to uphold the rule of law and good governance and human rights for all.

Finally, we spent a great deal of time on an issue that has wracked the region, the issue of Syria. Under the Prime Minister's leadership, the Turkish people have shown extraordinary generosity to the Syrians who have found refuge in Turkey. And I know this is a heavy burden. I've made it clear again today that the United States is going to keep on helping countries in the region, including Turkey, shoulder this burden, doing our part as a major donor of humanitarian aid to the Syrian people, including those refugees in Turkey. And we're going to keep working with our Turkish partners to deliver the food, shelter, and medicine that's needed to save lives.

At the same time, we're going to keep increasing the pressure on the Asad regime and working with the Syrian opposition. The Prime Minister has been at the forefront of the international effort to push for a transition to a democratic Syria without Bashar Asad. And Turkey is going to play an important role as we bring representatives of the regime and opposition together in the coming weeks.

We both agree that Asad needs to go. He needs to transfer power to a transitional body. That is the only way that we're going to resolve this crisis. And we're going to keep working for a Syria that is free from Asad's tyranny, that is intact and inclusive of all ethnic and religious groups, and that's a source of stability, not extremism, because it's in the profound interest of all our nations, especially Turkey.

So again, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you for being here and for being such a strong ally and partner in the region and around the world. I know that Michelle appreciates the opportunity to host Mrs. Erdogan and your two wonderful daughters this morning. I'm looking forward to our dinner tonight. And as always, among the topics where I appreciate your advice is close to our hearts, and that's how to raise our daughters well. You're a little ahead of me in terms of their ages.

With the Prime Minister's permission, I want to make one other point. There's been intense discussion in Congress lately around the attacks in Benghazi. We lost four brave Americans, patriots who accepted the risks that come with service because they know that their contributions are vital to our national interests and national security.

I am intent on making sure that we do everything we can to prevent another tragedy like this from happening. But that means we owe it to them and all who serve to do everything in our power to protect our personnel serving overseas. That's why, at my direction, we've been taking a series of steps that were recommended by the review board after the incident. We're continuing to review our security at high-threat diplomatic posts, including the size and nature of our presence; improving training for those headed to dangerous posts; increasing intelligence and warning capabilities. And I've directed the Defense Department to ensure that our military can respond lightning quick in times of crisis.

But we're not going to be able to do this alone. We're going to need Congress as a partner. So I've been in discussions, and my team has been in discussions, with both Democrats and Republicans, and I'm calling on Congress to work with us to support and fully fund our budget request to improve the security of our Embassies around the world. We also need Congress to work with us to provide the resources and new authorities so we can fully implement all of the recommendations of the Accountability Review Board. And we're going to need Congress's help in terms of increasing the number of our Marine Corps Guard who protect our Embassies.

So I want to say to Members of Congress in both parties, we need to come together and truly honor the sacrifice of those four courageous Americans and better secure our diplomatic posts around the world. And I should add, by the way, that we're getting some help from the Turkish Government on some of these issues. That's how we learn the lessons of

Benghazi. That's how we keep faith with the men and women who we send overseas to represent America. And that's what I will stay focused on as Commander in Chief.

So with that, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the United States. I'm sorry the weather is not fully cooperating with our lovely Rose Garden press conference, but I think we'll be okay.

Prime Minister Erdogan. Thank you.

Mr. President, distinguished members of the press, ladies and gentlemen. My dear friend, President of the United States, a friend and ally, I'm here to—I'm once again very pleased to be here in Washington to have meetings with the President. I would like to express my thanks for the hospitality that has been shown to us on occasion—on this occasion on behalf of myself and my delegation.

In the President's person, I would like to express our condolences for the terror attack that took place in Boston. I—we express our condolences to the American people. We are a country which has been fighting against terrorism for many years. We've lost many lives in that fight against terrorism, and so we very well understand the feelings and sentiments of the American people in face of such an event. As Turkey and the United States, we are both determined to continue to fight jointly against terrorism.

My dear friends, Turkey and the United States have many issues that cover the Middle East to the Balkans to Central Asia to other areas, including issues such as energy, security of supply, and many other issues. And in all these areas and on all these issues, we display a very strong cooperation.

And in our meetings with President Obama today, we talked about relations between Turkey and the United States and also about some topical issues which remain on both of our agenda. We had an opportunity to exchange views on regional and the global issues, and our exchange of views and opinions will continue throughout the day with other meetings that will take place during the rest of the day.

I am here with close to a hundred businesspeople, and they are holding meetings with their counterparts in the United States, and they will continue to talk and meet with their counterparts this afternoon as well.

Bilateral economic relations between Turkey and the United States have to be improved, and we both have this aim. Ten years ago, our trade stood at $8 billion; at the moment, trade stands at $20 billion. But this amount is still not sufficient. We have to increase the amount of trade between our two countries.

Bilateral economic and trade relations between Turkey and the United States will continue to develop. And as we carry forward with these efforts, we need to strengthen this relationship with free trade agreements and other agreements. And I can tell you that as leaders of our nations, we have the will to continue to develop our economic relations.

In our discussions that pertain to regional issues, Syria was at the top of our agenda. While Syria—while we discussed Syria, we talked about what has happened so far, and we talked about what can be done in the future. And we have views that overlap, as the President has just said. We will continue to discuss this issue in greater detail in our meeting this evening. But let me tell you that ending this bloody process in Syria and meeting the legitimate demands of the people by establishing a new government are two areas where we are in full agreement with the United States.

Supporting the opposition and Asad leaving are important issues. We also agree that we have to prevent Syria from becoming an area for terrorist organizations. We also agree that chemical weapons should not be used and all minorities and their rights should be secured. These are all priority areas for all of us. And we discussed what needs to be done on these issues with the President. And this evening we will continue to talk about these in greater detail.

Iraq was also another area of discussion for us on regional issues. Transparent elections in Iraq and the participation of—and ensuring the participation of all political groups in the elections are both very important in Iraq. With everyone's participation, we would like to see a

peaceful period in Iraq. And this is what both we and United States would like to see.

With respect to the Middle East peace process, we discussed with the President this important issue, which is very important for regional peace. In the attack against *Mavi Marmara*, which was taking humanitarian aid to Gaza, Turkish citizens and one Turkish American citizen were killed. And as you know, we are working with the Israeli Government for compensation for those who lost their lives. And the visit that I will pay to Gaza will contribute to the peace in Gaza and to unity in Palestine, in my opinion.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is always in favor of—and in Cyprus we believe that there is a lot of opportunity to reach an agreement on the Cyprus issue, and this is an area which we continue to focus on. We've also discussed Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and all these issues. And we have also briefly touched upon some developments in Africa and also about Myanmar.

Our joint fight against terrorism will continue to be the case, as I said before. And we also touched upon issues related to the defense industry. And I can say that this has been a historic day, a historic turning point in the context of Turkish-American relations.

On regional and global issues, the partnership between Turkey and the United States serves peace, security, and stability and will continue to do so even more in the future.

I will cut my remarks shortly, not because I am trying to flee from the rain; rain is considered to be a great source of abundance. But I will stop here to say that I hope our discussions will be beneficial for our future relations.

Thank you.

President Obama. Well, before we get started let me just make sure that I'm a good host. Mr. Prime Minister, do you want an umbrella? [*Laughter*] Because we can arrange it if you need it. You're okay? All right. This will be incentive for the press to ask concise questions and us to give concise answers.

I'm going to start with Julianna Goldman of Bloomberg.

Internal Revenue Service

Q. Unfortunately, we all forgot umbrellas.

President Obama. Yes.

Q. Mr. President, I want to ask you about the IRS. Can you assure the American people that nobody in the White House knew about the agency's actions before your Counsel's Office found out on April 22? And when they did find out, do you think that you should have learned about it before you learned about it from news reports as you said last Friday? And also, are you opposed to there being a special counsel appointed to lead the Justice Department investigation?

And also, Mr. Prime Minister, what is the status on efforts to normalize relations with Israel? And do you still plan to go to Gaza in the coming weeks? Thanks.

President Obama. Well, with respect to the IRS, I spoke to this yesterday. My main concern is fixing a problem, and we began that process yesterday by asking and accepting the resignation of the Acting Director there. We will be putting in new leadership that will be able to make sure that—following up on the IG audit—that we gather up all the facts, that we hold accountable those who have taken these outrageous actions. As I said last night, it is just simply unacceptable for there to even be a hint of partisanship or ideology when it comes to the application of our tax laws.

I am going to go ahead and ask folks—why don't you—why don't we get a couple of marines; they're going to look good next to us—[*laughter*]—just because—[*laughter*]. I've got a change of suits, but I don't know about our Prime Minister. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, two Marine Corps sentries arrived to hold umbrellas for President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan.*]

President Obama. There we go. That's good. You guys I'm sorry about. [*Laughter*]

[*Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and no translation was provided. President Obama then continued his remarks as follows.*]

But let me make sure that I answer your specific question. I can assure you that I certainly did not know anything about the IG report before the IG report had been leaked through press—through the press. Typically, the IG reports are not supposed to be widely distributed or shared. They tend to be a process that everybody is trying to protect the integrity of. But what I'm absolutely certain of is that the actions that were described in that IG report are unacceptable.

So in addition to making sure that we've got a new Acting Director there, we're also going to make sure that we gather up the facts and hold accountable and responsible anybody who was involved in this. We're going to make sure that we identify any structural or management issues to prevent something like this from happening again. We're going to make sure that we are accepting all of the recommendations that the IG has in the report.

And I'm looking forward to working with Congress to fully investigate what happened, make sure that it doesn't happen again, and also look at some of the laws that create a bunch of ambiguity in which the IRS may not have enough guidance and not be clear about what exactly they need to be doing and doing it right so that the American people have confidence that the tax laws are being applied fairly and evenly.

So in terms of the White House and reporting, I think that you've gotten that information from Mr. Carney and others. I promise you this, that the minute I found out about it, then my main focus is making sure we get the thing fixed. I think that it's going to be sufficient for us to be working with Congress. They've got a whole bunch of committees. We've got IGs already there.

The IG has done an audit; it's now my understanding they're going to be recommending an investigation. And Attorney General Holder also announced a criminal investigation of what happened. Between those investigations, I think we're going to be able to figure out exactly what happened, who was involved, what went wrong, and we're going to be able to implement steps to fix it.

And that ultimately is the main priority that I have, but also, I think, the American people have. They understand that we've got an agency that has enormous potential power and is involved in everybody's lives. And that's part of the reason why it's been treated as a quasi-independent institution. But that's also why we've got to make sure that it is doing its job scrupulously and without even a hint of bias or a hint that somehow they're favoring one group over another.

And as I said yesterday, I'm outraged by this in part because, look, I'm a public figure; the—if a future administration is starting to use the tax laws to favor one party over another or one political view over another, obviously, we're all vulnerable. And that's why, as I've said, it doesn't matter whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, you should be equally outraged at even the prospect that the IRS might not be acting with the kind of complete neutrality that we expect.

And I think we're going to be able to fix it. We're going to be able to get there and get it done, and we've already begun that progress, and we're going to keep on going until it's finished. Okay? All right, guys, I think the——

[*The President motioned to relieve the Marine Corps sentries.*]

Prime Minister Erdogan. The question about Gaza: According to my plans, most probably, I would be visiting Gaza in June. But it will not be a visit only to Gaza, I will also go to the West Bank.

I place a lot of significance on this visit in terms of peace in the Middle East, and I—this visit in no way means favoring of one or the other. I'm hoping that that visit will contribute to unity in Palestine, first of all. This is something that I focus on very much. And I hope that my visit can contribute to that process. Thank you.

Syria

Q. Senturk from Haberturk. My first question to you, Prime Minister: You talked about chemical weapons, and we know that Turkey

has some evidence. Did you present those—that evidence to President Obama in today's meeting? And what does Turkey expect from the United States in this process?

Question to President Obama about Syria: You had said earlier that chemical weapons would be a red line in Syria. Do you believe that at this point in time Syria has overgone the red line? And you said that Asad should go. Will the U.S. take more initiative to see Asad go in the future?

Prime Minister Erdogan. Let me, first of all, say that chemical weapons and missiles, rockets, all that have been fired, all that information is shared between the relevant bodies within our administrations. And it's not just Turkey and United States. For example, United Kingdom and all others have that—those documents, that information, because we share information. And the U.N. Security Council, all the other relevant authorities will also receive that information in the proper time so that more information is provided to the public. So we will continue to work in this way.

President Obama. Well, as the Prime Minister indicated, our militaries, our intelligence and diplomatic personnel are constantly sharing information. And I've said in the past, we have seen evidence of the use of chemical weapons inside of Syria. It is important for us to make sure that we're able to get more specific information about what exactly is happening there.

But separate and apart from the chemical weapons, we know that tens of thousands of people are being killed with artillery and mortars and that the humanitarian crisis and the slaughter that's taking place by itself is sufficient to prompt strong international action.

And that's why the Prime Minister and I spoke extensively about the steps we're taking on humanitarian efforts; the steps that we're taking to strengthen the opposition politically so that it is inclusive and representative of all the people inside of Syria; the steps that we need to take to continue to strengthen the capacity of the Syrian opposition that are on the ground fighting to protect themselves from the Asad regime; and that we continue to try to mobilize the entire international community to put more and more pressure on Asad so that he recognizes that he is no longer legitimate and that he needs to go, and that we are able to move to a political transition in which the institutions inside of Syria are still functioning, but we have a representative, multiethnic, multireligious body that can bring about democracy and peace inside of Syria.

With respect to what I've said in the past around red lines, what I've said is that the use of chemical weapons are something that the civilized world has recognized should be out of bounds. And as we gather more evidence and work together, my intention is to make sure that we're presenting everything that we know to the international community as an additional reason, an additional mechanism, for the international community to put all the pressure that they can on the Asad regime and to work with the opposition to bring about that political transition.

Now, there are a whole range of options that the United States is already engaged in, and I preserve the options of taking additional steps—both diplomatic and military—because those chemical weapons inside of Syria also threaten our security over the long term, as well as our allies and friends and neighbors.

But this is also an international problem. And it is very much my hope to continue to work with all the various parties involved, including Turkey, to find a solution that brings peace to Syria, stabilizes the region, stabilizes those chemical weapons. But it's not going to be something that the United States does by itself. And I don't think anybody in the region, including the Prime Minister, would think that U.S. unilateral actions in and of themselves would bring about a better outcome inside of Syria.

Jeff Mason [Reuters].

Internal Revenue Service/U.S. Diplomatic Security/Balancing National Security and Freedom of the Press

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about the Justice Department. Do you believe that the seizure of phone records from

Associated Press journalists this week—or before that was announced recently this week was an overreach? And do you still have full confidence in your Attorney General? Should we interpret yesterday's renewed interest by the White House in a media shield law as a response to that? And more broadly, how do you feel about comparisons by some of your critics of this week's scandals to those that happened under the Nixon administration?

President Obama. Well, I'll let you guys engage in those comparisons, and you can go ahead and read the history, I think, and draw your own conclusions.

My concern is making sure that if there's a problem in the Government, that we fix it. That's my responsibility, and that's what we're going to do. That's true with respect to the IRS and making sure that they apply the laws the way they were intended. That's true with respect to the security of our diplomats, which is why we're going to need to work with Congress to make sure that there's adequate funding for what's necessary out there.

Now, with respect to the Department of Justice, I'm not going to comment on a specific and pending case. But I can talk broadly about the balance that we have to strike. Leaks related to national security can put people at risk. They can put men and women in uniform that I've sent into the battlefield at risk. They can put some of our intelligence officers, who are in various, dangerous situations that are easily compromised, at risk.

U.S. national security is dependent on those folks being able to operate with confidence that folks back home have their backs so they're not just left out there high and dry and potentially put in even more danger than they may already be. And so I make no apologies, and I don't think the American people would expect me as Commander in Chief not to be concerned about information that might compromise their missions or might get them killed.

Now, the flip side of it is, we also live in a democracy where a free press, free expression, and the open flow of information helps hold me accountable, helps hold our Government accountable, and helps our democracy function. And the whole reason I got involved in politics is because I believe so deeply in that democracy and that process.

So the whole goal of this media shield law—that was worked on and largely endorsed by folks like the Washington Post editorial page and by prosecutors—was finding a way to strike that balance appropriately. And to the extent that this case—which we still don't know all the details of—to the extent that this case has prompted renewed interest about how do we strike that balance properly, then I think now is the time for us to go ahead and revisit that legislation. I think that's a worthy conversation to have, and I think that's important.

But I also think it's important to recognize that when we express concern about leaks at a time when I've still got 60,000-plus troops in Afghanistan and I've still got a whole bunch of intelligence officers around the world who are in risky situations—in outposts that, in some cases, are as dangerous as the outpost in Benghazi—that part of my job is to make sure that we're protecting what they do, while still accommodating for the need for information, so—or the need for the public to be informed and be able to hold my office accountable.

Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.

Q. I asked about Holder as well.

And for the Prime Minister, I wanted to ask you, sir, if the United States does not step up its involvement in Syria, in your view, how will that affect the war? And what plans do you have to react to the bombing of the border town that the President mentioned of Reyhanli?

President Obama. Mr. Prime Minister, just excuse me, you're right, I have complete confidence in Eric Holder as Attorney General. He's an outstanding Attorney General and does his job with integrity, and I expect he will continue to do so. Okay?

Prime Minister Erdogan. You are talking about the part of the glass which is empty. I like to look at things with the glass half full instead of half empty. We are—what we would like to see is the sensitivity on the part of the international community with respect to what's

going on in Syria. And this is what we, as Turkey, are striving for, and I do believe that the United States is doing the same. And other countries, the United Nations Security Council, the Arab League. And other countries—though not part of these structures—are still sensitive to what is going on in Syria.

Our aim is to accelerate this process, and I will be visiting other countries—my Foreign Minister will be visiting other countries—just to see how we can speed things up in a way which will prevent the death of more people and in a way which will ensure a transition to a democratic system in Syria. Our goal is to see the tyranny, the dictatorship, go away in Syria and to be replaced with democracy. And I think this is a collective responsibility on the part of all countries that believe in democracy. And this is what we will all continue to do.

Syria

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]. I'm with Turkish NTV television. Mr. President, my first question is to you. You mentioned that Asad should go, and the question is how and when. Is there a rough timetable? And for instance, shall we be talking about the Syrian tragedy next year at this time? What's the idea?

[*The reporter then asked a question in Turkish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

And, Mr. Prime Minister, before your departure from Ankara, you stated that you had expectations from this visit and that you have some expectations. What is your general observation about this visit?

President Obama. We would have preferred Asad go 2 years ago, last year, 6 months ago, 2 months ago. And there has been consistency on the part of my administration that Asad lost legitimacy when he started firing on his own people and killing his own people, who initially were protesting peacefully for a greater voice in their country's affairs. And obviously, that's escalated during the course of time. So the answer is, the sooner the better.

Now, in terms of the question how, I think we've already discussed that. There's no magic formula for dealing with a extraordinarily violent and difficult situation like Syria's. If there was, I think the Prime Minister and I would have already acted on it and it would already be finished.

And instead, what we have to do is apply steady international pressure, strengthen the opposition. I do think that the prospect of talks in Geneva, involving the Russians and representatives, about a serious political transition that all the parties can buy into may yield results. But in the meantime, we're going to continue to make sure that we're helping the opposition and obviously dealing with the humanitarian situation. And we'll do so in close consultation with Turkey, which obviously is deeply invested in this and with whom we've got an outstanding relationship with.

Prime Minister Erdogan. Thank you very much. As you know, we will be meeting again this evening, so we'll have time to go in further detail. As I said before, our views do overlap, and with our discussions this evening, we will continue to explore what we can do together, what we can consider as parts of a roadmap looking at Geneva and beyond.

Russia and China being part of this process is very important, and this is important in the context of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Their participation in this process will certainly add greater impetus. The pressure of the international community continues to be a very important element, and when we look at the humanitarian support that we have provided so far, we see that support equaling to more than $1½ billion.

And we continue to keep an open door policy, and we will continue to do this because we have a border which is 910 kilometers in length with Syria; we have—there are relatives across the border on each side. So we will continue these efforts.

These are all very important for regional peace, because, on the one hand, you have the steps that have been taken, efforts that are in place to normalize relations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. We don't need to have other problems, issues in the region. We had, as you know, taken steps to bring Syria and Israel

together to solve their problems. We had five rounds of discussions, but unfortunately, they came to an end. But I hope that all the steps that we take in the future with respect to regional peace will yield results and we can work together with the United States with determination to achieve peace in the region. Thank you.

We are discussing all these issues. The step to be taken by the U.N. Security Council and the Geneva process are important. We will continue to assess that between us.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:48 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Ermine Erdogan, wife, and Esre and Sümeyye, daughters, of Prime Minister Erdogan; Steven T. Miller, former Deputy Commissioner for Services and Enforcement, and Daniel Werfel, Acting Commissioner, Internal Revenue Service; and Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration J. Russell George. He also referred to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) insurgent group. Prime Minister Erdogan referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu of Turkey. Prime Minister Erdogan and some reporters spoke in Turkish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Preventing Sexual Assault in the Armed Forces

May 16, 2013

Well, I appreciate all of you coming in just for a second. We have gathered here all the top people in not just our military, but our entire national security operation. And I want to start off by thanking all the people sitting around this table and in this room for the extraordinary service that they've rendered this country.

And I want to also remind everybody that we have folks active in theater right now—men and women in uniform—who are making heroic sacrifices on behalf of our security. And our thoughts and prayers are with them and their families, because they are dealing with a whole lot to make sure that we are safe.

We have focused this conversation, though, on something that is at the core of our effectiveness as a military. So I told all these people that one of the great honors of my life is serving as Commander in Chief to what I consider to be the best military in the history of the world. And I am in awe of the work that the vast majority of our men and women in uniform do.

But the reason we are so good is not because of the fancy equipment. It's not because of our incredible weapon systems and technology. It's because of our people. And the capacity for our men and women in uniform to work as a team, a disciplined unit looking out for each other in the most severe of circumstances, is premised, as Ray Odierno said, on trust. It comes down to, do people trust each other and do they understand that they're all part of a single system that has to operate under whatever circumstances effectively?

The issue of sexual assault in our Armed Forces undermines that trust. So not only is it a crime, not only is it shameful and disgraceful, but it also is going to make and has made the military less effective than it can be. And as such, it is dangerous to our national security. So this is not a sideshow. This is not, sort of, a second-order problem that we're experiencing. This is—goes to the heart and the core of who we are and how effective we're going to be.

Now, the good news is, I am absolutely confident that everybody in this room and our leadership, starting with Chuck Hagel and Marty Dempsey and the Joint Chiefs, as well as our top enlisted men and women, they care about this. And they're angry about it. And I heard directly from all of them that they're ashamed by some of what's happened.

But it's not fixed yet, and that's clear. So, even though I think there's a level of concern and interest that is appropriate, we haven't actually been able to ensure that our men and women in uniform are not experiencing this and if they do experience it, that there's serious accountability.

So what I've done is, I've asked Secretary of Defense Hagel and Marty Dempsey to help lead a process to continue to get at this. That starts with accountability, and that means at every level. And that includes accountability not just for enforcing the law, but also training our personnel effectively, putting our best people on this challenge.

I think Secretary of the Army McHugh made a very good point, which is, I'm not sure we've incentivized some of our top people to understand, this is as core to our mission as anything else. And we've got to reward them, not think of this as a sideline for anything else that they do, but incentivize ambitious folks in the ranks to make sure that they understand this is important. So that's part of accountability.

Empowering victims: We've got to create an environment in which victims feel that they're comfortable coming forward and they know people have their backs and that they will work through this process in a way that keeps the focus on justice and making right what's been wrong as opposed to, suddenly, they're on trial, it may weaken their position, it may compromise their ability to advance. That's going to be important. They've got to know that they should have no fear of retaliation, no fear of stigma, no damage to their careers, and certainly no protection for criminals.

Third thing is justice for the victims. When victims do come forward, they deserve justice. Perpetrators have to experience consequences. And I'm pleased that Secretary Hagel has proposed reforms that would restrict the ability of commanders to overturn convictions after trial. Those reforms have my full support.

There are a range of ideas that are being proposed on Capitol Hill, and I know that Chuck and Marty are both engaged with those Members of Congress. But what I've said to them is, I want to leave no stone unturned and I want us to explore every good idea that's out there in order to fix this problem. And I'm pleased to say that Secretary Hagel is not only consulting with Congress, but is also looking at militaries around the world—the Canadians or the Israelis or others—that may have designed systems that get at this to see if there are any lessons learned in terms of best practices.

And Vice President Biden, who has been a champion for issues—around issues of domestic violence for 20 years or more, he made an important point, which is, is that we've got to make sure that advocates and professionals who are in the civilian system and have been working on this problem for a long time, that we're listening to them as well; that we don't assume that the military has to completely recreate the wheel. And I think that's a very important point.

So I want to thank all the work that Congress is doing, especially our friends in the Senate. All of us here are committed to working with them.

The last point I'm going to make, and that is that there is no silver bullet to solving this problem. This is going to require a sustained effort over a long period of time. And that's why I'm very pleased to know that Secretary Hagel is going to be having weekly meetings on this. And I want us to make sure that we've got effective metrics and feedback loops so that we are continually evaluating how well we're doing.

One point that was made around the table is that a sign that we're actually getting at this problem may initially be increased reporting rather than less reporting. We may see more reporting of incidents, in part because even outside of our military, traditionally, these problems of sexual assault are vastly underreported. And so over the next several months and years, if I start seeing a—data that shows that in fact we are seeing more reports, that may actually indicate to me that people are becoming more confident about moving forward.

On the other hand, I would then want those trend lines to start going down because that indicates that we're also starting to fix the

problem and we've highlighted it and people who are engaging in despicable behavior, they get fully punished for it.

So again, I want to emphasize: Everybody in this room has heard from me directly. They've heard from Secretary Hagel, and they've heard from Marty Dempsey. They all understand this is a priority and we will not stop until we've seen this scourge, from what is the greatest military in the world, eliminated. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:53 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Ernest J. Moniz as Secretary of Energy
May 16, 2013

I am pleased that today, by a unanimous vote, the Senate confirmed Ernest Moniz as our next Energy Secretary. Dr. Moniz is a world-class scientist with expertise in a range of energy sources and a leader with a proven record of bringing prominent thinkers and innovators together to advance new energy solutions. He also shares my conviction that the United States must lead the world in developing more sustainable sources of energy that create new jobs and new industries and in responding to the threat of global climate change. I am thrilled that Ernie is joining my team, and I look forward to his counsel on these issues as my administration continues to increase our Nation's energy security, strengthen our nuclear security, develop the next generation of clean energy technologies, and compete for the jobs of the 21st century.

Remarks at Ellicott Dredges, LLC, in Baltimore, Maryland
May 17, 2013

The President. Hello, Baltimore! Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. Give Duncan a big round of applause for the great introduction. I want to thank all of you for the warm welcome, the great hospitality. And I tell you what, I'm going to return the favor by hosting your Super Bowl Champion Baltimore Ravens at the White House this summer. So we'll have Ray Lewis in the China Room. What could go wrong? [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your CEO, Peter Bowe, and your plant manager, Robert Croom, and your entire team for showing me around this great facility. I was told that one of your customers once named a dredge after President Clinton, so I've got my fingers crossed. [*Laughter*] Never had a dredge named after me, so I'm looking after—looking forward to that.

I've come here today to talk about our single most important priority as a country right now. And that is reigniting the true engine of our economic growth, and that is a rising, thriving middle class. And as I said in my State of the Union Address this year, that's our north star. That's what we have to focus on. That's what has to guide all our efforts.

And we've got some great people who are championing middle class families every single day. First of all, your outstanding Governor—come on—Martin O'Malley. Your outstanding mayor, Madam Mayor. You've got some outstanding Members of Congress, led by your senior Senator, Barbara Mikulski. And your own leader in the House of Representatives, he is doing a great job every single day, and he loves this State: Steny Hoyer.

The—so we've got just some extraordinary folks here. Every—let me make sure I've—Elijah Cummings is here. But more importantly, Elijah's mom is here. And we are so proud of Elijah, but his mom apparently prays for me every day, so I'm very grateful for her as well.

And the—all of these, all of your Members of Congress, every single day, are working, fighting on behalf—on your behalf in terms of making sure that we're growing an economy

that creates outstanding middle class jobs. That's the challenge that we should be rallying around every single day. And I know it can seem frustrating sometimes when it seems like Washington's priorities aren't the same as your priorities. I know it often seems like folks down there are more concerned with their jobs than with yours. Others may get distracted by chasing every fleeting issue that passes by. But the middle class will always be my number-one focus, period. Your jobs, your families, your communities, that's why I ran for President. That's what drives me every day as I step into the Oval Office. That's what I'm going to keep fighting for over the next 4 years.

And that's why I'm so proud to have these partners. The—John Sarbanes I saved for last, because Congressman Sarbanes, he himself is doing a great job, but when I first came in, his father was one of the people who I so admired in the Senate. He had served for a long time. And I remember just a conversation that we had. He probably doesn't remember it, but he—I asked him—I came and paid him a visit, and I asked him, what's your advice? He says: "Just keep in mind the people who sent you. Because here in Washington, sometimes people get distracted. But you're here to work on behalf of your constituencies. And if you stick to that, you're going to be just fine."

And that's what's happening here in Maryland. Under Governor O'Malley's leadership, Maryland has won back almost 100 percent of the jobs that were claimed by the recession. So you might not know it if you were just watching the news and you're exposed to all these partisan battles and brinksmanship in Washington, but the truth is, there are a lot of reasons to be optimistic about where this country is headed, especially after all that we've been through over the past several years. And that's got to encourage us to roll up our sleeves and work together and take on the challenges that are still holding back the economy and holding down working families.

Now, the good news is, in a little over 3 years, businesses like this one have created more than 6.5 million new jobs. And while our unemployment rate is still too high, it's the lowest it's been since 2008. That's good news. But that's not enough because we've also got to create even more good, middle class jobs, and we've go to do it even faster.

Corporate profits have skyrocketed at an all-time high. Now we've got to make sure that middle class wages and incomes are going up too, because families all across America haven't seen their take-home pay rise for nearly a decade. That's the next phase. It's good that companies are profitable. I want you to be profitable. I want you to be taking a little more home in your paycheck.

Our housing market is healing. But that's not enough. Now we've got to help more families stay in their homes or refinance to take advantage of these historically low interest rates.

Our deficits are shrinking at the fastest rate in decades. That's the truth. That's worth applause, sure, because you wouldn't always know that listening to folks in Washington. But the fact is, our deficits are going down faster than they have gone down in decades. But we still have to create a budget that is smart and doesn't hurt middle class families or harm our critical investments into our future.

Barbara Mikulski is on the Appropriations Committee; she's fighting hard to make sure that this sequester that is slowing down growth—and we're starting to see growth slowing down because of furloughs and cuts in defense spending and a whole bunch of stuff that wasn't well thought through. We've got to make sure that we've got a budget that doesn't push our economy back down. We need a budget that pushes our economy back up.

The American auto industry is thriving. American energy is booming. American ingenuity in our tech sector has the potential to change the way we do almost everything.

And thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, we've been able to clear away the rubble of the crisis. We're now poised for progress, but our work is not done, and our focus cannot drift. We've got to stay focused on our economy and putting people back to work, and raising wages and bringing manufacturing back to the United States of America. That has

to be what we're thinking about every single day.

Middle class has been taking a beating for more than a decade. You deserve folks in Washington who are willing to fight back on your behalf every single day. Because every single day, you and Americans like you all across the country are working hard and living up to your responsibilities. So you've got to have the same seriousness of purpose in your leaders.

Now, I see three areas where we need to focus if we're really going to keep the recovery going, but take it to new heights. Number one, we've got to make America a magnet for good jobs. Number two, we've got to make sure that workers are able to get the education and skills they need to do those jobs. Number three, we've got to make sure that, if and when you're working hard, that that leads to a decent living.

And that's why I wanted to come to Baltimore, because a lot of people here in Baltimore, they work hard. Baltimore has gone through tough times in the past, but Baltimore has come bouncing back.

I started a few hours ago at a pre-K program at Moravia Park Elementary School. There, kids are getting a head start learning skills they need to succeed in college and the workplace. And by the way, this is a center that was named after Steny's—Steny Hoyer's late wife Judy because she and Steny share my belief in the importance of giving every kid every chance as early as possible.

I got to help with one of the lessons; we were having to draw zoo animals. [*Laughter*] And I've got to say, my tiger was not very good. [*Laughter*] The kids were unimpressed. They kind of looked at it, they said, that doesn't look like a tiger. [*Laughter*] But they were amazing.

And later today I'm going to visit with a program that helps people who have gone through some tough circumstances, especially low-income dads, and this program is now helping them get the training and the guidance they need to find work and support a family. The—which is a priority because—and probably, some of these folks who I'm meeting, they didn't get that early childhood education that put them on the right track. And what we want to do is, first of all, make sure our kids are getting the training they need, but if they missed out early on, we still want to give them opportunity on the backend.

But obviously, the training of kids, giving them good education, training older workers, none of that is going to make a difference if we don't have great companies that are hiring. And that's why I wanted to come to Ellicott.

Ellicott Dredges, you guys are an example of what we can do to make America a magnet for good jobs. After all, you all know a thing or two about growing the economy; you've been doing it for more than a century. This company was founded in 1885. You've been right here on Bush Street since 1900. This company built dredging equipment that helped dig the Panama Canal. [*Applause*] That's impressive.

What that means is this company, right here in Baltimore, literally helped create our global economy, because that was one of the first connectors, right, that started to allow us to ship goods and cut the distances that integrated the world economy.

And yet, after all this time, this company still has a set of core values that's lasted for generations. Just like the folks who came before you, you've got that drive to make the best machines that money can buy, to sell products all over the world, to grow not just a business, but a community, and by doing that, you're growing our country.

And these values have seen you through an era of enormous change. Your leaders saw the potential in developing markets like China and India and Brazil and Bangladesh. So you ramped up your focus on airports—on exports—maybe on airports too—[*laughter*]—but on exports. And the Federal Government has worked with you as a partner to sell dredging equipment right out of this shop all over the world. You maintained your quality. You built a sales force that travels everywhere, outhustling the competition in search of new business.

All that hard work has paid off. Today, this company, you have sold equipment to more than 100 different countries. You've made new

investments here at home. You employ more than 200 people in Baltimore and Wisconsin and Kansas. And over the past few decades, during some of the tough times for our workers, you were able to keep building equipment stamped with those three proud words: Made in America. And you're selling it around the world.

As Steny Hoyer and some of these House Members like to say, that means you're making it in America.

Representative Steny H. Hoyer. All right.

The President. See, Steny gets excited. [*Laughter*] You're actually making stuff here in America, but it also means that we're all making it here in America when you do what you're doing. And this is a great example.

And the good news is, more and more companies are following your example. After shedding jobs for 10 years, our manufacturers have added more than 500,000 jobs over the past 3 years. Ford is bringing jobs back from Mexico. Caterpillar is bringing jobs back from Japan. After placing plants in other countries like China, Intel, which is making the chips in your smartphone and your iPad and your—all of these gizmos everybody is holding up right now—[*laughter*]—Intel is opening its most advanced plant right here at home, right here in America.

Washington should be helping these kinds of success stories take root all across the country. That's why we've boosted—my administration has boosted our efforts to help businesses export more of their goods and services. That's why we signed trade agreements that will protect American workers, but open up new markets and support tens of thousands of good-paying jobs.

That's why we reauthorized the Export-Import Bank. And we are proud to have the bank's chairman right here, Fred Hochberg. He's here this afternoon. He's helping this company, as we speak, sell more goods overseas. And so today, exports are at an alltime high. We are selling more stuff around the world. We've added more than a million export-supported jobs since I took office.

So all these steps are making a difference, but there's more we can do. We need to pursue new trade agreements with Europe and the Pacific region. We need to invest in high-tech manufacturing centers, because I want the next revolution in manufacturing to be made here in America.

Our workers are at our best when we're building stuff. So today I'm also announcing the next step in our effort to cut through redtape that keeps big construction projects from getting off the ground.

Now, some of you, if you've heard me, I'm really big on us rebuilding our .infrastructure in this country I want to put people back to work improving our roads, our bridges, our airports, our ports. We were talking about the Panama Canal. The Panama Canal is being revamped down in Panama so that it can accommodate even bigger ships. And these cargo ships are so big that if we don't remodel our ports here in the United States, they can't dock at our ports. They'll dock someplace else. We'll lose that business.

So we've got to up our game when it comes to infrastructure. And the good news is, when you do that, you're putting people back to work right away, operating dredging equipment and doing other stuff, and you're also laying the foundation for future economic growth.

Now, the problem is, we've had some trouble out of Congress just going ahead and funding——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I know, it's surprising, isn't it? [*Laughter*] But we've had some little difficulty getting our Republican friends to work with us to find a steady funding source for these projects that everybody knows needs to happen. But in fairness, one of the problems we've had in the past is, is that sometimes, it takes too long to get projects off the ground. There are all these permits and redtape and planning and this and that, and some of it's important to do, but we could do it faster.

So a while back, what I did was, I ordered everybody who was involved in approving projects to speed up the permitting process for 50 different big projects all across the country,

from the Tappan Zee Bridge in New York to the Port of Charleston in South Carolina. And we've been able to, in some cases, cut approval times from 7 years down to a year. Right? So we've made progress.

Today I'm directing agencies across the Government to do what it takes to cut timelines for breaking ground on major infrastructure projects in half. And what that will mean is, is that construction workers get back on the jobs faster. It means more money going back into local economies, and it means more demand for outstanding dredging equipment that is made right here in Baltimore.

Now, some of you know, one of the guys who has been working on this, he's Deputy Transportation Secretary John Porcari, your former transportation secretary here in Maryland before Governor O'Malley generously agreed to share him with the entire country.

So those are some of the ways that we can create the conditions for businesses like this one to generate even more good jobs. And these are the kinds of ideas that we have to stay focused on every single day. This should be our principal focus: How are we making ourselves more competitive? How are we training our workers so that they can do the jobs that need to be done? How can we make sure that we stay on the cutting edge in terms of technology? How are we making it easier for businesses to succeed?

And I'm going to keep trying to work with both parties in Washington to make progress, because our challenges are solvable. I travel all around the world, and I meet people from all walks of life. And I can tell you, there's not a country on Earth that wouldn't trade places with the United States of America. That's really true. They know we've got all the ingredients to succeed. We've got the answers. The only thing that's holding us back sometimes is a lack of political will. Sometimes, our leadership isn't focused where we need to be focused. And that's where you come in. It's up to you and all the people across the country to tell the people in Washington, focus on getting stuff done. We may not agree on the way to do certain things, but I think we all love our country. We all want what's best for our kids and our grandkids.

Wouldn't we be better off if every American could find a good job that pays the bills and lets you afford a home and maybe take a vacation, put some money away to retire? Wouldn't we all be better off if we knew that all of our kids were getting a good education from an earliest age, if we reformed our high schools for this new economy, if we're helping more young people afford to go to college?

Wouldn't we be better off if every worker's wage was a wage you could live on? Nobody wants to be on welfare. Nobody wants to have to rely on a handout. They want to work. But let's make sure that work pays.

Wouldn't we be better off if every American could afford quality healthcare and the peace of mind that comes with it? That's why we passed health care reform. Wouldn't we be better off if we did what's necessary to protect more of our children from the horrors of gun violence?

There are going to be disagreements about how we get there. But let's remind ourselves that when we work together nobody can stop us, when we do the right thing. That's what I believe. That's what I'm going to keep fighting for. That's what drives me; it's all the stories of people like you that I have the great honor of meeting and working with every single day. You deserve leaders with the same dedication and commitment and focus that the people who work at this company bring to their jobs every single day. And you look at those dredges up there—and I met folks who have worked here 38 years, some who have worked 40 years, and the pride that they take in their product and the way they all work together, that's the attitude that we've got to bring to bear here.

I think about a woman here, Myrna LaBarre. Myrna LaBarre. Where is Myrna? There's Myrna right here. [*Applause*] Myrna LaBarre. Myrna has been at Ellicott for more than 50 years. Now, that means she started when there were no child labor laws, because she—it was clearly illegal. [*Laughter*] She was

about 4 or 5, and they started putting her to work, put a broom in her hand. But when somebody asked Myrna what lessons she learned after 50 years working at the same company, she said, "Be honest, be helpful, accept your mistakes and improve upon them, be good to people, keep a good sense of humor, have the best work ethic possible, and handle the good times and get over the bad." That's a pretty good recipe for success right there. That's who we are. [*Applause*] That's who we are. Thank you, Myrna.

I mean, that pretty much sums up everything. [*Laughter*] That's who we like to understand America to be, who we are as Americans. We're honest and helpful. We work hard. We're good to others. We handle the good times, and we get over the bad times. If we keep that in mind, if we just all keep Myrna's advice in mind, keep plugging away, keep fighting, we'll build an even better America than we've got right now.

Audience member. We're praying!

The President. And I know you're going to—we can pray too; we'll add that in there. [*Laughter*]

If we work to create more jobs, if we give every American the tools that they need for those jobs, if we make sure that hard work pays off and that responsibility is rewarded, then once again, America is going to be the place where you can always make it if you try. And we'll all prosper together. And we'll make sure that America remains the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Duncan A. McTaggart, contract administrator, Peter A. Bowe, president and chief executive officer, Robert E. Croom, general manager, Martin E. Barnes, Jr., executive vice president and chief operating officer, and Myrna L. LaBarre, executive assistant, Ellicott Dredges, LLC; Ing Manuel Ordonez Galan, a former customer of Ellicott Dredges, LLC, who named a dredge after former President William J. Clinton; Ray Lewis, former linebacker, National Football League's Baltimore Ravens; Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore, MD; Ruth Cummings, mother of Rep. Elijah E. Cummings; and former Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes, father of Rep. John P. Sarbanes. He also referred to the memorandum on modernizing Federal infrastructure review and permitting regulations, policies, and procedures, which was signed on May 17 and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq
May 17, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq that was declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2013.

Obstacles to the continued reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 17, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2014
May 17, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Justice, State, and Transportation, as well as Other International Programs, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the Federal Trade Commission. These amendments do not affect the proposed FY 2014 Budget totals. These amendments are necessary to reflect correctly policies assumed in the FY 2014 Budget.

Also included is a new Department of Defense (DOD) General Provision that would authorize the Secretary of the Navy to receive and retain payment in-kind for the settlement of the longstanding A–12 aircraft contract litigation. This litigation has been ongoing for over two decades.

The final decision about the pace of the drawdown in Afghanistan was not made at the time the FY 2014 Budget request was developed. As a result, the Budget included a placeholder for DOD FY 2014 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding, equivalent to the amount provided in the President's FY 2013 Budget. The Administration noted in the FY 2014 Budget that after determining the required force levels in Afghanistan, a Budget amendment updating the OCO request would be submitted to the Congress. The enclosed DOD amendments also include the necessary updates to the OCO request, which funds military operations in Afghanistan and other activities that primarily support Operation Enduring Freedom.

In addition, this transmittal contains FY 2014 amendments for the Legislative Branch. As a matter of comity and tradition, these appropriations requests for the Legislative Branch are transmitted without change.

The details of these amendments are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

I again urge the Congress to consider my FY 2014 Budget, which takes a balanced approach to further deficit reduction and replaces sequestration.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

The President's Weekly Address
May 18, 2013

Hi, everybody. Over the past few months, I've laid out a series of commonsense ideas to reignite the true engine of our economic growth: a rising, thriving middle class.

The way I see it, there are three areas where we need to focus: one, making America a magnet for good jobs; two, making sure our workers have the education and skills they need to do those jobs; and three, making sure your hard work leads to a decent living.

I've also been visiting cities across the country that are doing some interesting and creative things along these lines. So on Friday, for example, I stopped by a factory in Baltimore

that's creating good jobs here at home by exporting dredging equipment abroad. I read with young kids at a pre-K program, where kids are getting a head start learning the skills they need to succeed in life. And I stopped by a program that's helping folks in tough circumstances, especially low-income dads, get the training and guidance they need to find work and support their families.

That's why I like getting out of the Washington echo chamber whenever I can, because too often our politics aren't focused on the same things you are: working hard, supporting your family and supporting your community, making sure your kids have every chance in life.

More than anything, the American people make me optimistic about where we're headed as a nation, especially after all we've been through during the past several years. And that should encourage us all to work even harder on the issues that matter to you.

In a little over 3 years, our businesses have created more than 6.5 million new jobs. And while our unemployment rate is still too high, it's the lowest it's been since 2008. But now, we need to create even more good, middle class jobs, and we've got to do it faster.

Corporate profits have skyrocketed to an all-time high. But now we need to get middle class wages and incomes rising too.

Our housing market is healing. But we need to do a lot more to help families stay in their homes or to help them refinance to take advantage of historically low rates.

And our deficits, well, they're shrinking at the fastest rate in decades. But now we've got to budget in a smarter way that doesn't hurt middle class families or harm critical investments in our future.

So, in a lot of sectors, things are looking up. The American auto industry is thriving. American energy is booming. And American ingenuity in our high-tech sector has the potential to change the way we do almost everything.

In the coming weeks, I'm going to visit more cities like Baltimore and Austin, Texas—where I was 2 weeks ago—places where Americans are coming together to strengthen their own communities and economies and, in the process, making this country better for all of us.

And I'm going to keep on trying to work with both parties in Washington to make progress on your priorities. Because I know that if we come together around creating more jobs, educating more of our kids, and building new ladders of opportunity for everyone who's willing to climb them, we'll all prosper together.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4 p.m. on May 17 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 17, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 18.

Commencement Address at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia
May 19, 2013

The President. Hello, Morehouse! Well, thank you, everybody. Please be seated.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*] That is why I am here.

Now, I have to say that it is one of the great honors of my life to be able to address this gathering here today. I want to thank Dr. Wilson for his outstanding leadership, and the Board of Trustees. We have Congressmen Cedric Richmond and Sanford Bishop, both proud alumni of this school, as well as Congressman Hank Johnson. And one of my dear friends and a great inspiration to us all, the great John Lewis is here. We have your outstanding mayor, Mr. Kasim Reed, in the house.

To all the members of the Morehouse family, and most of all, congratulations to this distinguished group of Morehouse men, the class of 2013.

I have to say that it's a little hard to follow—not Dr. Wilson, but a skinny guy with a funny

name. [*Laughter*] Betsegaw Tadele, he's going to be doing something.

[*At this point, thunder sounded in the background.*]

I also have to say that you all are going to get wet. [*Laughter*] And I'd be out there with you if I could. But Secret Service gets nervous. [*Laughter*] So I'm going to have to stay here, dry. But know that I'm there with you in spirit. [*Laughter*]

Some of you are graduating summa cum laude. Some of you are graduating magna cum laude. I know some of you are just graduating, "thank you, Lordy." [*Laughter*] And that's appropriate because it's a Sunday. [*Laughter*]

I see some moms and grandmas here, aunts, in their Sunday best; although, they are upset about their hair getting messed up. [*Laughter*] Michelle would not be sitting in the rain. She has taught me about hair. [*Laughter*]

I want to congratulate all of you: the parents, the grandparents, the brothers and sisters, the family and friends who supported these young men in so many ways. This is your day as well. Just think about it: Your sons, your brothers, your nephews, they've spent the last 4 years far from home and close to Spelman, and yet they are still here today. So you've done something right. Graduates, give a big round of applause to your family for everything that they've done for you.

I know that some of you had to wait in long lines to get into today's ceremony. And I would apologize, but it did not have anything to do with security. Those graduates just wanted you to know what it's like to register for classes here. [*Laughter*] And this time of year brings a different kind of stress: every senior stopping by Gloster Hall over the past week making sure your name was actually on the list of students who met all the graduation requirements. If it wasn't on the list, you had to figure out why. Was it that library book you lent to that trifling roommate who didn't return it? [*Laughter*] Was it Dr. Johnson's policy class? Did you get enough Crown Forum credits?

On that last point, I'm going to exercise my power as President to declare this speech sufficient Crown Forum credits for any otherwise eligible student to graduate. That is my graduation gift to you. You have a special dispensation.

Now, graduates, I am humbled to stand here with all of you as an honorary Morehouse man. I finally made it. [*Laughter*] And as I do, I am mindful of an old saying: "You can always tell a Morehouse man, but you can't tell him much." [*Laughter*] And that makes my task a little more difficult, I suppose. But I think it also reflects the sense of pride that's always been part of this school's tradition.

Benjamin Mays, who served as the president of Morehouse for almost 30 years, understood that tradition better than anybody. He said, and I quote, "It will not be sufficient for Morehouse College, for any college, for that matter, to produce clever graduates; but rather honest men, men who can be trusted in public and private life, men who are sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society and who are willing to accept responsibility for correcting those ills."

It was that mission, not just to educate men, but to cultivate good men, strong men, upright men, that brought community leaders together just 2 years after the end of the Civil War. They assembled a list of 37 men, free Blacks and freed slaves, who would make up the first prospective class of what later became Morehouse College. Most of those first students had a desire to become teachers and preachers, to better themselves so they could help others do the same.

A century and a half later, times have changed. But the Morehouse mystique still endures. Some of you probably came here from communities where everybody looked like you. Others may have come here in search of a community. And I suspect that some of you probably felt a little bit of culture shock the first time you came together as a class in King's Chapel. All of a sudden, you weren't the only high school sports captain, you weren't the only student council president. You were suddenly in a group of high achievers, and that meant you were expected to do something more.

And that's the unique sense of purpose that this place has always infused: the conviction that this is a training ground not only for individual success, but for leadership that can change the world.

Dr. King was just 15 years old when he enrolled here at Morehouse. He was an unknown, undersized, unassuming young freshman who lived at home with his parents. And I think it's fair to say he wasn't the coolest kid on campus; for the suits he wore, his classmates called him Tweed. But his education at Morehouse helped to forge the intellect, the discipline, the compassion, the soul force that would transform America. It was here that he was introduced to the writings of Gandhi and Thoreau and the theory of civil disobedience. It was here that professors encouraged him to look past the world as it was and fight for the world as it should be. And it was here, at Morehouse, as Dr. King later wrote, where "I realized that nobody . . . was afraid."

Not even of some bad weather. I added on that part. [*Laughter*] I know it's wet out there. But Dr. Wilson told me you all had a choice and decided to do it out here anyway. That's a Morehouse man talking.

Now, think about it: For Black men in the forties and the fifties, the threat of violence, the constant humiliations, large and small, the uncertainty that you could support a family, the gnawing doubts born of the Jim Crow culture that told you every day that somehow you were inferior, the temptation to shrink from the world, to accept your place, to avoid risks, to be afraid—that temptation was necessarily strong.

And yet here, under the tutelage of men like Dr. Mays, young Martin learned to be unafraid. And he, in turn, taught others to be unafraid. And over time, he taught a nation to be unafraid. And over the last 50 years, thanks to the moral force of Dr. King and a Moses generation that overcame their fear and their cynicism and their despair, barriers have come tumbling down, and new doors of opportunity have swung open, and laws and hearts and minds have been changed to the point where someone who looks just like you can somehow come to serve as President of these United States of America.

So the history we share should give you hope. The future we share should give you hope. You're graduating into an improving job market. You're living in a time when advances in technology and communication put the world at your fingertips. Your generation is uniquely poised for success unlike any generation of African Americans that came before it.

But that doesn't mean we don't have work, because if we're honest with ourselves, we know that too few of our brothers have the opportunities that you've had here at Morehouse. In troubled neighborhoods all across this country, many of them heavily African American, too few of our citizens have role models to guide them. Communities just a couple of miles from my house in Chicago, communities just a couple miles from here, they're places where jobs are still too scarce and wages are still too low; where schools are underfunded and violence is pervasive; where too many of our men spend their youths, not behind a desk in a classroom, but hanging out on the streets or brooding behind a jail cell.

My job as President is to advocate for policies that generate more opportunity for everybody: policies that strengthen the middle class and give more people the chance to climb their way into the middle class, policies that create more good jobs and reduce poverty and educate more children and give more families the security of health care and protect more of our children from the horrors of gun violence. That's my job. Those are matters of public policy, and it is important for all of us—Black, White, and Brown—to advocate for an America where everybody has got a fair shot in life. Not just some. Not just a few.

But along with collective responsibilities, we have individual responsibilities. There are some things, as Black men, we can only do for ourselves. There are some things, as Morehouse men, that you are obliged to do for those still left behind. As Morehouse men, you now wield something even more powerful than the diploma you're about to collect, and that's the power of your example.

So what I ask of you today is the same thing I ask of every graduating class I address: Use that power for something larger than yourself. Live up to President Mays's challenge. Be "sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society." And be "willing to accept responsibility for correcting those ills."

I know that some of you came to Morehouse from communities where life was about keeping your head down and looking out for yourself. Maybe you feel like you escaped and now you can take your degree and get that fancy job and the nice house and the nice car and never look back. And don't get me wrong, with all those student loans you've had to take out, I know you've got to earn some money. With doors open to you that your parents and grandparents could not even imagine, no one expects you to take a vow of poverty. But I will say, it betrays a poverty of ambition if all you think about is what goods you can buy instead of what good you can do.

So yes, go get that law degree. But if you do, ask yourself if the only option is to defend the rich and the powerful or if you can also find some time to defend the powerless. Sure, go get your MBA or start that business. We need Black businesses out there. But ask yourselves what broader purpose your business might serve in putting people back to work or transforming a neighborhood. The most successful CEOs I know didn't start out intent just on making money; rather, they had a vision of how their product or service would change things, and the money followed.

Some of you may be headed to medical school to become doctors. But make sure you heal folks in underserved communities who really need it too. For generations, certain groups in this country, especially African Americans, have been desperate in need of access to quality, affordable health care. And as a society, we're finally beginning to change that. Those of you who are under age 26 already have the option to stay on your parent's health care plan. But all of you are heading into an economy where many young people expect not only to have multiple jobs, but multiple careers.

So starting October 1, because of the Affordable Care Act—otherwise known as Obamacare—you'll be able to shop for a quality, affordable plan that's yours and travels with you, a plan that will insure not only your health, but your dreams if you are sick or go—get in an accident. But we're going to need some doctors to make sure it works too. We've got to make sure everybody has good health in this country. It's not just good for you, it's good for this country. So you're going to have to spread the word to your fellow young people.

Which brings me to a second point: Just as Morehouse has taught you to expect more of yourselves, inspire those who look up to you to expect more of themselves. We know that too many young men in our community continue to make bad choices. And I have to say, growing up, I made quite a few myself. Sometimes, I wrote off my own failings as just another example of the world trying to keep a Black man down. I had a tendency sometimes to make excuses for me not doing the right thing. But one of the things that all of you have learned over the last 4 years is, there's no longer any room for excuses.

I understand there's a common fraternity creed here at Morehouse: "Excuses are tools of the incompetent used to build bridges to nowhere and monuments of nothingness." Well, we've got no time for excuses. Not because the bitter legacy of slavery and segregation have vanished entirely; they have not. Not because racism and discrimination no longer exist; we know those are still out there. It's just that in today's hyperconnected, hypercompetitive world, with millions of young people from China and India and Brazil, many of whom started with a whole lot less than all of you did, all of them entering the global workforce alongside you, nobody is going to give you anything that you have not earned.

Nobody cares how tough your upbringing was. Nobody cares if you suffered some discrimination. And moreover, you have to remember that whatever you've gone through, it pales in comparison to the hardships previous generations endured, and they overcame them.

And if they overcame them, you can overcome them too.

You now hail from a lineage and legacy of immeasurably strong men, men who bore tremendous burdens and still laid the stones for the path on which we now walk. You wear the mantle of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington and Ralph Bunche and Langston Hughes and George Washington Carver and Ralph Abernathy and Thurgood Marshall and, yes, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These men were many things to many people. And they knew full well the role that racism played in their lives. But when it came to their own accomplishments and sense of purpose, they had no time for excuses.

Every one of you have a grandma or an uncle or a parent who's told you that at some point in life, as an African American, you have to work twice as hard as anyone else if you want to get by. I think President Mays put it even better. He said, "Whatever you do, strive to do it so well that no man living and no man dead and no man yet to be born can do it any better."

And I promise you, what was needed in Dr. Mays's time—that spirit of excellence and hard work and dedication and no excuses—is needed now more than ever. If you think you can just get over in this economy just because you have a Morehouse degree, you're in for a rude awakening. But if you stay hungry, if you keep hustling, if you keep on your grind and get other folks to do the same, nobody can stop you.

And when I talk about pursuing excellence and setting an example, I'm not just talking about in your professional life. One of today's graduates, Frederick Anderson—where's Frederick? Frederick, right here. I want—I know it's raining, but I'm going to tell about Frederick. Frederick started his college career in Ohio, only to find out that his high school sweetheart back in Georgia was pregnant. So he came back and enrolled in Morehouse to be closer to her. Pretty soon, helping raise a newborn and working night shifts became too much, so he started taking business classes at a technical college instead, doing everything from delivering newspapers to buffing hospital floors to support his family.

And then, he enrolled at Morehouse a second time. But even with a job, he couldn't keep up with the cost of tuition. So, after getting his degree from that technical school, this father of three decided to come back to Morehouse for a third time. As Frederick says, "God has a plan for my life, and He's not done with me yet."

And today, Frederick is a family man and a working man and a Morehouse man. And that's what I'm asking all of you to do: Keep setting an example for what it means to be a man. Be the best husband to your wife or your boyfriend or your partner. Be the best father you can be to your children, because nothing is more important.

I was raised by a heroic single mom, wonderful grandparents, made incredible sacrifices for me. And I know there are moms and grandparents here today who did the same thing for all of you. But I sure wish I had had a father who was not only present, but involved. Didn't know my dad. And so my whole life, I've tried to be for Michelle and my girls what my father was not for my mother and me. I want to break that cycle where a father is not at home, where a father is not helping to raise that son or daughter. I want to be a better father, a better husband, a better man.

It's hard work that demands your constant attention and frequent sacrifice. And I promise you—Michelle will tell you—I'm not perfect. She's got a long list of my imperfections. [*Laughter*] Even now I'm still practicing, I'm still learning, still getting corrected in terms of how to be a fine husband and a good father. But I will tell you this: Everything else is unfulfilled if we fail at family, if we fail at that responsibility.

I know that when I am on my deathbed someday, I will not be thinking about any particular legislation I pass. I will not be thinking about a policy I promoted. I will not be thinking about the speech I gave. I will not be thinking the Nobel Prize I received. I will be thinking about that walk I took with my daughters. I'll be thinking about a lazy afternoon with my

wife. I'll be thinking about sitting around the dinner table and seeing them happy and healthy and knowing that they were loved. And I'll be thinking about whether I did right by all of them.

So be a good role model. Set a good example for that young brother coming up. If you know somebody who's not on point, go back and bring that brother along. Those who've been left behind, who haven't had the same opportunities we have, they need to hear from you. You've got to be engaged on the barbershop, on the basketball court, at church, spend time and energy and presence to give people opportunities and a chance. Pull them up, expose them, support their dreams. Don't put them down.

We've got to teach them—just like what we have to learn—what it means to be a man: to serve your city like Maynard Jackson; to shape the culture like Spike Lee; to be like Chester Davenport, one of the first people to integrate the University of Georgia Law School. When he got there, nobody would sit next to him in class. But Chester didn't mind. Later on, he said: "It was the right thing for me to do. Someone needed to be the first." And today Chester is here celebrating his 50th reunion. Where is Chester Davenport? He's here.

So if you've had role models—fathers, brothers like that—thank them today. And if you haven't, commit yourself to being that man to somebody else.

And finally, as you do these things, do them not just for yourself, but don't even do them just for the African American community. I want you to set your sights higher. At the turn of the last century, W.E.B. Du Bois spoke about the "talented tenth," a class of highly educated, socially conscious leaders in the Black community. But it's not just the African American community that needs you. The country needs you. The world needs you.

As Morehouse men, many of you know what it's like to be an outsider, know what it's like to be marginalized, know what it's like to feel the string of—sting of discrimination. And that's an experience that a lot of Americans share. Hispanic Americans know that feeling when somebody asks them where they come from or tell them to go back. Gay and lesbian Americans feel it when a stranger passes judgment on their parenting skills or the love that they share. Muslim Americans feel it when they're stared at with suspicion because of their faith. Any woman who knows the injustice of earning less pay for doing the same work, she knows what it's like to be on the outside looking in.

So your experiences give you special insight that today's leaders need. If you tap into that experience, it should endow you with empathy: the understanding of what it's like to walk in somebody else's shoes, to see through their eyes; to know what it's like when you're not born on third base, thinking you hit a triple. It should give you the ability to connect. It should give you a sense of compassion and what it means to overcome barriers.

And I will tell you, class of 2013, whatever success I have achieved, whatever positions of leadership I have held have depended less on Ivy League degrees or SAT scores or GPAs and have instead been due to that sense of connection and empathy, the special obligation I felt, as a Black man like you, to help those who need it most: people who didn't have the opportunities that I had. Because there but for the grace of God go I; I might have been in their shoes. I might have been in prison. I might have been unemployed. I might not have been able to support a family. And that motivates me.

So it's up to you to widen your circle of concern, to care about justice for everybody: White, Black, and Brown. Everybody. Not just in your own community, but also across this country and around the world. To make sure everyone has a voice and everybody gets a seat at the table; that everybody, no matter what you look like or where you come from, what your last name is, where—it doesn't matter, everybody gets a chance to walk through those doors of opportunity if they are willing to work hard enough.

When Leland Shelton was 4 years old—where's Leland? Stand up, Leland. When Leland Shelton was 4 years old, social services took him away from his mama, put him in the

care of his grandparents. By age 14, he was in the foster care system. Three years after that, Leland enrolled in Morehouse. And today he is graduating Phi Beta Kappa on his way to Harvard Law School. But he's not stopping there. As a member of the National Foster Care Youth and Alumni Policy Council, he plans to use his law degree to make sure kids like him don't fall through the cracks. And it won't matter whether they're Black kids or Brown kids or White kids or Native American kids, because he'll understand what they're going through. And he'll be fighting for them. He'll be in their corner. That's leadership. That's a Morehouse man right there.

That's what we've come to expect from you, Morehouse, a legacy of leaders, not just in our Black community, but for the entire American community: to recognize the burdens you carry with you, but to resist the temptation to use them as excuses; to transform the way we think about manhood and set higher standards for ourselves and for others; to be successful, but also to understand that each of us has responsibilities not just to ourselves, but to one another and to future generations. Men who refuse to be afraid. Men who refuse to be afraid.

Members of the class of 2013, you are heirs to a great legacy. You have within you that same courage and that same strength, the same resolve as the men who came before you. That's what being a Morehouse man is all about. That's what being an American is all about.

Success may not come quickly or easily. But if you strive to do what's right, if you work harder and dream bigger, if you set an example in your own lives and do your part to help meet the challenges of our times, then I am confident that, together, we will continue the never-ending task of perfecting our Union.

Congratulations, class of 2013. God bless you, God bless Morehouse, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. on Century Campus. In his remarks, he referred to John Silvanus Wilson, president, Betsegaw Tadele, 2013 valedictorian, and Tobe Johnson, professor of political science, Morehouse College; filmmaker Spike Lee; and Chester C. Davenport, managing director, Georgetown Partners, LLC.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Atlanta
May 19, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. Please have a seat.

Let me begin by saying that you just heard from one of the finest Senators we've got in this country and an example of the kind of young national leadership that we are seeing. Michael, who was a superintendent in schools, cares about policy, cares about education, and he's doing a great job in the Senate. And so I couldn't be prouder to call him a friend. Please give Michael Bennet a big round of applause.

And, Michael, if it makes you feel any better, what—the feeling you described is exactly how I feel every time I precede Michelle on the podium. [*Laughter*] She—people want to get rid of me quick too. [*Laughter*]

I also want to acknowledge one of the finest young mayors that we've got in the country, Kasim Reed in the house. And the person primarily responsible for Kasim's success, his mother, who, of course, looks too young to be his mother, but is his mother. [*Laughter*]

And I want to thank Arthur Blank for hosting us. Speaking of people responsible for our success, Arthur's mom is here. She is celebrating her 98th birthday today, and so we've got to give her a big round of applause. Happy birthday. [*Applause*] Happy birthday. And Arthur's promised, for your birthday, that the Falcons will win the Super Bowl this year. [*Laughter*] That's a promise.

I just had the pleasure of speaking at the Morehouse commencement. And it was a spectacular gathering, a very wet gathering because there were thunderstorms, but people were undaunted. And you had 500-plus

incredible young men and their families there. The valedictorian was a young man, an immigrant from Ethiopia, who, like me, was skinny, and initially at least, it was very hard to pronounce his name. And he's now going to be going off to Microsoft to help do program design at Microsoft's head office.

During the course of the address that I gave I had the opportunity to address a young man who had been taken away from his mother when he was 4, lived with his grandparents, but then had some issues there, ended up in the foster system, and 3 years after he entered into the foster care system, was admitted to Morehouse and is now on his way to Harvard Law School, where he intends to practice law in the child welfare system and is already on the national advisory board for children's welfare.

And I tell these stories because all around the country, I get a chance to meet young people who are simply remarkable, who have overcome the biggest odds, who are doing things that I could not ever dream of doing. And it makes you so optimistic about the future of America. There is a spirit of innovation and a spirit of determination, and there is an awareness of the environment and social equity and a belief that there's nothing that can stop America when people are pulling together. And you see it in these young people, and it just makes you ready to go out there and fight the good fight.

And the challenge is, is that all too often, that same spirit isn't as evident as it needs to be in Washington. Sometimes, you feel as if Washington is impeding rather than advancing the possibilities that these young people represent.

And so, for the last 4 years, I've been fairly busy—[*laughter*]—ending a war; winding down another war; making sure that we went after Al Qaida and those who attacked us on 9/11; recovering from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression; saving an auto industry; stabilizing the banking system; making sure that we have a system in place that every American has access to health care; ensuring that we begin on the road to energy independence; deal with issues like climate change; double our fuel efficiency on cars; double our production of clean energy; make sure that our education system is on a solid path of reform; and making sure that college is affordable so that those young people that I saw at Morehouse, that more of them are able to graduate without a mountain of debt.

And all of that progress is because of you. Couldn't have done it had it not been for the incredible support of so many people in this room. But what I think we're all aware of is that our job is not finished, that those Morehouse graduates that we just saw, they're entering into a job market that is still challenging, and because of some policies in Washington like the sequester, growth may end up slowing and we may start seeing once again the job market stall in ways that makes it a lot harder for them to realize their full potential.

We know that we've still got a lot of work to do when it comes to education. One of the things that I talked about during the State of the Union is making sure that we've got early childhood education in place. The last time I was in Georgia, I was out at Decatur. It's got a wonderful model program for early childhood education. You've got kids who are poor alongside kids who are middle class and alongside disabled kids, all of them coming together with outstanding teachers who have teacher-coaches.

And we can document, every dollar we spend on early childhood education, we get $7 back in fewer dropouts, in fewer teen pregnancies, in fewer incarcerations. It pays off. But what those kids in Decatur experience, there are a lot more kids out there who don't have that same chance, don't have that same shot.

We know that we've still got a lot—to do a lot more work when it comes to energy. We are sitting on this revolution in the energy sector. Probably in 5, 6, 7 years, America will be a net exporter of natural gas. And we will be able to say, probably in 15 years or so, that we are about as close as you can be to energy independent as America has ever been. But despite that, what we also know is, is that the energy sources of the future are not going to be enough—or the past are not going to be

enough. We've got to look at the energy source of the future.

And there's still a lot more work to be done to make our economy more energy efficient, to make sure that we're dealing with serious issues like climate change. When I look at Arthur's incredible kids and grandkids, I'm thinking—just like I'm thinking about when I see Malia and Sasha—I want to make sure that 30 years from now, 40 years from now, when they're with their kids and their grandkids, that they've got a planet that isn't in chaos because of decisions that we made or decisions that we failed to make. So we've got a lot more work to do there.

We've still got to implement health care. We've actually seen health care costs increase at the slowest rate that we've seen in decades, and it's now—we've seen this over the last 3, 3½ years. So we're making real changes in terms of health care delivery to improve quality and reduce costs. But unfortunately, for a lot of people, they're not seeing those savings because costs are being passed on to them from their employers. And it's still the biggest driver of our deficits. It's still a source of concern when it comes to Medicare and Medicaid. So we're going to have to do a lot of work on that front.

Infrastructure: We've got about $2 trillion of deferred maintenance. And I haven't gone through the Atlanta airport recently—[*laughter*]. I don't have to take off my shoes, generally, when I fly. [*Laughter*] But my assumption is, is that there's some reworking that we could be doing: roads, bridges, ports all across the Gulf. I was down in Costa Rica meeting with the Central American Presidents, and I was reminded once again, Panama is revamping its canal; they're going to be bringing in these mega-container cargo ships. And right now a bunch of those ships can't dock in our ports all along the Gulf—Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana. And if we don't revamp those, we're going to lose business.

So the good news is, every single item that I just mentioned, we've got good, commonsense solutions that we can implement right now. The bad news is, is that there's a shortage of common sense in Washington. [*Laughter*]

And so part of the reason that what you're doing here today is so important is because it gives us the opportunity to elect more people like a Michael Bennet, who are not ideological, who don't come at this thinking there's just one way of doing things, who are interested in data and are interested in facts and are interested in figuring out what works. And that kind of approach to governance—if we get a critical mass in the Senate and we can potentially get a critical mass of folks like that in the House—means that the sky is the limit. Nothing can stop us.

I travel all around the world, and the one thing I have to tell you is there's not a country that would not gladly trade places with the United States of America. All right? I mean, you're seeing tremendous changes everywhere. Obviously, in a place like China, we've seen more people rise out of poverty than any time in human history. That is a good thing. We shouldn't feel threatened by that, we should welcome that by—first of all, because our humanity demands that we welcome people being out of dire poverty, and if it's managed properly, it means that China is more likely to be peaceful, and it means those are big markets for our companies.

But what it also means is that, sometimes, people get worried, are we being overtaken? Is America falling behind?

[*At this point, an audience member sneezed.*]

Well—bless you. [*Laughter*] Let me tell you, you talk to Chinese leaders; they look at what we've got in terms of our network of universities and the dynamism and talent of our businesses and our strong middle class, and they would love to have our problems. Would love to have our problems. India, same thing. Brazil, same thing. What's holding us back is a tendency in Washington to put politics ahead of policy, to put the next election ahead of the next generation. And that mindset is what we need to change.

And that's what Michael Bennet represents, and that's what your efforts represent here: our capacity to get beyond the kind of short-term

tactical, partisan thinking that has come to so dominate Washington and to start moving in a direction in which we're just trying to get stuff done.

Which doesn't mean that there aren't going to be politics involved; it doesn't mean that there are not going to be some rough and tumble. And one thing that I think folks like myself and Michael and Kasim and others learned is that if you get in this business, folks are going to take their shots at you. And I've got the gray hair to prove it. [*Laughter*] But that kind of stuff doesn't bother me, and I know it doesn't bother others who are in elected office, if we feel like we're getting stuff done. If we feel that, at the end of the day, when we look back on our public service, we can say, you know what, this country is stronger, better positioned for the future than it was before.

And I think we have that possibility. And you're starting to see in Washington some sense, even among the most partisan folks there, that we've, kind of—the balance has tipped too far away from getting stuff done. And that's why, for example, I'm optimistic about our capacity to get immigration reform done. Michael is one of the group of eight that's been putting this together, seeing four Democrats, four Republicans, who are sitting down and methodically, systematically just trying to fix a broken system because they understand that it needs to get done and that if, in fact, we're able to preserve our identity as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, our economy is going to be strong, and we're going to be better positioned to compete all around the world.

So the upshot is this: Despite sometimes the doom and gloom of what you hear emanating out of Washington, you should be optimistic about this country. I sure am. I think that we are on track with just a few important decisions that are well within our capacity to make sure that the 21st century is the American century just like the 20th century was.

But we can't do it alone. What I told those young Morehouse men is that it's not enough that you now have succeeded individually, you now have a broader obligation to this country and to the world. And all of you who, in this room, have been so successful in so many different walks of life, I hope you still feel that sense of obligation, that sense of citizenship, that sense of giving back. That's what built this country. That's its essence. And with your help, that's the kind of spirit that Michael and I and others want to continue to bring to Washington for as long as we can. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. at the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Michael F. Bennet, in his capacity as chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Sylvia Reed, mother of Mayor M. Kasim Reed of Atlanta, GA; Arthur M. Blank, owner, National Football League's Atlanta Falcons, and his mother Molly Blank; Betsegaw Tadele and Leland Shelton, 2013 graduates, Morehouse College; and Sens. Marco A. Rubio, Jeffrey L. Flake, John S. McCain III, Lindsey O. Graham, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, and Charles E. Schumer.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Thein Sein of Burma
May 20, 2013

President Obama. I want to welcome President Thein Sein to the United States of America and to the Oval Office.

Last year, I was proud to make a historic visit to Myanmar as the first U.S. President ever to visit that country. And now President Sein is able to return the favor by making a visit to the United States, and my understanding is that this is the first visit by a leader of Myanmar in almost 50 years.

Obviously, during this period in between, there have been significant bilateral tensions between our countries. But what has allowed this shift in relations is the leadership that

President Sein has shown in moving Myanmar down a path of both political and economic reform.

Over the last 2 years, we've seen a steady process in which political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, have been released and have been incorporated into the political process.

We've seen credible elections and a legislature that is continuing to make strides in the direction of more inclusivity and greater representation of all the various groups within Myanmar.

President Sein has also made genuine efforts to resolve longstanding ethnic conflicts within the country and has recognized the need to establish laws that respect the rights of the people of Myanmar.

As a consequence of these changes in policy inside of Myanmar, the United States has been able to relax sanctions that had been placed on Myanmar, and many countries around the world have followed suit.

And this has also allowed the United States and other countries to—and international institutions to participate in engagement with the Myanmar Government about how we can be helpful in spurring economic development that is broad based and that produces concrete results for the people of Myanmar. And that includes the prospect of increasing trade and investment in Myanmar, which can produce jobs and higher standards of living.

But as President Sein is the first to admit, this is a long journey and there is still much work to be done. And during our discussions, President Thein shared with me the fact—the manner in which he intends to continue to move forward on releasing more political prisoners; making sure that the Government of Myanmar institutionalizes some of the political reforms that have already taken place; how rule of law is codified so that it continues into the future; and the process whereby these ethnic conflicts that have existed are resolved not simply by a cease-fire, but an actual incorporation of all these communities into the political process.

I also shared with President Sein our deep concern about communal violence that has been directed at Muslim communities inside of Myanmar. The displacement of people, the violence directed towards them needs to stop, and we are prepared to work in any ways that we can with both the Government of Myanmar and the international community to assure that people are getting the help that they need, but more importantly, that their rights and their dignity is recognized over the long term.

As I indicated to President Sein, countries that are successful are countries that tap into the talents of all people and respect the rights of all people. And I'm confident that if Myanmar follows that recipe, that it will be not only a successful democracy, but also a thriving economy.

We also discussed some very concrete projects that we've already initiated. For example, USAID is already working to evaluate how we can improve agricultural productivity in Myanmar; that can benefit farmers, increase incomes, and improve standards of living in a largely agricultural country.

And we're also working, for example, on projects like improving the road that currently exists between Rangoon and Mandalay.

Finally, I wanted to thank President Sein for his participation in ASEAN and the East Asia Summit in which the United States is actively engaged in all the countries in Southeast Asia, as part of our broader refocusing on the Asia-Pacific region, a region of enormous growth and potential with which we want to continue to strengthen our bonds.

So, Mr. President, welcome to the United States of America. We very much appreciate your efforts and leadership in leading Myanmar in a new direction, and we want you to know that the United States will make every effort to assist you on what I know is a long and sometimes difficult, but ultimately, correct path to follow.

President Thein Sein. I would like to express my sincere thanks to President Obama for inviting me to come to the United States. Indeed, this is my very first visit to Washington, DC, as well as to the White House.

And I am also very pleased to have this opportunity to discuss about the democratization process and reform process undertaken in my country.

Our two countries established diplomatic relations since 1947, a year before our independence. And since then, we have been able to enjoy—historically, our two countries have enjoyed cordial relations, and there were also exchange of—high-level exchange of visits between our two countries.

But I have to say that in the past, there were difficulties or difficulties in our bilateral relationship. But now we are very pleased that our relations have been improved significantly, and I am very thankful that in 50 years, I am repaying a visit to the United States at the invitation of President Obama. And I am very grateful for extending an invitation to me to pay a visit to the United States.

Now that our country, Myanmar, has started to practice democratic system, so we can say that we have—both our countries have similar political system in our two countries.

As you all know, our government is just—our democratic government is just 2 years old. And we have—within the 2—short period of 2 years, our government have carried out political and economic reforms in our country. Because we are in a very nascent stage of democratic—a democratic stage, we still need a lot of democratic experience and practices to be learned. And we have seen successes. At the same time, we have been encountering obstacles and challenges along our democratization process, our path.

And the improvement in our relation is also in recognition—U.S. Government's recognition of our democratization efforts and my—our genuine efforts for democratization process in our country. And it is also due to—thanks to the President Obama's reengagement policy to reengage with our country so that we have seen improvement in our bilateral relations within a short period of time.

Myanmar, being a developing country, and as we are undertaking changes of our democratization reforms, it is a daunting task ahead of us. We encounter many challenges, such as, at present, our poverty rate in the country is quite high, and we have very few job opportunities. And then, as well as, we have a—we do not have much middle class in our country. And then we still—our people needs to be more familiar with democratic practice, democratic norms and values.

So we have a lot of challenges ahead of us, but we have to—thanks to the U.S. Government and the people's support and their understanding that we will be able to encounter these challenges as we undertake the reform process in our country.

During our—my meeting with—our discussion with President, as he have already elaborated, we discussed about the rule of law in our country; the strengthening of judicial bodies; and the providing necessary assistance so that our police and military force become professional forces. And then to—we also discussed what related to the poverty alleviation to—for the rural people and farmers, agricultural development, as well as health—uplifting the health and education sectors of our countries.

So we had a very fruitful discussion with President Obama, and then I should—I must say that I am very pleased to have this opportunity to have a candid and frank discussion with President Obama. And I believe that I have—my success—my visit to the United States is quite successful and meaningful.

For in—for democracy to flourish in our country, we will have to move forward, and we will have to undertake reforms, political reforms and economic reforms, in the years ahead. We will also have to—we are trying our best with our own resources—our own efforts to have political and economic reforms in our country. But we will also need—along this path, we will also need the assistance and understanding from the international community, including the United States.

And what I want to say is that President Obama has frequently used the word "forward." And I will take this opportunity to reiterate that Myanmar and I will continue to take the forward—move forward so that we will have—we can build a new democratic state—a new Myanmar, a new democratic state in our country.

I thank you all.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Member of Parliament and National League for Democracy Party Leader Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. President Thein Sein spoke in Burmese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the Tornadoes in Oklahoma
May 21, 2013

Good morning, everybody. As we all know by now, a series of storms swept across the Plains yesterday, and one of the most destructive tornadoes in history sliced through the towns of Newcastle and Moore, Oklahoma. In an instant, neighborhoods were destroyed. Dozens of people lost their lives. Many more were injured. And among the victims were young children, trying to take shelter in the safest place they knew, their school.

So our prayers are with the people of Oklahoma today.

Our gratitude is with the teachers who gave their all to shield their children, with the neighbors, first responders and emergency personnel who raced to help as soon as the tornado passed, and with all of those who, as darkness fell, searched for survivors through the night.

As a nation, our full focus right now is on the urgent work of rescue and the hard work of recovery and rebuilding that lies ahead.

Yesterday I spoke with Governor Fallin to make it clear to Oklahomans that they would have all the resources that they need at their disposal. Last night, I issued a disaster declaration to expedite those resources, to support the Governor's team in the immediate response, and to offer direct assistance to folks who have suffered loss. I also just spoke with Mayor Lewis of Moore, Oklahoma, to ensure that he's getting everything that he needs.

I've met with Secretary Napolitano this morning and my Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser, Lisa Monaco, to underscore that point that Oklahoma needs to get everything that it needs right away. The FEMA Administrator, Craig Fugate, is on his way to Oklahoma as we speak. FEMA staff was first deployed to Oklahoma's Emergency Operations Center on Sunday, as the State already was facing down the first wave of deadly tornadoes. Yesterday FEMA activated urban search and rescue teams from Texas, Nebraska, and Tennessee to assist in the ongoing search and rescue efforts and a mobile response unit to boost communications and logistical support.

So the people of Moore should know that their country will remain on the ground, there for them, beside them as long as it takes. For there are homes and schools to rebuild, businesses and hospitals to reopen, there are parents to console, first responders to comfort, and of course, frightened children who will need our continued love and attention.

There are empty spaces where there used to be living rooms, and bedrooms, and classrooms, and in time, we're going to need to refill those spaces with love and laughter and community.

We don't yet know the full extent of the damage from this week's storm. We don't know both the human and economic losses that may have occurred. We know that severe rumbling of weather, bad weather, through much of the country still continues, and we're also preparing for a hurricane season that begins next week.

But if there is hope to hold on to—not just in Oklahoma, but around the country—it's the knowledge that the good people there and in Oklahoma are better prepared for this type of storm than most. And what they can be certain of is that Americans from every corner of this country will be right there with them, opening our homes, our hearts to those in need. Because we're a nation that stands with our fellow citizens as long as it takes. We've seen that spirit in Joplin, in Tuscaloosa; we saw that spirit in Boston and Breezy Point. And that's what

the people of Oklahoma are going to need from us right now.

For those of you who want to help, you can go online right now to the American Red Cross, which is already on the ground in Moore. Already we've seen the University of Oklahoma announce that it will provide housing for displaced families. We've seen local churches and companies open their doors and their wallets. And last night the people of Joplin dispatched a team to help the people of Moore.

So for all those who've been affected, we recognize that you face a long road ahead. In some cases, there will be enormous grief that has to be absorbed, but you will not travel that path alone. Your country will travel it with you, fueled by our faith in the Almighty and our faith in one another.

So our prayers are with the people of Oklahoma today. And we will back up those prayers with deeds for as long as it takes.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Statement on Senate Action on Immigration Reform Legislation
May 21, 2013

I congratulate the Senate Judiciary Committee on completing its work on S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act. Thanks to the leadership of Chairman Leahy and a bipartisan group of eight Senators, the legislation that passed the Judiciary Committee with a strong bipartisan vote is largely consistent with the principles of commonsense reform I have proposed and meets the challenge of fixing our broken immigration system. The process for considering this legislation has been open and inclusive with multiple hearings, and more than a hundred amendments were considered and adopted, in many cases with bipartisan support. I applaud the committee members for their hard work, especially Gang of Eight members, Senators Schumer, Durbin, Graham, and Flake. None of the committee members got everything they wanted, and neither did I, but in the end, we all owe it to the American people to get the best possible result over the finish line. I encourage the full Senate to bring this bipartisan bill to the floor at the earliest possible opportunity and remain hopeful that the amendment process will lead to further improvements.

NOTE: The statement referred to Sens. Marco A. Rubio, John S. McCain III, Robert Menendez, and Michael F. Bennet.

Remarks at PBS's "Carole King: The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song In Performance at the White House"
May 22, 2013

Thank you. I have to say that as the podium came out, which meant that was my cue, my mother-in-law said, "Oh, shoot." [*Laughter*] True story! She was getting into the music. [*Laughter*] Welcome to the White House, everybody.

I want to start by thanking all the incredible artists who have joined us to pay tribute to the one and only Carole King. I also want to thank Dr. James Billington and all the folks at the Library of Congress not just for making this event possible, but for the outstanding work that they do every day to preserve the very best of our culture for generations to come.

Of course, as we gather tonight to present this award, our thoughts and prayers remain with the wonderful people of Oklahoma. They have suffered mightily this week. And while the road ahead will be long, their country will be with them every single step of the way.

That's who we are, and that's how we treat our family and friends and our neighbors wherever they are in the country. So we're going to help them recover. We're going to help them rebuild for as long as it takes. And eventually, life will go on and new memories will be made. And new laughter will come. New songs will be sung.

And that's often why we turn to music, during trying times, for comfort and for inspiration, and sometimes, just for a good diversion. And George Gershwin, it was said, was a "man who lives in music," who "expresses everything, serious or not, sound or superficial, by means of music, because it is his native language." And I can't think of a better description of tonight's Gershwin Prize recipient, singer-songwriter Carole King.

By the age of 4, Carole was already mastering the piano. By 15, she had already conducted her first orchestra. By 17, she had already written her first number-one hit, which you've already heard, "Will You Love Me Tomorrow?" with Gerry Goffin. So, at this point, all of you are feeling like underachievers. I understand. [*Laughter*] It was pretty clear by this time that this promising young musician from New York, who grew up not far from where George and Ira Gershwin were born, was destined for similar heights.

Whether it was Little Eva telling us to do "The Loco-Motion" or Aretha Franklin belting out the anthem of "A Natural Woman" or James Taylor reminding us that even here in Washington, "You've Got a Friend"—[*laughter*]—for an entire decade, behind so many of the songs that touched our hearts, behind so many of the lyrics that stirred our soul, there was Carole, ever joyful, ever uplifting.

And then, in 1971, came the biggest break of all, when she showed the world that she couldn't just write hit songs, she could sing them too. Her album "Tapestry" struck a chord with a whole new legion of fans, including me. It was the very first solo album by a female artist to reach diamond status, meaning it sold more than 10 million copies. It was the first album by a female artist to win all the top Grammy awards for record, song, and album of the year, along with the Grammy for best pop vocal performance. And as one of the best selling albums of all time, it cemented Carole's status as one of the most influential singer-songwriters that America has ever seen.

To date, Carole has written more than 400 compositions that have been recorded by over 1,000 artists, resulting in over 100 hits. She's done everything from doo-wop to pop. She's played with everyone from Bono to Babyface. She's been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. And tonight she's still reaching new heights, becoming the first female artist to win the Gershwin Prize for Popular Song.

As Carole tells it, the secret to her success is that "I try to get out of the way and let the process be guided by whatever is driving me." That's what makes her songs so personal and so powerful, so enduring. Like the Gershwins, it's not just that Carole lives the music, it's that music lives in her.

So tonight it is my great pleasure to present America's highest award for popular music to a living legend, Carole King.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:32 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson; lyricist Gerry Goffin; and musicians Paul D. "Bono" Hewson and Kenneth B. "Babyface" Edmonds.

Remarks at National Defense University
May 23, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

It is a great honor to return to the National Defense University. Here at Fort McNair, Americans have served in uniform since 1791, standing guard in the earliest days of the Republic and contemplating the future of warfare here in the 21st century.

For over two centuries, the United States has been bound together by founding documents that defined who we are as Americans and served as our compass through every type of change. Matters of war and peace are no different. Americans are deeply ambivalent about war, but having fought for our independence, we know a price must be paid for freedom. From the Civil War to our struggle against fascism, on through the long twilight struggle of the cold war, battlefields have changed, and technology has evolved. But our commitment to constitutional principles has weathered every war, and every war has come to an end.

And with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a new dawn of democracy took hold abroad, and a decade of peace and prosperity arrived here at home. And for a moment, it seemed the 21st century would be a tranquil time. And then, on September 11, 2001, we were shaken out of complacency. Thousands were taken from us, as clouds of fire and metal and ash descended upon a sun-filled morning. This was a different kind of war. No armies came to our shores, and our military was not the principal target. Instead, a group of terrorists came to kill as many civilians as they could.

And so our Nation went to war. We have now been at war for well over a decade. I won't review the full history. What is clear is that we quickly drove Al Qaida out of Afghanistan, but then shifted our focus and began a new war in Iraq. And this carried significant consequences for our fight against Al Qaida, our standing in the world, and to this day, our interests in a vital region.

Meanwhile, we strengthened our defenses: hardening targets, tightening transportation security, giving law enforcement new tools to prevent terror. Most of these changes were sound. Some caused inconvenience. But some, like expanded surveillance, raised difficult questions about the balance that we strike between our interests in security and our values of privacy. And in some cases, I believe we compromised our basic values, by using torture to interrogate our enemies and detaining individuals in a way that ran counter to the rule of law.

So, after I took office, we stepped up the war against Al Qaida, but we also sought to change its course. We relentlessly targeted Al Qaida's leadership. We ended the war in Iraq and brought nearly 150,000 troops home. We pursued a new strategy in Afghanistan and increased our training of Afghan forces. We unequivocally banned torture, affirmed our commitment to civilian courts, worked to align our policies with the rule of law, and expanded our consultations with Congress.

Today, Usama bin Laden is dead, and so are most of his top lieutenants. There have been no large-scale attacks on the United States, and our homeland is more secure. Fewer of our troops are in harm's way, and over the next 19 months, they will continue to come home. Our alliances are strong, and so is our standing in the world. In sum, we are safer because of our efforts.

Now, make no mistake, our Nation is still threatened by terrorists. From Benghazi to Boston, we have been tragically reminded of that truth. But we have to recognize that the threat has shifted and evolved from the one that came to our shores on 9/11. With a decade of experience now to draw from, this is the moment to ask ourselves hard questions about the nature of today's threats and how we should confront them. And these questions matter to every American.

For over the last decade, our Nation has spent well over a trillion dollars on war, helping to explode our deficits and constraining our ability to nation-build here at home. Our servicemembers and their families have sacrificed far more on our behalf. Nearly 7,000 Americans have made the ultimate sacrifice. Many more have left a part of themselves on the battlefield or brought the shadows of battle back home. From our use of drones to the detention of terror suspects, the decisions that we are making now will define the type of nation and world that we leave to our children.

So America is at a crossroads. We must define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else, it will define us. We have to be mindful of James Madison's warning that "no nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual

warfare." Neither I, nor any President, can promise the total defeat of terror. We will never erase the evil that lies in the hearts of some human beings, nor stamp out every danger to our open society. But what we can do—what we must do—is dismantle networks that pose a direct danger to us and make it less likely for new groups to gain a foothold, all the while maintaining the freedoms and ideals that we defend. And to define that strategy, we have to make decisions based not on fear, but on hard-earned wisdom. And that begins with understanding the current threat that we face.

Today, the core of Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan is on the path to defeat. Their remaining operatives spend more time thinking about their own safety than plotting against us. They did not direct the attacks in Benghazi or Boston. They've not carried out a successful attack on our homeland since 9/11.

Instead, what we've seen is the emergence of various Al Qaida affiliates. From Yemen to Iraq, from Somalia to North Africa, the threat today is more diffuse, with Al Qaida's affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP, the most active in plotting against our homeland. And while none of AQAP's efforts approach the scale of 9/11, they have continued to plot acts of terror, like the attempt to blow up an airplane on Christmas Day in 2009.

Unrest in the Arab world has also allowed extremists to gain a foothold in countries like Libya and Syria. But here too, there are differences from 9/11. In some cases, we continue to confront state-sponsored networks like Hizballah that engage in acts of terror to achieve political goals. Other of these groups are simply collections of local militias or extremists interested in seizing territory. And while we are vigilant for signs that these groups may pose a transnational threat, most are focused on operating in the countries and regions where they are based. And that means we'll face more localized threats like the—what we saw in Benghazi or the BP oil facility in Algeria, in which local operatives, perhaps in loose affiliation with regional networks, launch periodic attacks against Western diplomats, companies, and other soft targets or resort to kidnapping and other criminal enterprises to fund their operations.

And finally, we face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States. Whether it's a shooter at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin, a plane flying into a building in Texas, or the extremists who killed 168 people at the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, America has confronted many forms of violent extremism in our history. Deranged or alienated individuals—often U.S. citizens or legal residents—can do enormous damage, particularly when inspired by larger notions of violent jihad. And that pull towards extremism appears to have led to the shooting at Fort Hood and the bombing of the Boston Marathon.

So that's the current threat: lethal yet less capable Al Qaida affiliates, threats to diplomatic facilities and businesses abroad, homegrown extremists. This is the future of terrorism. We have to take these threats seriously and do all that we can to confront them. But as we shape our response, we have to recognize that the scale of this threat closely resembles the types of attacks we faced before 9/11.

In the 1980s, we lost Americans to terrorism at our Embassy in Beirut, at our Marine Barracks in Lebanon, on a cruise ship at sea, at a disco in Berlin, and on a Pan Am flight—Flight 103—over Lockerbie. In the 1990s, we lost Americans to terrorism at the World Trade Center, at our military facilities in Saudi Arabia, and at our Embassy in Kenya. These attacks were all brutal, they were all deadly, and we learned that left unchecked, these threats can grow. But if dealt with smartly and proportionally, these threats need not rise to the level that we saw on the eve of 9/11.

Moreover, we have to recognize that these threats don't arise in a vacuum. Most, though not all, of the terrorism we faced is fueled by a common ideology, a belief by some extremists that Islam is in conflict with the United States and the West and that violence against Western targets, including civilians, is justified in pursuit of a larger cause. Of course, this ideology is based on a lie, for the United States is not at war with Islam. And this ideology is rejected

by the vast majority of Muslims, who are the most frequent victims of terrorist attacks.

Nevertheless, this ideology persists, and in an age when ideas and images can travel the globe in an instant, our response to terrorism can't depend on military or law enforcement alone. We need all elements of national power to win a battle of wills, a battle of ideas. So what I want to discuss here today is the components of such a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy.

First, we must finish the work of defeating Al Qaida and its associated forces.

In Afghanistan, we will complete our transition to Afghan responsibility for that country's security. Our troops will come home. Our combat mission will come to an end. And we will work with the Afghan Government to train security forces and sustain a counterterrorism force, which ensures that Al Qaida can never again establish a safe haven to launch attacks against us or our allies.

Now, beyond Afghanistan, we must define our effort not as a boundless global war on terror, but rather, as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America. In many cases, this will involve partnerships with other countries. Already, thousands of Pakistani soldiers have lost their lives fighting extremists. In Yemen, we are supporting security forces that have reclaimed territory from AQAP. In Somalia, we helped a coalition of African nations push Al Shabaab out of its strongholds. In Mali, we're providing military aid to French-led intervention to push back Al Qaida in the Maghreb and help the people of Mali reclaim their future.

Much of our best counterterrorism cooperation results in the gathering and sharing of intelligence, the arrest and prosecution of terrorists. That's how a Somali terrorist apprehended off the coast of Yemen is now in a prison in New York. That's how we worked with European allies to disrupt plots from Denmark to Germany to the United Kingdom. That's how intelligence collected with Saudi Arabia helped us stop a cargo plane from being blown up over the Atlantic. These partnerships work.

But despite our strong preference for the detention and prosecution of terrorists, sometimes, this approach is foreclosed. Al Qaida and its affiliates try to gain footholds in some of the most distant and unforgiving places on Earth. They take refuge in remote tribal regions. They hide in caves and walled compounds. They train in empty deserts and rugged mountains.

In some of these places, such as parts of Somalia and Yemen, the state only has the most tenuous reach into the territory. In other cases, the state lacks the capacity or will to take action. And it's also not possible for America to simply deploy a team of special forces to capture every terrorist. Even when such an approach may be possible, there are places where it would pose profound risks to our troops and local civilians, where a terrorist compound cannot be breached without triggering a firefight with surrounding tribal communities, for example, that pose no threat to us; times when putting U.S. boots on the ground may trigger a major international crisis.

To put it another way, our operation in Pakistan against Usama bin Laden cannot be the norm. The risks in that case were immense. The likelihood of capture, although that was our preference, was remote given the certainty that our folks would confront resistance. The fact that we did not find ourselves confronted with civilian casualties or embroiled in an extended firefight was a testament to the meticulous planning and professionalism of our special forces, but it also depended on some luck. And it was supported by massive infrastructure in Afghanistan.

And even then, the cost to our relationship with Pakistan and the backlash among the Pakistani public over encroachment on their territory was so severe that we are just now beginning to rebuild this important partnership.

So it is in this context that the United States has taken lethal, targeted action against Al Qaida and its associated forces, including with remotely piloted aircraft, commonly referred to as drones.

As was true in previous armed conflicts, this new technology raises profound questions:

about who is targeted and why, about civilian casualties and the risk of creating new enemies, about the legality of such strikes under U.S. and international law, about accountability and morality. So let me address these questions.

To begin with, our actions are effective. Don't take my word for it. In the intelligence gathered at bin Laden's compound, we found that he wrote: "We could lose the reserves to enemy's air strikes. We cannot fight air strikes with explosives." Other communications from Al Qaida operatives confirm this as well. Dozens of highly skilled Al Qaida commanders, trainers, bomb makers, and operatives have been taken off the battlefield. Plots have been disrupted that would have targeted international aviation, U.S. transit systems, European cities, and our troops in Afghanistan. Simply put: These strikes have saved lives.

Moreover, America's actions are legal. We were attacked on 9/11. Within a week, Congress overwhelmingly authorized the use of force. Under domestic law and international law, the United States is at war with Al Qaida, the Taliban, and their associated forces. We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first. So this is a just war, a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense.

And yet, as our fight enters a new phase, America's legitimate claim of self-defense cannot be the end of the discussion. To say a military tactic is legal, or even effective, is not to say it is wise or moral in every instance. For the same progress that gives us the technology to strike half a world away also demands the discipline to constrain that power or risk abusing it. And that's why, over the last 4 years, my administration has worked vigorously to establish a framework that governs our use of force against terrorists—insisting upon clear guidelines, oversight, and accountability—that is now codified in a Presidential policy guidance that I signed yesterday.

In the Afghan war theater, we must and will continue to support our troops until the transition is complete at the end of 2014. And that means we will continue to take strikes against high-value Al Qaida targets, but also against forces that are massing to support attacks on coalition forces. But by the end of 2014, we will no longer have the same need for force protection, and the progress we've made against core Al Qaida will reduce the need for unmanned strikes.

Beyond the Afghan theater, we only target Al Qaida and its associated forces. And even then, the use of drones is heavily constrained. America does not take strikes when we have the ability to capture individual terrorists. Our preference is always to detain, interrogate, and prosecute. America cannot take strikes wherever we choose; our actions are bound by consultations with partners and respect for state sovereignty.

America does not take strikes to punish individuals; we act against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the American people and when there are no other governments capable of effectively addressing the threat. And before any strike is taken, there must be near certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured, the highest standard we can set.

Now, this last point is critical, because much of the criticism about drone strikes, both here at home and abroad, understandably centers on reports of civilian casualties. There's a wide gap between U.S. assessments of such casualties and nongovernmental reports. Nevertheless, it is a hard fact that U.S. strikes have resulted in civilian casualties, a risk that exists in every war. And for the families of those civilians, no words or legal construct can justify their loss. For me and those in my chain of command, those deaths will haunt us as long as we live, just as we are haunted by the civilian casualties that have occurred throughout conventional fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But as Commander in Chief, I must weigh these heartbreaking tragedies against the alternatives. To do nothing in the face of terrorist networks would invite far more civilian casualties, not just in our cities at home and our facilities abroad, but also in the very places like Sana'a and Kabul and Mogadishu where

terrorists seek a foothold. Remember that the terrorists we are after target civilians and the death toll from their acts of terrorism against Muslims dwarfs any estimate of civilian casualties from drone strikes. So doing nothing is not an option.

Where foreign governments cannot or will not effectively stop terrorism in their territory, the primary alternative to targeted lethal action would be the use of conventional military options. As I've already said, even small special operations carry enormous risks. Conventional airpower or missiles are far less precise than drones and are likely to cause more civilian casualties and more local outrage. And invasions of these territories lead us to be viewed as occupying armies, unleash a torrent of unintended consequences, are difficult to contain, result in large numbers of civilian casualties, and ultimately, empower those who thrive on violent conflict.

So it is false to assert that putting boots on the ground is less likely to result in civilian deaths or less likely to create enemies in the Muslim world. The results would be more U.S. deaths, more Black Hawks down, more confrontations with local populations, and an inevitable mission creep in support of such raids that could easily escalate into new wars.

Yes, the conflict with Al Qaida, like all armed conflict, invites tragedy. But by narrowly targeting our action against those who want to kill us and not the people they hide among, we are choosing the course of action least likely to result in the loss of innocent life.

Our efforts must be measured against the history of putting American troops in distant lands among hostile populations. In Vietnam, hundreds of thousands of civilians died in a war where the boundaries of battle were blurred. In Iraq and Afghanistan, despite the extraordinary courage and discipline of our troops, thousands of civilians have been killed. So neither conventional military action nor waiting for attacks to occur offers moral safe harbor, and neither does a sole reliance on law enforcement in territories that have no functioning police or security services and, indeed, have no functioning law.

Now, this is not to say that the risks are not real. Any U.S. military action in foreign lands risks creating more enemies and impacts public opinion overseas. Moreover, our laws constrain the power of the President, even during wartime, and I have taken an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. The very precision of drone strikes and the necessary secrecy often involved in such actions can end up shielding our Government from the public scrutiny that a troop deployment invites. It can also lead a President and his team to view drone strikes as a cure-all for terrorism.

Now, for this reason, I've insisted on strong oversight of all lethal action. After I took office, my administration began briefing all strikes outside of Iraq and Afghanistan to the appropriate committees of Congress. Let me repeat that: Not only did Congress authorize the use of force, it is briefed on every strike that America takes—every strike. That includes the one instance where we target—targeted an American citizen: Anwar Awlaki, the chief of external operations for AQAP.

Now, this week, I authorized the declassification of this action and the deaths of three other Americans in drone strikes to facilitate transparency and debate on this issue and to dismiss some of the more outlandish claims that have been made. For the record, I do not believe it would be constitutional for the Government to target and kill any U.S. citizen with a drone or with a shotgun, without due process; nor should any President deploy armed drones over U.S. soil.

But when a U.S. citizen goes abroad to wage war against America and is actively plotting to kill U.S. citizens and when neither the United States, nor our partners are in a position to capture him before he carries out a plot, his citizenship should no more serve as a shield than a sniper shooting down on an innocent crowd should be protected from a SWAT team.

That's who Anwar Awlaki was; he was continuously trying to kill people. He helped oversee the 2010 plot to detonate explosive devices on two U.S.-bound cargo planes. He was involved in planning to blow up an airliner in

2009. When Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Christmas Day bomber, went to Yemen in 2009, Awlaki hosted him, approved his suicide operation, helped him tape a martyrdom video to be shown after the attack, and his last instructions were to blow up the airplane when it was over American soil. I would have detained and prosecuted Awlaki if we captured him before he carried out a plot, but we couldn't. And as President, I would have been derelict in my duty had I not authorized the strike that took him out.

Of course, the targeting of any American raises constitutional issues that are not present in other strikes, which is why my administration submitted information about Awlaki to the Department of Justice months before Awlaki was killed and briefed the Congress before this strike as well. But the high threshold that we've set for taking lethal action applies to all potential terrorist targets, regardless of whether or not they are American citizens. This threshold respects the inherent dignity of every human life. Alongside the decision to put our men and women in uniform in harm's way, the decision to use force against individuals or groups, even against a sworn enemy of the United States, is the hardest thing I do as President. But these decisions must be made, given my responsibility to protect the American people.

Now, going forward, I've asked my administration to review proposals to extend oversight of lethal actions outside of war zones that go beyond our reporting to Congress. Each option has virtues in theory, but poses difficulties in practice. For example, the establishment of a special court to evaluate and authorize the lethal action has the benefit of bringing a third branch of Government into the process, but raises serious constitutional issues about Presidential and judicial authority. Another idea that's been suggested, the establishment of an independent oversight board in the executive branch, avoids those problems, but may introduce a layer of bureaucracy into national security decisionmaking, without inspiring additional public confidence in the process. But despite these challenges, I look forward to actively engaging Congress to explore these and other options for increased oversight.

I believe, however, that the use of force must be seen as part of a larger discussion we need to have about a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, because for all the focus on the use of force, force alone cannot make us safe. We cannot use force everywhere that a radical ideology takes root. And in the absence of a strategy that reduces the wellspring of extremism, a perpetual war—through drones or special forces or troop deployments—will prove self-defeating, and alter our country in troubling ways.

So the next element of our strategy involves addressing the underlying grievances and conflicts that feed extremism, from North Africa to South Asia. As we've learned this past decade, this is a vast and complex undertaking. We must be humble in our expectation that we can quickly resolve deep-rooted problems like poverty and sectarian hatred. Moreover, no two countries are alike, and some will undergo chaotic change before things get better. But our security and our values demand that we make the effort.

This means patiently supporting transitions to democracy in places like Egypt and Tunisia and Libya, because the peaceful realization of individual aspirations will serve as a rebuke to violent extremism. We must strengthen the opposition in Syria, while isolating extremist elements, because the end of a tyrant must not give way to the tyranny of terrorism. We are actively working to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians because it is right and because such a peace could help reshape attitudes in the region. And we must help countries modernize economies, upgrade education, and encourage entrepreneurship, because American leadership has always been elevated by our ability to connect with people's hopes and not simply their fears.

Success on all these fronts requires sustained engagement, but it will also require resources. I know that foreign aid is one of the least popular expenditures that there is. That's true for Democrats and Republicans—I've seen the polling—even though it amounts to

less than 1 percent of the Federal budget. In fact, a lot of folks think it's 25 percent, if you ask people on the streets. Less than 1 percent, still wildly unpopular. But foreign assistance cannot be viewed as charity. It is fundamental to our national security. And it's fundamental to any sensible long-term strategy to battle extremism.

Moreover, foreign assistance is a tiny fraction of what we spend fighting wars that our assistance might ultimately prevent. For what we spent in a month in Iraq at the height of the war, we could be training security forces in Libya, maintaining peace agreements between Israel and its neighbors, feeding the hungry in Yemen, building schools in Pakistan, and creating reservoirs of good will that marginalize extremists. So that has to be part of our strategy.

Moreover, America cannot carry out this work if we don't have diplomats serving in some very dangerous places. Over the past decade, we have strengthened security at our Embassies, and I am implementing every recommendation of the Accountability Review Board, which found unacceptable failures in Benghazi. I've called on Congress to fully fund these efforts to bolster security and harden facilities, improve intelligence, and facilitate a quicker response time from our military if a crisis emerges.

But even after we take these steps, some irreducible risks to our diplomats will remain. This is the price of being the world's most powerful nation, particularly as a wave of change washes over the Arab world. And in balancing the tradeoffs between security and active diplomacy, I firmly believe that any retreat from challenging regions will only increase the dangers that we face in the long run. And that's why we should be grateful to those diplomats who are willing to serve there.

Targeted action against terrorists, effective partnerships, diplomatic engagement and assistance—through such a comprehensive strategy, we can significantly reduce the chances of large-scale attacks on the homeland and mitigate threats to Americans overseas. But as we guard against dangers from abroad, we cannot neglect the daunting challenge of terrorism from within our borders.

As I said earlier, this threat is not new. But technology and the Internet increase its frequency and, in some cases, its lethality. Today, a person can consume hateful propaganda, commit themselves to a violent agenda, and learn how to kill without leaving their home. To address this threat, 2 years ago, my administration did a comprehensive review and engaged with law enforcement.

And the best way to prevent violent extremism inspired by violent jihadists is to work with the Muslim American community, which has consistently rejected terrorism, to identify signs of radicalization and partner with law enforcement when an individual is drifting towards violence. And these partnerships can only work when we recognize that Muslims are a fundamental part of the American family. In fact, the success of American Muslims and our determination to guard against any encroachments on their civil liberties is the ultimate rebuke to those who say that we're at war with Islam.

Now, thwarting homegrown plots presents particular challenges in part because of our proud commitment to civil liberties for all who call America home. That's why, in the years to come, we will have to keep working hard to strike the appropriate balance between our need for security and preserving those freedoms that make us who we are. That means reviewing the authorities of law enforcement so we can intercept new types of communication, but also build in privacy protections to prevent abuse.

That means that—even after Boston—we do not deport someone or throw somebody in prison in the absence of evidence. That means putting careful constraints on the tools the Government uses to protect sensitive information, such as the state secrets doctrine. And that means finally having a strong Privacy and Civil Liberties Board to review those issues where our counterterrorism efforts and our values may come into tension.

The Justice Department's investigation of national security leaks offers a recent example

of the challenges involved in striking the right balance between our security and our open society. As Commander in Chief, I believe we must keep information secret that protects our operations and our people in the field. To do so, we must enforce consequences for those who break the law and breach their commitment to protect classified information. But a free press is also essential for our democracy. That's who we are. And I'm troubled by the possibility that leak investigations may chill the investigative journalism that holds government accountable.

Journalists should not be at legal risk for doing their jobs. Our focus must be on those who break the law. And that's why I've called on Congress to pass a media shield law to guard against Government overreach. And I've raised these issues with the Attorney General, who shares my concerns. So he has agreed to review existing Department of Justice guidelines governing investigations that involve reporters, and he'll convene a group of media organizations to hear their concerns as part of that review. And I've directed the Attorney General to report back to me by July 12.

Now, all these issues remind us that the choices we make about war can impact—in sometimes unintended ways—the openness and freedom on which our way of life depends. And that is why I intend to engage Congress about the existing authorization to use military force, or AUMF, to determine how we can continue to fight terrorism without keeping America on a perpetual wartime footing.

The AUMF is now nearly 12 years old. The Afghan war is coming to an end. Core Al Qaida is a shell of its former self. Groups like AQAP must be dealt with, but in the years to come, not every collection of thugs that labels themselves Al Qaida will pose a credible threat to the United States. Unless we discipline our thinking, our definitions, our actions, we may be drawn into more wars we don't need to fight or continue to grant Presidents unbound powers more suited for traditional armed conflicts between nation-states.

So I look forward to engaging Congress and the American people in efforts to refine, and ultimately repeal, the AUMF's mandate. And I will not sign laws designed to expand this mandate further. Our systematic effort to dismantle terrorist organizations must continue. But this war, like all wars, must end. That's what history advises. That's what our democracy demands.

And that brings me to my final topic: the detention of terror suspects. I'm going to repeat one more time: As a matter of policy, the preference of the United States is to capture terrorist suspects. When we do detain a suspect, we interrogate them. And if the suspect can be prosecuted, we decide whether to try him in a civilian court or a military commission.

During the past decade, the vast majority of those detained by our military were captured on the battlefield. In Iraq, we turned over thousands of prisoners as we ended the war. In Afghanistan, we have transitioned detention facilities to the Afghans, as part of the process of restoring Afghan sovereignty. So we bring law-of-war detention to an end, and we are committed to prosecuting terrorists wherever we can.

The glaring exception to this time-tested approach is the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. The original premise for opening Gitmo—that detainees would not be able to challenge their detention—was found unconstitutional 5 years ago. In the meantime, Gitmo has become a symbol around the world for an America that flouts the rule of law. Our allies won't cooperate with us if they think a terrorist will end up at Gitmo.

During a time of budget cuts, we spend $150 million each year to imprison 166 people, almost a million dollars per prisoner. And the Department of Defense estimates that we must spend another 200 million to keep Gitmo open at a time when we're cutting investments in education and research here at home and when the Pentagon is struggling with sequester and budget cuts.

Now, as President, I have tried to close Gitmo. I transferred 67 detainees to other countries, before Congress imposed restrictions to effectively prevent us from either transferring

detainees to other countries or imprisoning them here in the United States.

These restrictions make no sense. After all, under President Bush, some 530 detainees were transferred from Gitmo with Congress's support. When I ran for President the first time, John McCain supported closing Gitmo; this was a bipartisan issue. No person has ever escaped one of our supermax or military prisons here in the United States—ever. Our courts have convicted hundreds of people for terrorism or terrorism-related offenses, including some folks who are more dangerous than most Gitmo detainees. They're in our prisons.

And given my administration's relentless pursuit of Al Qaida's leadership, there is no justification, beyond politics, for Congress to prevent us from closing a facility that should have never have been opened.

CODEPINK Cofounder Medea Benjamin. Excuse me, President Obama, you are the Commander in Chief. You have the authority——

The President. Today—[*applause*]. So—let me finish, ma'am. So today, once again——

Ms. Benjamin. There's 102 people on a hunger strike. These are desperate people.

The President. I'm about to address it, ma'am, but you've got to let me speak. I'm about to address it.

Ms. Benjamin. You are Commander in Chief——

The President. Let me address it.

Ms. Benjamin. You can close Guantanamo Bay.

The President. Why don't you let me address it, ma'am.

Ms. Benjamin. [*Inaudible*]—release those 86 prisoners——

The President. Why don't you sit down, and I will tell you exactly what I'm going to do.

Ms. Benjamin. [*Inaudible*]—that includes 57 Yemenis.

The President. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you. Thank you. Ma'am, thank you. You should let me finish my sentence.

Today I once again call on Congress to lift the restrictions on detainee transfers from Gitmo.

I have asked the Department of Defense to designate a site in the United States where we can hold military commissions. I'm appointing a new Senior Envoy at the State Department and Defense Department whose sole responsibility will be to achieve the transfer of detainees to third countries.

I am lifting the moratorium on detainee transfers to Yemen so we can review them on a case-by-case basis. To the greatest extent possible, we will transfer detainees who have been cleared to go to other countries.

Ms. Benjamin. Eighty-seven are cleared already. Release them today.

The President. Where appropriate, we will bring terrorists to justice in our courts and our military justice system. And we will insist that judicial review be available for every detainee.

Ms. Benjamin. It needs to be——

The President. Now, ma'am, let me finish. Let me finish, ma'am. This is—part of free speech is you being able to speak, but also, you listening and me being able to speak. All right? [*Applause*] Thank you.

Now, even after we take these steps one issue will remain, which is how to deal with those Gitmo detainees who we know have participated in dangerous plots or attacks, but who cannot be prosecuted, for example, because the evidence against them has been compromised or is inadmissible in a court of law. But once we commit to a process of closing Gitmo, I am confident that this legacy problem can be resolved, consistent with our commitment to the rule of law.

And I know the politics are hard. But history will cast a harsh judgment on this aspect of our fight against terrorism and those of us who fail to end it. Imagine a future, 10 years from now or 20 years from now, when the United States of America is still holding people who have been charged with no crime on a piece of land that is not part of our country. Look at the current situation, where we are force-feeding detainees who are hold—being held on a hunger strike. I'm willing to cut the young lady who interrupted me some slack because it's worth being passionate about. Is this who we are? Is that something our Founders foresaw? Is that

the America we want to leave our children? Our sense of justice is stronger than that.

We have prosecuted scores of terrorists in our courts. That includes Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to blow up an airplane over Detroit, and Faisal Shahzad, who put a car bomb in Times Square. It's in a court of law that we will try Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who is accused of bombing the Boston Marathon. Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, is, as we speak, serving a life sentence in a maximum security prison here in the United States. In sentencing Reid, Judge William Young told him, "The way we treat you is the measure of our own liberty." When we——

Ms. Benjamin. How about Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, 16-year-old boy, killed by a drone?

The President. We went——

Ms. Benjamin. Is that the way we treat a 16-year-old American?

The President. He went on——

Ms. Benjamin. Why was he killed? Can you tell us why Abdulrahman al-Awlaki should be killed? Can you tell the Muslim people their lives are as precious as our lives? Can you take the drones out of the hands of the CIA? Can you stop the signature strikes that are killing people on the basis of suspicious activities?

The President. We're addressing that, ma'am.

Ms. Benjamin. Can you apologize to the thousands of Muslims that you have killed? Will you compensate the innocent family victim? That would make us safer here at home. I love my country. I love the rule of law. But drones are making us less safe. And keeping people in indefinite detention at Guantanamo is making us less safe. Abide by the rule of law. You're a constitutional lawyer.

[*At this point, Ms. Benjamin was escorted out of the auditorium.*]

The President. I think that the—and I'm going off script, as you might expect here. [*Laughter*] The voice of that woman is worth paying attention to. Obviously, I do not agree with much of what she said, and obviously, she wasn't listening to me in much of what I said. But these are tough issues, and the suggestion that we can gloss over them is wrong.

When that judge sentenced Mr. Reid, the shoe bomber, he went on to point to the American flag that flew in the courtroom. "That flag," he said, "will fly there long after this is all forgotten. That flag still stands for freedom."

So, America, we've faced down dangers far greater than Al Qaida. By staying true to the values of our founding and by using our constitutional compass, we have overcome slavery and Civil War and fascism and communism. In just these last few years as President, I've watched the American people bounce back from painful recession, mass shootings, natural disasters like the recent tornados that devastated Oklahoma. These events were heartbreaking; they shook our communities to the core. But because of the resilience of the American people, these events could not come close to breaking us.

I think of Lauren Manning, the 9/11 survivor who had severe burns over 80 percent of her body, who said: "That's my reality. I put a Band-Aid on it, literally, and I move on." I think of the New Yorkers who filled Times Square the day after an attempted car bomb as if nothing had happened. I think of the proud Pakistani parents who, after their daughter was invited to the White House, wrote to us, "We have raised an American Muslim daughter to dream big and never give up because it does pay off."

I think of all the wounded warriors rebuilding their lives and helping other vets to find jobs. I think of the runner planning to do the 2014 Boston Marathon, who said: "Next year, you're going to have more people than ever. Determination is not something to be messed with." That's who the American people are: determined and not to be messed with. And now we need a strategy and a politics that reflects this resilient spirit.

Our victory against terrorism won't be measured in a surrender ceremony at a battleship or a statue being pulled to the ground. Victory will be measured in parents taking their kids to school, immigrants coming to our shores, fans taking in a ballgame, a veteran starting a

business, a bustling city street, a citizen shouting her concerns at a President.

The quiet determination, that strength of character and bond of fellowship, that refutation of fear—that is both our sword and our shield. And long after the current messengers of hate have faded from the world's memory—alongside the brutal despots and deranged madmen and ruthless demagogues who litter history—the flag of the United States will still wave from small-town cemeteries to national monuments to distant outposts abroad. And that flag will still stand for freedom.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. May God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:01 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame, an accused member of the Al Shabaab terrorist organization in U.S. custody who pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges; former President George W. Bush; 2008 Republican Presidential nominee Sen. John S. McCain III; and William G. Young, judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

Statement on the Attack on a British Servicemember in London, United Kingdom

May 23, 2013

I condemn in the strongest terms the appalling attack against a British servicemember in Woolwich on May 22. The United States stands resolute with the United Kingdom, our ally and friend, against violent extremism and terror. There can be absolutely no justification for such acts, and our thoughts and prayers are with the family of the victim, the police and security services responding to this horrific act and the communities they serve, and the British people. Our special relationship with the United Kingdom is especially important during times of trial, and I look forward to my trip to the United Kingdom to participate in the June G–8 summit hosted by Prime Minister Cameron, which will include discussions on the important global security challenges our countries face together.

NOTE: The statement referred to Lee Rigby, a British servicemember who was killed on May 22.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Srikanth Srinivasan as a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

May 23, 2013

I'm pleased the Senate unanimously confirmed Sri Srinivasan to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Sri is a trailblazer who personifies the best of America. Born in Chandigarh, India, and raised in Lawrence, Kansas, Sri spent nearly two decades as an extraordinary litigator before serving as Principal Deputy Solicitor General of the United States. Now he will serve with distinction on the Federal bench. Sri will in fact be the first South Asian American to serve as a circuit court judge in our history. While I applaud the Senate's action, it's important to remember that this confirmation is the first one to this important court in 7 years. The three remaining vacancies must be filled, as well as other vacancies across the country.

Commencement Address at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland

May 24, 2013

Hello, midshipmen! Well, thank you, Governor O'Malley, for your kind introduction and the great support that Maryland gives this Academy. To Secretary Mabus, Admiral Greenert, and General Paxton: Thank you all for your incredible leadership of our extraordinary Navy and Marine Corps teams.

To Vice Admiral Miller, thank you for the outstanding work that you do. To Captain Clark and all the faculty and staff; to the moms and dads who raised your sons and daughters to seek this life of service; to the local sponsor families who cared for them far from home; the members of the class of 1963—veterans who've guided these midshipmen along the way—today is also a tribute to your support and your patriotism. And I know that the class of 2013 joins me in saluting your service as well.

To the entire Brigade of Midshipmen: You embody the highest virtues of this venerable institution. And yet I know that some of you at times have enjoyed yourselves at other local institutions like McGarvey's and Armadillo's. But today is a day of celebration and also forgiveness. And so, in keeping with tradition, I declare all midshipmen on restriction for minor conduct offenses are hereby absolved. As always, Admiral Miller gets to decide what's "minor." [*Laughter*] Some of these guys are laughing a little nervously about that. [*Laughter*]

Now, obviously, most of all, it is wonderful to be able to celebrate this incredible class of 2013. This has special meaning for me as well, because the United States Naval Academy was the very first service academy that I had the privilege to address as President. On that spring day 4 years ago, most of you were still in high school, finishing your senior year, or at NAPS, finishing up prep school. You were a little younger, and I was too. You had your entire Naval Academy experience ahead of you; I was already getting chest bumps from the graduates of 2009. [*Laughter*]

Soon after, you came to the Yard, and you got quite a welcome: the joy of I-Day, wonderful haircuts, stylish eyeglasses. And all that Plebe Year, if you got something wrong, your upperclassmen kindly corrected you, at high volume, at very close range. [*Laughter*] When Michelle brought our daughter Sasha here for a visit, she got a somewhat different reception. She was just in elementary school, but it seemed like the Navy was already doing some recruiting, because as she went through Bancroft Hall, she came to one room and saw the name on the door: "Sasha Obama, Class of 2023." [*Laughter*] So you never know.

Today each of you can take enormous pride, for you've met the mission of this Academy. You've proven yourselves morally, living a concept of honor and integrity, and this includes treating one another with respect and recognizing the strength of every member of your team. You're the most diverse class to graduate in Naval Academy history. And among the many proud young women graduating today, 13 will serve on submarines.

You've proven yourselves mentally. Now, I know that some think of this as just a small engineering school on the Severn. You've not only met its rigorous standards, you've helped this Academy earn a new distinction: the number-one public liberal arts school in America.

And you've proven yourselves physically: a Herndon climb of 2 minutes, 5 seconds. Now that they put the grease back on, no one will ever match your time. [*Laughter*] More importantly, last month, I welcomed Coach Ken and the team back to the White House because you beat Air Force, you beat Army, and you brought the Commander in Chief's Trophy back to Annapolis.

So, class of 2013, in your 4 years by the Bay, you've met every test before you. And today is the day that you've been counting down to for so long. You will take your oath. Those boards and gold bars will be placed on your shoulders. And as your Commander in Chief,

I congratulate each of you on becoming our newest officers: ensigns in the United States Navy, second lieutenants in the United States Marine Corps.

And soon you will join the fleet. You will lead marines. And just as you've changed over the past 4 years, so too have the challenges facing our military. Before you arrived here, our Nation was engaged in two wars, Al Qaida's leadership was entrenched in their safe havens, many of our alliances were strained, and our Nation's standing in the world had suffered. And over the past 4 years, we've strengthened our alliances and restored America's image in the world.

The war in Iraq is over, and we welcomed our troops home. Thanks to our brave personnel—including our incredible Navy SEALs—we delivered justice to Usama bin Laden. In Afghanistan, the transition is underway, our troops are coming home, and by the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will come to an end.

And today we salute all the Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in these wars, including 18 graduates of this Academy. We honor them all, now and forever.

Yesterday I spoke about the way forward in the fight to keep our country secure, for even as we've decimated the Al Qaida leadership, we still face threats from Al Qaida affiliates and from individuals caught up in its ideology. Even as we move beyond deploying large ground armies abroad, we still need to conduct precise, targeted strikes against terrorists before they kill our citizens. And even as we stay vigilant in the face of terrorism and stay true to our Constitution and our values, we need to stay ready for the full range of threats, from nations seeking weapons of mass destruction to cyber criminals seeking to unleash weapons of mass destruction.

Now, in these tough fiscal times, we also have to make hard choices at home, including in our Armed Forces. But I want you all to know, as you enter in what I know will be extraordinary years of service, let me say as clearly as I can: The United States of America will always maintain our military superiority. And as your Commander in Chief, I'm going to keep fighting to give you the equipment and support required to meet the missions we ask of you, and also to make sure that you are getting the pay and the benefits and the support that you deserve.

I'll keep fighting for the capabilities and technologies you need to prevail and a shipbuilding plan that puts us on track to achieve a 300-ship fleet, with capabilities that exceed the power of the next dozen navies combined.

And I'll keep fighting to end those foolish across-the-board budget cuts known as the sequester, which is threatening our readiness. With deficits falling at the fastest rate in decades, it's time for Congress to budget in a smarter way that protects middle class priorities, preserves investments in our future, and keeps our military strong. Because we have the best trained, best led, best equipped military in history, and I am determined to keep it that way, and Congress should be too.

We need you to project power across the oceans, from the Pacific to the Persian Gulf, 100 percent on watch. We need you to partner with other navies and militaries, from Africa to the Americas. We need you to respond with compassion in times of disaster, as when you helped respond to Hurricane Sandy. And in all your work—in your lifetime of service—we need you to uphold the highest standards of integrity and character.

With the time I have left—and I know it's a little wet, but the Superintendent told me that marines and folks in the Navy don't mind a little water. [*Laughter*]

With the time I have left, that's what I want to discuss today. It's no secret that in recent decades, many Americans have lost confidence in many of the institutions that help shape our society and our democracy. But I suggest to you today that institutions do not fail in a vacuum. Institutions are made up of people, individuals. And we've seen how the actions of a few can undermine the integrity of those institutions.

Every day, men and women of talent and skill work in the financial institutions that fund new businesses and put new families—put

families in new homes and help students go to college. But we've also seen how the misdeeds of some—wild risk-taking or putting profits before people—sparked a financial crisis and deepened the recession that cost millions of Americans their jobs.

Every day, elected officials like those on this stage, but also all across the Nation, devote themselves to improving our communities and our country. But all too often, we've seen a politics where compromise is rejected as a dirty word and policies are driven by special interests rather than the national interest. And that breeds a cynicism that threatens our democracy.

Every day, our civil servants do their jobs with professionalism, protecting our national security and delivering the services that so many Americans expect. But, as we've seen again in recent days, it only takes the misconduct of a few to further erode the people's trust in their government. And that's unacceptable to me, and I know it's unacceptable to you.

And against this backdrop, what I said here 4 years ago remains true today: Our military remains the most trusted institution in America. When others have shirked their responsibilities, our Armed Forces have met every mission we've given them. When others have been distracted by petty arguments, our men and women in uniform come together as one American team.

And yet we must acknowledge that even here, even in our military, we've seen how the misconduct of some can have effects that ripple far and wide. In our digital age, a single image from the battlefield of troops falling short of their standards can go viral and endanger our forces and undermine our efforts to achieve security and peace. Likewise, those who commit sexual assault are not only committing a crime, they threaten the trust and discipline that make our military strong. That's why we have to be determined to stop these crimes, because they've got no place in the greatest military on Earth.

So, class of 2013, I say all this because you're about to assume the burden of leadership. As officers, you will be trusted with the most awesome of responsibilities: the lives of the men and women under your command. And when your service is complete, many of you will go on to help lead your communities, America's companies. You will lead this country. And if we want to restore the trust that the American people deserve to have in their institutions, all of us have to do our part. And those of us in leadership—myself included—have to constantly strive to remain worthy of the public trust.

As you go forward in your careers, we need you to carry forth the values that you've learned at this institution, because our Nation needs them now more than ever.

We need your honor, that inner compass that guides you, not when the path is easy and obvious, but when it's hard and uncertain; that tells you the difference between that which is right and that which is wrong. Perhaps it will be a moment when you think nobody is watching. But never forget that honor, like character, is what you do when nobody is looking. More likely, it will be when you're in the spotlight, leading others, the men and women who are looking up to you to set an example. Never ask them to do what you don't ask of yourself. Live with integrity and speak with honesty and take responsibility and demand accountability.

We need your honor, and we need your courage. Yes, the daring that tells you to move toward danger when every fiber of your being says to turn the other way, but even more than physical courage, we need your moral courage: the strength to do what's right, especially when it's unpopular. Because at the end of the day and at the end of your career, you want to look in the mirror and say with confidence and with pride, I fulfilled my oath. I did my duty. I stayed true to my values.

We need your honor and courage, and we need your commitment: that sense of purpose that says I will try even harder, I will do even better in what I expect of myself, in the way I interact with others, including those of different backgrounds. It's no accident that our military is the most respected institution in America and one of the most diverse institutions in

America. So recognize the dignity in every human being. Treat one another with respect. Remember that when we harness the talents of every man and every woman from every race and every religion and every creed, no nation can ever match us.

And finally, we need your resolve, the same spirit reflected in your class motto: "Surrender to Nothing." And if you seek an example, you don't need to look far, because not long ago, two midshipmen sat where you sat—from the class of 2006—and they inspire us today.

Here at the Academy, Brad Snyder was the captain of the swim team. He deployed to Afghanistan, and while rushing to the aid of his teammates, he stepped on an IED and lost both his eyes. With the support of family and friends, Brad learned to feel his way and move again. And before long, he was back in the swimming pool, where he said, "I'm free." Then, just 1 year later, Brad competed at the London Paralympics and won three medals, including two golds.

And when Michelle and I welcomed our U.S. Olympians to the White House, Brad joined us standing tall, right in front. And he said: "Overcoming adversity is a decision. You can let that beat you, or you can make the decision to move forward."

Here at the Academy, Matt Lampert was on the rowing team. He deployed to Afghanistan with his Marine special ops team. And as they entered a compound, an IED exploded, and Matt lost both his legs. He endured a long and painful recovery. But with his new legs, he learned to walk again. He practiced, he trained, and then, he passed his physical tests and deployed to Afghanistan again, a double amputee, back in the fight.

And Matt recently completed his tour. He is back home and is looking ahead to many years of service. Reflecting on his journey—his mission to return to his unit—he said he was determined, "however long it was going to take."

So, class of 2013, I cannot promise you a life of comfort and ease, for you have chosen an ancient path—the profession of arms—which carries all the perils of our modern world. And just as classes before you could not know that they would find themselves at Coral Sea or Midway or Fallujah or Helmand, we cannot know sitting here today where your service will carry you.

But I do know this. As you say farewell to Bancroft Hall, as you make your way down Stribling Walk one last time, you're becoming the newest link in a storied chain. As I look into your eyes today, I see the same confidence and the same professionalism, the same fidelity to our values of those who have served before you—the Jones and Nimitz and Lejeune and Burke, and yes, the Snyder and the Lampert—Americans who surrendered to nothing.

And I'm absolutely confident that you will uphold the highest of standards and that your courage and honor and your commitment will see us through and that you will always prove yourselves worthy of the trust our Nation is placing in you today.

So congratulations, class of 2013. God bless our Navy, and God bless our Marine Corps. God bless our Armed Services. God bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. John M. Paxton, USMC, Assistant Commandant, and Ken Niumatalolo, head football coach, U.S. Naval Academy.

The President's Weekly Address
May 25, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, I've been speaking about America's national security: our past, our present, and our future.

On Thursday, I outlined the future of our fight against terrorism: the threats we face, and the way in which we will meet them. On Fri-

day, I went to Annapolis to celebrate the extraordinary young men and women of the United States Naval Academy's class of 2013, the sailors and marines who will not only lead that fight, but who will lead our country for decades to come. And on Monday, we celebrate Memorial Day. Unofficially, it's the start of summer, a chance for us to spend some extra time with family and friends, at barbecues or on the beach, getting a little fun and relaxation in before heading back to work.

It's also a day on which we set aside some time, on our own or with our families, to honor and remember all the men and women who have given their lives in service to this country we love. They are heroes, each and every one. They gave America the most precious thing they had: "the last full measure of devotion." And because they did, we are who we are today: a free and prosperous nation, the greatest in the world.

At a time when only about 1 percent of the American people bear the burden of our defense, the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform isn't always readily apparent. And that's partly because our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen are so skilled at what they do. It's also because those who serve tend to do so quietly. They don't seek the limelight. They don't serve for our admiration or even our gratitude. They risk their lives, and many give their lives, for something larger than themselves or any of us: the ideals of liberty and justice that make America a beacon of hope for the world.

That's been true throughout our history, from our earliest days, when a tiny band of revolutionaries stood up to an empire, to our 9/11 generation, which continues to serve and sacrifice today.

Every time a threat has risen, Americans have risen to meet it. And because of that courage—that willingness to fight and even die—America endures. That is the purpose of Memorial Day: to remember with gratitude the countless men and women who gave their lives so we could know peace and live in freedom.

And we must do more than remember. We must care for the loved ones that our fallen servicemembers have left behind. We must make sure all our veterans have the care and benefits they've earned and the jobs and opportunity they deserve. We must be there for the military families whose loved ones are in harm's way, for they serve as well. And above all, we must make sure that the men and women of our Armed Forces have the support they need to achieve their missions safely at home and abroad.

The young men and women I met at the Naval Academy this week know the meaning of service. They've studied the heroes of our history. They've chosen to follow in their footsteps: to stand their watch, man a ship, lead a platoon. They are doing their part. And each of us must do ours.

So this weekend, as we commemorate Memorial Day, I ask you to hold all our fallen heroes in your hearts. And every day, let's work together to preserve what their sacrifices achieved: to make our country even stronger, even more fair, even more free. That's our mission, it's our obligation, and it is our privilege, as the heirs of those who came before us and as citizens of the United States of America.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5 p.m. on May 24 in the Green Room at the White House for broadcast on May 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 25.

Remarks Following a Tour of Tornado Damage in Moore, Oklahoma
May 26, 2013

Good afternoon, everybody. Obviously, a picture is worth a thousand words, and what we're seeing here, I think, gives you some sense of what the people of Moore and the people of Oklahoma have been dealing with over these last several days.

There are a couple of acknowledgements that I want to make, but let me begin by just saying that whenever I come to an area that's been devastated by some natural disaster like this, I want to make sure everybody understands I'm speaking on behalf of the entire country. Everywhere, fellow Americans are praying with you, they're thinking about you, and they want to help.

And so I'm just a messenger here today, letting everybody here know that you are not alone, that you've got folks behind you.

Obviously, the damage here is pretty hard to comprehend. Our hearts go out to the families who have been impacted, including those who have had loved ones who were lost. And that was true for the parents of some of the children here at Plaza Towers Elementary school.

There are a number of people I want to especially thank, because they've engaged in some heroic efforts in dealing with this disaster. First of all, Governor Mary Fallin, thank you so much for your quick response and your outstanding work. Mayor Glenn Lewis, the mayor of Moore, who has been mayor here before when there was a disaster, and because of his strong spirit and sense of community has been able to help lead the community through this disaster. We very much appreciate your work.

Representative Tom Cole, not only is this his congressional district, but more importantly, this is his hometown. And so for him, this carries a special sadness, but also a resolve in terms of trying to make sure that the city of Moore bounces back. Mayor Mick Cornett, Oklahoma City, a neighbor and friend, we appreciate him being here. Craig Fugate is here, and obviously we are very proud of the work that he and his FEMA team have done. Susie Pierce, superintendent of schools here, thank you for your leadership.

Amy Simpson, I want to especially commend, Plaza Towers Elementary school principal, as well as Shelley McMillin, the Briarwood Elementary school principal. They were on the ground when this happened, and because of their quick response, their keeping a level head, their putting kids first saved a lot of people. And they're still going through some tough times. I can only imagine being their husbands, who are here, and the panic that I'm sure they were feeling when the tornado first struck. But I know that they could not be prouder of their wives for the outstanding work that they did in this amazing situation.

I want to thank Chief of Police Jerry Stillings and all the first responders in this area who were some of the first folks on the scene who were putting themselves at risk to save other people's lives. That's what first responders do, but sometimes, we take them for granted, and it's important we don't and we remember moments like that. That's why it's so important that we continually support them.

At my direction, Craig Fugate arrived here on Tuesday. FEMA was on the ground even before Monday's tornado hit. And their teams have now completed searches of more than 1,200 buildings. We've helped to register more than 4,200 people for disaster assistance, and we've approved more than $3.4 million in direct aid. Obviously, there's a lot more to come. But it's not just a Government response. We've seen incredible outpourings of support from churches, from community groups who are helping folks begin to recover.

This area has known more than its share of heartbreak. But people here pride themselves on the Oklahoma standard, what Governor Fallin has called, "Being able to work through disasters like this, and [to] come out stronger on the other side." And that's what we've been seeing this week.

From the forecasters who issued the warnings, to the first responders who dug through the rubble, to the teachers who shielded with their own bodies their students, Oklahomans have inspired us with their love and their courage and their fellowship.

Neighbors have been offering up spare bedrooms and couches for those in need of shelter. Universities have opened up their buildings for temporary housing, and local companies have pitched in.

So this is a strong community with strong character. There's no doubt they're going to bounce back. But they need help, just like any

of us would need help if we saw the kind of devastation that we're seeing here. We have about 1,200 homes that have been completely destroyed, but we've got 12,000 that have been damaged in one way or another, and that's a big piece of business. And along with the schools, we've got a hospital that has been destroyed. It's going to take a long time for this community to rebuild.

So I want to urge every American to step up. If I've got one message for folks here today: Go online, donate to the American Red Cross. And if you're from the area and you need to register for disaster assistance, you can call 1–800–621–FEMA. That's 1–800–621–FEMA. Or you can go to disasterassistance.gov. Disasterassistance.gov on the web. Either way, I guarantee you, if you've got some significant damage and have been impacted, go ahead and reach out, and there are going to be professionals there who are ready and willing to provide you the assistance that you need.

We know Moore is going to come back stronger from this tragedy. Your mayor said that you're already printing new street signs.

Mayor Glenn Lewis of Moore, OK. Yes, sir.

The President. And I want folks affected throughout Oklahoma to know that we're going to be with you every step of the way.

On Sunday, the first deadly tornadoes touched down about 40 miles from here. And I mentioned this the day afterwards—there was a story that really struck me in the press—in the rubble was found a Bible, open to the words that read: "A man will be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest." And that—it's a reminder, as Scripture often is, that God has a plan, and it's important, though, that we also recognize we're an instrument of his will. And we need to know that as fellow Americans, we're going to be there as shelter from the storm for the people of Moore who have been impacted.

And when we say that we've got your back, I promise you, we keep our word. If you talk to folks in Alabama who have been affected over the last couple of years; you talk to the folks at Joplin, who I know have actually sent volunteers down here to Moore; if you talk to folks in New Jersey and New York, they'll tell you that when we say we're going to be there until you completely rebuild, we mean it. And I want everybody to have that confidence.

So again, to all the people here behind me, I want to say how proud I am of them, how grateful I am for their service. I want to make one final comment. A lot of the first responders talked about the training that they've done, in part through some Federal grants, to prepare for disasters like this. And as a consequence, when it actually happens, they know what to do, they're not losing time, they're able to go through all the drills and the training that they've gone through.

Training, education, both for citizenry, but also for first responders, is absolutely critical. And we've got to make sure that those resources remain in place. So I know everybody in Congress cares deeply about what's happening, and I'm confident that resources will be forthcoming when it comes to rebuilding. But remember that it's also the ongoing training and equipment, that we're making sure that those things are in place. We can't shortchange that kind of ongoing disaster response. We can't just wait until the disaster happens. That's how, in part, we were able to save a lot of lives, and I want everybody to keep that in mind.

So with that, let me just again say thank you to everybody here. Madam Governor, thank you for your leadership. And may God bless the people of Oklahoma and obviously continue to bless the United States of America.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:57 p.m. in front of the remains of Plaza Towers Elementary. In his remarks, he referred to Matthew C. Shipman, husband of Amy D. Simpson, principal, Plaza Towers Elementary in Moore, OK; and Michael McMillin, husband of Shelley Jaques-McMillin, principal, Briarwood Elementary in Oklahoma City, OK.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
May 27, 2013

Thank you very much. Good morning, everybody. I want to thank Secretary Chuck Hagel, not only for the introduction, but, Chuck, for your lifetime of service, from sergeant in the Army to Secretary of Defense, but always a man who carries with you the memory of friends and fallen heroes from Vietnam. We're grateful to you.

I want to thank General Dempsey; Major General Linnington; Kathryn Condon, who has served Arlington with extraordinary dedication and grace and who will be leaving us, but we are so grateful for the work that she's done; for Chaplain Brainerd; Secretary Shinseki; all our guests. And most of all, to members of our Armed Services and our veterans; to the families and friends of the fallen who we honor today; to Americans from all across the country who have come to pay your respects: I have to say it is always a great honor to spend this Memorial Day with you at this sacred place where we honor our fallen heroes, those who we remember fondly in our memories and those known only to God.

Beyond these quiet hills, across that special bridge, is a city of monuments dedicated to visionary leaders and singular moments in the life of our Republic. But it is here, on this hallowed ground, where we choose to build a monument to a constant thread in the American character: the truth that our Nation endures because it has always been home to men and women who are willing to give their all and lay down their very lives to preserve and protect this land that we love.

That character, that selflessness, beats in the hearts of the very first patriots who died for a democracy they had never known and would never see. It lived on in the men and women who fought to hold our Union together and in those who fought to defend it abroad, from the beaches of Europe to the mountains and jungles of Asia. This year, as we mark the 60th anniversary of the end of fighting in Korea, we offer a special salute to all those who served and gave their lives in the Korean war. And over the last decade, we've seen the character of our country again in the nearly 7,000 Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice on battlefields and city streets half a world away.

Last Memorial Day, I stood here and spoke about how, for the first time in 9 years, Americans were no longer fighting and dying in Iraq. Today, a transition is underway in Afghanistan, and our troops are coming home. Fewer Americans are making the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, and that's progress for which we are profoundly grateful. And this time next year, we will mark the final Memorial Day of our war in Afghanistan.

And so, as I said last week, America stands at a crossroads. But even as we turn a page on a decade of conflict, even as we look forward, let us never forget, as we gather here today, that our Nation is still at war.

It should be self-evident. And in generations past, it was. And during World War II, millions of Americans contributed to the war effort: soldiers like my own grandfather; women like my grandmother, who worked the assembly lines. During the Vietnam war, just about everybody knew somebody—a brother, a son, a friend—who served in harm's way.

Today, it's different. Perhaps it's a tribute to our remarkable All-Volunteer Force, made up of men and women who step forward to serve and do so with extraordinary skill and valor. Perhaps it's a testament to our advanced technologies, which allow smaller numbers of troops to wield greater and greater power. But regardless the reason, this truth cannot be ignored: that today, most Americans are not directly touched by war.

As a consequence, not all Americans may always see or fully grasp the depth of sacrifice, the profound costs that are made in our name: right now, as we speak, every day. Our troops and our military families understand this, and they mention to me their concern about whether the country fully appreciates what's happening. I think about a letter I received from a naval officer, a reservist who had just

returned from a deployment to Afghanistan. And he wrote me, "I'm concerned that our work in Afghanistan is fading from memory." And he went on to ask that we do more to keep this conflict "alive and focused in the hearts and minds of our own people."

And he's right. As we gather here today, at this very moment, more than 60,000 of our fellow Americans still serve far from home in Afghanistan. They're still going out on patrol, still living in spartan forward operating bases, still risking their lives to carry out their mission. And when they give their lives, they are still being laid to rest in cemeteries in the quiet corners across our country, including here in Arlington.

Captain Sara Cullen had a smile that could light up a room and a love of country that led her to West Point. And after graduation, Sara became a Black Hawk pilot and married a former Black Hawk pilot. She was just 27 years old when she and four other soldiers were killed in a helicopter crash during a training mission near Kandahar. This past April, Sara was laid to rest here, in Section 60. Today Sara is remembered by her mother Lynn, who says she is "proud of her daughter's life, proud of her faith, and proud of her service to our country."

Staff Sergeant Frankie Phillips came from a military family and is—was as tough as they come. A combat medic, Frankie was on patrol in Afghanistan 3 weeks ago when his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb. He was so humble that his parents never knew how many lives he had saved until soldiers started showing up at his funeral from thousands of miles away. And last week, Frankie was laid to rest just a few rows over from Sara.

Staff Sergeant Eric Christian was a born leader. A member of the Marine Corps Special Operatings Command, Eric had served five tours of duty, but kept going back because he felt responsible for his teammates and was determined to finish the mission. On May 4, Eric gave his life after escorting a high-ranking U.S. official to meet with Afghan leaders. Later, his family got a letter from a marine who had served two tours with Eric. In it, the marine wrote: "There were people who measured their success based on how many enemies they killed or how many missions they led to conquer a foe. Eric based his success on how many of his friends he brought home, and he brought home many, including me." Eric was laid to rest here at Arlington, just 6 days ago.

So today we remember their service. Today, just steps from where these brave Americans lie in eternal peace, we declare, as a proud and grateful nation, that their sacrifice will never be forgotten. And just as we honor them, we hold their families close. Because for the parents who lose a child, for the husbands and wives who lose a partner, for the children who lose a parent, every loss is devastating. And for those of us who bear the solemn responsibility of sending these men and women into harm's way, we know the consequences all too well. I feel it every time I meet a wounded warrior, every time I visit Walter Reed, and every time I grieve with a Gold Star family.

And that's why on this day we remember our sacred obligation to those who laid down their lives so we could live ours: to finish the job these men and women started by keeping our promise to those who wear America's uniform; to give our troops the resources they need; to keep faith with our veterans and their families, now and always; to never stop searching for those who have gone missing or who are held as prisoners of war.

But on a more basic level, every American can do something even simpler. As we go about our daily lives, we must remember that our countrymen are still serving, still fighting, still putting their lives on the line for all of us.

Last fall, I received a letter from Candie Averette of Charlotte, North Carolina. Both of her sons are marines. Her oldest served two tours in Iraq. Her youngest was in Afghanistan at the time. He was, in her words, "A hundred percent devoted to his deployment and wouldn't have had it any other way."

Reading Candie's letter, it was clear she was extraordinarily proud of the life her boys had chosen. But she also had a request on behalf of all the mothers just like her. She said, "Please don't forget about my child and every other

marine and soldier over there who proudly choose to defend their country."

A mother's plea: Please don't forget. On this Memorial Day, and every day, let us be true and meet that promise. Let it be our task, every single one of us, to honor the strength and the resolve and the love these brave Americans felt for each other and for our country. Let us never forget to always remember and to be worthy of the sacrifice they make in our name.

May God bless the fallen and all those who serve. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Michael S. Linnington, USA, commanding general, and Col. Michael E. Brainerd, USA, command chaplain, Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region and Military District of Washington; Kathryn A. Condon, Executive Director, Army National Military Cemeteries; Christopher C. Cullen, husband, and Lynn Brinkworth Knutson, mother, of Capt. Sara M. Cullen, USA; Francis G. Phillips III and Cherie Forslund Phillips, parents of S. Sgt. Francis G. Phillips IV, USA. The related proclamation of May 24 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks in Asbury Park, New Jersey
May 28, 2013

The President. Hello, New Jersey! It is good to be back in Jersey.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back!

Let me, first of all, say thank you to Governor Christie for that introduction and the great work he's done here. Your mayor, Ed Johnson, is here as well and has been working tirelessly on your behalf. We've got three great Representatives in Congress from New Jersey: Rush Holt, Frank Pallone, Donald Payne, Jr.

Now, last week, my advisers asked me, they said, Mr. President, do you want to spend next Tuesday in Washington, or would you rather spend it at the Jersey Shore? And I've got to say, I've got to make some tough decisions as President, but this wasn't one of them. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We love you anyway.

The President. I appreciate that.

Governor Christie and I just spent some time on the Point Pleasant boardwalk. I got a chance to see the world's tallest sandcastle being built. We played some Touchdown Fever. I've got to say, Christie got it in the tire the first try—[*laughter*]—although I did pay for his throws. [*Laughter*] I played a little Frog Bog, and Governor Christie's kids taught me the right technique for hitting the hammer to get those frogs in the buckets the way I was supposed to. [*Laughter*] And of course, I met with folks who are still rebuilding after Sandy.

Now, we all understand there's still a lot of work to be done. There are homes to rebuild. There are businesses to reopen. There are landmarks and beaches and boardwalks that aren't all the way back yet. But thanks to the hard work of an awful lot of people, we've got wonderful shops and restaurants and arcades that are opening their doors. And I saw what thousands of Americans saw over Memorial Day weekend: You are stronger than the storm. After all you've dealt with, after all you've been through, the Jersey Shore is back and it is open for business, and they want all Americans to know that they're ready to welcome you here.

And I've got to say, if they ever let me have any fun, I'd have some fun here. [*Laughter*] I was telling my staff on the ride over, I could see being a little younger—[*laughter*]—and having some fun on the Jersey Shore. I can't do that anymore. [*Laughter*] Maybe after I leave office. [*Laughter*]

I think a friend of mine from here once put it pretty well: "Down the shore, everything's all right." He's the only guy a President still has to call the Boss. [*Laughter*] Other than the First Lady. [*Laughter*]

But for generations, that's what this place has been about. Life isn't always easy. We're people who have to work hard and do what it takes to provide for our families. But when you come here, everything's all right. And whether you spend a lifetime here or a weekend or a summer, the shore holds a special place in your heart and in—a special place in America's mythology, America's memory.

When I was here 7 months ago, Hurricane Sandy had just hammered communities all across the East Coast, and lives were lost, and homes and businesses were destroyed, and folks were hurting. And I remember something Chris said back then. He said, "We cannot permit that sorrow to replace the resilience that I know all New Jerseyans have."

Audience member. Yes, we do!

The President. And it didn't. You didn't let it. You kept going. Because these towns have a special character, not just in the summer, but all year round. From the moment the hurricane hit, first responders worked around the clock to save lives and property. And neighbors opened their homes and their hearts to one another. And you came together as citizens to rebuild.

And we're not done yet, and I want to make sure everybody understands that, because for somebody who hasn't seen their home rebuilt yet or is still trying to get their business up and running again after all those losses, we don't want them to think that somehow we've checked a box and we've moved on. That's part of the reason I came back: to let people know we're going to keep on going until we finish.

But if anybody wondered whether the shore could ever be all right again, you got—you got your answer this weekend. From Sea Bright to Bay Head, from Belmar to Seaside Heights, folks were hanging out on balconies and beaches. Shows were sold out at the Stone Pony. Kids were eating ice cream, going on rides, going and eating some more ice cream. [*Laughter*] Guys were trying to win those big stuffed animals to impress a special girl. So, like I said, the Jersey Shore is back in business.

The work's not over, though. Seven months ago, I promised you that your country would have your back. I told you we would not quit until the job was done, and I meant it. [*Applause*] I meant it.

Craig Fugate, the head of FEMA, he couldn't be here today, but I want to thank him and his team for their ongoing work. FEMA was here before Sandy made landfall; they're still here today. They're working with the Governor's team and with the Task Force I set up to support families and communities who still need help. Since the storm hit, we've provided billions of dollars to families and State and local governments across the region, and more is on the way.

And even as my team is helping communities recover from the last hurricane season, they're already starting to prepare for the next hurricane season, which starts this Saturday. Because if there's one thing that we've learned last year, it's that when a storm hits, we've got to be ready. Education, preparation, that's what makes a difference. That's what saves lives. And anyone who wants to make sure they're ready—for a hurricane or any other disaster—I want them to visit something: a website called ready.gov. Make a plan. It's never too early.

And we've also got to remember that rebuilding efforts like these aren't measured in weeks or months, but they're measured in years. That's why just this past Thursday, we announced billions of new relief aid for New York and New Jersey transit agencies. And that's why the Army Corps of Engineers is working to restore beaches and strengthen the shore's natural defenses. That's why I joined Governor Christie and your representatives, fighting to get a relief package through Congress. We're going to keep doing what it takes to rebuild all the way and make it better than it was before, make it stronger than it was before, make it more resilient than it was before.

So, Jersey, you've got a—you've still got a long road ahead, but when you look out on this beach—this beautiful beach here—even in the rain, it looks good. You look out over the horizon, you can count on the fact that you won't be alone. Your fellow citizens will be there for you, just like we'll be there for folks in Breezy

Point and Staten Island, and obviously, we're going to be there for the folks in Monroe [Moore],* Oklahoma, after the devastation of last week.

Part of the reason I wanted to come back here was not just to send a message to New Jersey, but send a message to folks in Oklahoma: When we make a commitment that we've got your back, we mean it, and we're not going to finish until the work is done. Because that's who we are. We help each other as Americans through the bad times, and we sure make the most of the good times.

So let's have some good times on the New Jersey Shore this summer. And next summer and the summer after that and all year long, America, bring your family and friends. Spend a little money on the Jersey Shore. You'll find some of the friendliest folks on Earth, some of the best beaches on Earth. And you'll see that even after a tough couple of months, this space is as special as ever, and down the shore, everything is still all right.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:26 p.m. at Asbury Park Convention Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew, Sarah, Patrick, and Bridget Christie, children of Gov. Christopher J. Christie of New Jersey; and musician Bruce Springsteen.

Remarks at a Reception Celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
May 28, 2013

The President. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you so much. Aloha!

Audience members. Aloha!

The President. Welcome to the White House, everybody. And thank you, Joan, for the introduction. And I want to thank everybody who's here, the incredible warmth of the reception. A sign of the warmth is the lipstick on my collar. [*Laughter*] I have to say, I think I know the culprit. Where is Jessica Sanchez? [*Laughter*] Jessica—no, it wasn't Jessica. It was her aunt. Where is she? [*Laughter*] Auntie, right there. Look at this. [*Laughter*] Look at this. I just want everybody to witness. [*Laughter*] So I do not want to be in trouble with Michelle. [*Laughter*] That's why I'm calling you out right in front of everybody. [*Laughter*]

We are here today to honor the incredibly rich heritage and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. And there's no better example of that diversity than the people who are in this room. We've got Members of Congress. We've got members of my administration. We've got lots of special guests and talented performers.

And every day, we're reminded of the many ways in which Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders have all contributed and enriched our Nation throughout our history. Obviously for me, I don't have to look any further than my own family. I've got my brother-in-law here, Konrad, who is—Konrad Ng, who's heading up the Smithsonian Asian American center—or it probably has a longer name than that. [*Laughter*] My sister Maya, their beautiful daughters, my nieces Suhaila and Savita.

I can think back to my college years when my roommates were Indian and Pakistanis, which is how I learned how to cook *keema* and *dal*. [*Laughter*] Very good. And of course, I can dig back into my own memories of growing up in Hawaii and in Indonesia. And so, certainly, it's been a central part of my life, the entire Asia-Pacific region.

But it's more than food and family, because generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders helped build this country and helped to defend this country and to make America what it is today. It's a history that speaks to the

* White House correction.

promise of our Nation, one that welcomes the contributions of all people, no matter their color or their beliefs, because we draw from the rich traditions of everybody who calls America home. *E pluribus unum*—"out of many, one."

And the artists joining us today exemplify that creed. So we've got performers like Karsh Kale, who fuses the best of East and West, mixing eclectic beats with the sounds of his heritage and creating music that's distinctly his own; that's a trait obviously that's distinctly American. We've got musicians like Paula Fuga and John Cruz, whose work represents the spirit of my native Hawaii and reminds us that we're all part of the same *ohana*. We have authors like Amy Tan, who uses her own family's immigration story to trace the stories of others. She makes out of the particular something very universal.

We value these voices because from the very beginning, ours has been a nation of immigrants, a nation challenged and shaped and pushed ever forward by diverse perspectives and fresh thinking. And in order to keep our edge and stay ahead in the global race, we need to figure out how to way—a way to fix our broken immigration system, to welcome that infusion of newness while still maintaining the enduring strength of our laws. And the service and the leadership of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have proved that point time and again.

So we take opportunities like today to honor the legacy of those who paved the way, like my friend, the late Senator from Hawaii, Daniel Inouye, the first Japanese American to serve in Congress. And to celebrate the pioneers of this generation, like Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth, one of the first female veterans elected to Congress. And one of my favorite people right now, Sri Srinivasan, who has just been confirmed. Here's Sri, right here.

I was proud to nominate Sri, and he was just confirmed unanimously to become the first South Asian American Federal appeals court judge. I was telling his kids, who are here today, if he starts getting a big head, walking around the house with a robe—[*laughter*]—asking them to call him Your Honor—[*laughter*]—then they should talk to me. But—[*laughter*].

In every election, at every board meeting, in every town across America, we see more and more different faces of leadership, setting an example for every young kid who sees a leader who looks like him or her. And that's a good thing. We've got to keep that up. We've got to do everything we can to make sure everybody works hard, everybody plays by the rules, everybody has a chance to get ahead—to start their own business, to earn a degree, to write their own page in the American story—that the laws respect everybody; that civil rights apply to everybody. That's who we are at our best, and that's what we're here to celebrate. That's the challenge that I believe we're going to meet together.

So I want to thank all of you for being here tonight. It is going to be a wonderful, wonderful gathering. And from Michelle and Malia and Sasha and Bo—[*laughter*]—thank you all for the incredible contributions that you're making each and every day.

God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:28 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Joan Shikegawa, Acting Chair, National Endowment for the Arts; musician Jessica Sanchez and her grandmother Virginia Bugay; Srikanth Srinivasan, judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and his children Maya and Vikram. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, her husband Konrad Ng, and their daughters Suhaila and Savita. The related proclamation of April 30 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Chicago, Illinois
May 29, 2013

Hello, Chicago!

Michael Jordan—no, different Michael Jordan. [*Laughter*] It is great to be home, and it is great to be among so many good friends. Starting with Jan Schakowsky, what she does not mention is—in her introduction—that not too many folks gave me a chance to win that first Senate race, but Jan Schakowsky was one of the few people who did and stepped out, along with Robin Kelly, along with Michael Jordan.

So there is a certain crew here of true believers, and we ended up having the primary night celebration in this hotel. And I was just saying that was probably—maybe my favorite moment in politics, as opposed to governing—[*laughter*]—just because nobody expected it, including maybe me. [*Laughter*] So it's wonderful to have Jan here.

A couple other people, obviously, I want to acknowledge. First of all, outstanding leader, soon once again to be Speaker, Nancy Pelosi in the house. We love Nancy.

A man who is doing a thankless job with style and grace, our DCCC chairman, Steve Israel. Tomorrow is Steve Israel's birthday, so I want to wish everybody—yes, let's go ahead and sing.

[*At this point, the President led audience members in singing "Happy Birthday."*]

Yay! We've got a number of other extraordinary Members: a visitor, Steny Hoyer, whose leadership is invaluable and works so closely with Nancy; and then just an incredible congressional delegation headed up by our own Dick Durbin. I already mentioned Robin Kelly. We've got Cheri Bustos here. We've got Bill Foster here. We've got Bobby Rush here. We've got Rick Nolan here. Rick is not from Illinois, but we like him anyway. [*Laughter*] Sandy Levin is here. And candidate in the Illinois 13th from down south who is going to win, Ann Callis is in the house.

And finally, a great friend and somebody who's showing what leadership is all about here in Chicago—I could not be prouder of him—your great mayor, Rahm Emanuel.

All right. Now, my remarks are going to be relatively brief because game seven of the Blackhawks game is going on right now. And I expect the Blackhawks to win. I know the Crosstown Classic is going on this week, and I expect the White Sox to win. But I love the Cubs too; they're great. [*Laughter*] I'm not a Cubs hater; I'm just saying. [*Laughter*] I think the Sox will win. [*Laughter*]

But the main reason I'm here is just to say thanks to all of you for the incredible privilege that you've given me to lead this country and to say that our work is not yet done.

Jan rattled off a list of accomplishments that I could not be prouder of, and I couldn't have gotten them done had it not been for Nancy Pelosi and an incredible congressional delegation from here in Illinois. But what we also know is, despite the headlines talking about the economy starting to pick up steam, despite recovery in the housing market, despite the fact that we've created all those jobs, despite the fact that the stock market has hit an alltime high, what we also know is, is that there are people all across this country who are still hurting.

People whose homes are still underwater. People just a few miles from here who desperately want to work and can't yet find work or can't get the skills they need to work. There are people just a few miles from here who are still worried about gun violence striking down their children on the way to school. There are folks all across the country who are willing to work hard, have the same kinds of values that built this country, looking after their families, taking responsibility not just for themselves, but also for their communities and their neighborhoods.

But the environment has changed for them, and what they need desperately is an entire na-

tion that is willing to rally around the basic concept that if you work hard in this country, you can make it—doesn't matter where you come from, what you look like, what faith you practice, who you love—that here in America, you can make it if you try.

Now, the good news is that we know the answers to so many of our challenges. We know, for example, that even though the economy has picked up, that if, in fact, we started putting people back to work all across this country rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our ports and our dams and our airports, that not only would that accelerate economic growth right now, but it would lay the foundation for economic growth for decades to come. We know that.

And we know, by the way, if we just put it off, it's just going to get worse. This is deferred maintenance. It's like not fixing the roof on your house and—when it's leaking. It's going to be more expensive to fix later.

We know that in this global economy, knowledge and skills and education count for everything and that the biggest bang we can get for our education dollar is if we are investing in early childhood education so that every child is getting a good start when they enter kindergarten. We know that.

And we've got great models all across the country. We know how to do early childhood education well. The problem is, we haven't invested in it. We probably invest less in early childhood education in this country than in any other industrialized country in the world. Same, by the way, goes for infrastructure, which is why not a single airport out of the top 25 in the world are in America.

We know that if we have some commonsense laws that check to see if we're keeping guns out of the hands of criminals or folks who have significant mental illnesses, we know that that can reduce some deaths, save some kids. It doesn't solve the whole problem, but we know that. So—and we know that 90 percent of the American people and 80 percent of gun owners agree with us. Why aren't we getting that done?

We know that energy is what makes an economy go. And the great news, here in America, is that by 2020, we'll be a net exporter of natural gas. We will, over the next couple of decades, have the capacity to be energy independent for the first time. Incredible change. It will change geopolitics for generations to come, and it frees ourselves from dependence not only on foreign oil generally, but from some of the most volatile parts of the world.

But what we also know is, is that the climate is changing in ways that we can't fully predict, but we know are not going to be good for our kids. And the good news is, we've already doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars. We've already doubled our production of clean energy. And if we continue to make the investments, nobody has the know-how and the scientific skill to create the kinds of breakthroughs that deal with climate change, but we've got to go ahead and make that decision so that we can be leaders not just for our own kids, but for kids all around the world.

We know that making investments in science and technology pay off like nothing else. And yet right now we've got a budget that is actually cutting our commitment to science and energy because bad priorities in Washington.

And yet how else are we going to compete against China and Germany when they're doubling or tripling their R&D investments and we're actually seeing ours fall or at least stay stagnant?

So the good news is that the United States of America is better positioned than any country on Earth to make sure that the 21st century remains our century, just like the 20th was. And a world city like Chicago is better positioned than just about anybody. Look at the assets that are here. We've got the best universities. We've got the most dynamic entrepreneurs. We've got everything we need to succeed.

But the one thing that's still missing is a politics that matches up with the decency and the hard work and determination and creativity of the American people. We've got a politics that's stuck right now. And the reason it's stuck is because people spend more time thinking

about the next election than they do thinking about the next generation.

Now, I've got to tell you, I've run my last political race, and many of you may be relieved about that because—[*laughter*]—my good friend Ab Mikva in this town used to say that having a friend who is a politician is like permanently having a child in college. [*Laughter*] You're just—you're always writing checks. So I've graduated. [*Laughter*]

But the reason that I'm here is because for me to govern effectively over the next 3, 3½ years, part of my task is to constantly, continually reach out to the other side to try to find common ground; to look for those Republicans who don't think compromise is a dirty word; to continue to advance the agenda that the American people sent me there to advance; to make work pay; to attract new businesses to our shores; to make sure that we're competitive; to build a middle class. And so any opportunities I have to do that, I will seize them.

And I have to say, as tough a fighter as Nancy Pelosi is, I have watched her, and I have watched some of the Democrats who are in this room take very tough votes, even going against some of the special interests who support Democrats typically if we think it's the right thing to do. We've shown ourselves willing to do it.

And so I'm constantly eager to find Republicans who are willing to do the same, because I actually don't think that any party has a monopoly on wisdom. And I actually think that Democrats, we have to be willing to compromise sometimes to get stuff done. We're not an ideological party, we're a practical party.

But what I will also say is this: that if day in, day out, what we confront is obstructionism for the sake of obstructionism and what appears to be an interest only in scoring political points or placating a base as opposed to trying to advance the interests of the American people, then we've got to figure out a way to work around that. And one of the best ways to work around it is to have a Democratic House of Representatives.

So the—so thanks to the work of Steve Israel, thanks to incredible candidates like Ann Callis, we've got a great chance of taking back the House. And I'm going to be working tirelessly, wherever I get the opportunity, to make the case to the American people that our ideas are the right ones for growing the middle class, that our ideas are the right ones to protect our environment, that our ideas are the right ones in terms of making sure our kids are getting a great education.

And any Republican who joins up and says, "I agree, those are the right ideas," hey, I'm ready to work. But those who don't, I'm going to be out there making the case. And I know that that's what some of the great candidates at the DCCC are going to be doing as well. And the only way they're able to do that is if they've got support from folks like you.

So I just want to say to all of you, I'm grateful to you, but do not get complacent. Do not buy into this notion somehow that, oh, these problems are too big or Washington is broken. No. Washington is not broken. It's broken right now for a particular reason, but it's not permanently broken. It can be fixed.

We got a whole bunch of stuff done my first 2 years. We've gotten a whole bunch of done—stuff done since that time. And I'm optimistic about us getting legislation passed this year, but we could be doing a whole lot more. We can only do it with you. We can only do it not only by you contributing to the DCCC, but also by talking to your friends and neighbors and colleagues about the ideas that are important for America.

And we can only do it if you guys sustain a sense of hope, a sense of promise, a belief that here in America, sometimes, we take a bad turn, sometimes, we make mistakes, but the trajectory of this country is for greater rights, more prosperity, greater tolerance. People still from around the world come here, recognizing that in this country there is this unique idea that all of us count and that all of us can make it. And that's just a great gift, and it should make us hopeful.

And when I see young people—some of whom are here today—I am constantly inspired because they are smarter than we were, they're more sophisticated than we were, in many ways

they're more conscientious than we were. So this is—the generation coming behind us, I mean, they are spectacular. We've just got to make sure that we leave for them a political system that allows them to express all that incredible creativity and ingenuity and wonderful values that they're going to be able to express through our politics. That's what this project is about, and we can't do it without you. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. at the Hilton Chicago hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Michael J. Jordan, board member, Obama for America; Reps. Robin L. Kelly, Cheri Bustos, Bill Foster, and Richard M. Kelly; Ann Callis, former chief judge, Madison County Circuit Court in Edwardsville, IL; and former White House Counsel Abner J. Mikva.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Chicago

May 29, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. No, no, no, don't do that. This is my—you know, this is like old home week.

Bettylu K. Saltzman. Mr. President.

The President. Yes?

Mrs. Saltzman. Sandy Levin is here from Michigan.

The President. Yes.

Mrs. Saltzman. Sandy Levin.

The President. We've got a—that's because he's got a relative here. [*Laughter*] The good excuse to——

Rep. Sander M. Levin. I came here to cheer for the Red Wings.

The President. Oh, no!

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Secret Service, can you have this man removed, please? [*Laughter*] The—[*laughter*].

Audience member. What's the score?

The President. We don't know yet. If anybody is monitoring the score, please let us know. I'll make the announcement.

Well, look, everybody here has been introduced, but I want to say something about everybody. First of all, the Whip, Steny Hoyer, does a great job every single day. And there's nobody in the House of Representatives who understands the mechanics of getting things done and is able to deliver on behalf of the values that we care about than an outstanding Congressman from Maryland: Steny Hoyer.

Steve Israel has the thankless job of traveling around the country every day on behalf of Democrats, trying to get a Democratic House back. And he does it with good humor and grace and has been outstanding. And we're so grateful for him. It also happens to be the day before his birthday, so wish every—everybody wish Steve a happy birthday.

I was going to say nice things about Sandy Levin, but we'll skip over that. [*Laughter*] Actually, Sandy is wonderful, and nobody fights for working people harder than Sandy Levin. And we're just grateful him, for everything that he does.

Jan Schakowsky has been a progressive champion in this State for so many years and was one of my earliest supporters when I ran for the United States Senate. And I could not have ever achieved what I did nationally without the support of Jan Schakowsky. So we're grateful for her.

Nancy Pelosi. It is absolutely true that the things I'm proudest of having accomplished as President, I accomplished with Nancy Pelosi fighting every step of the way. You could not have a better partner than her. She is tough as nails. She is a great politician. She is a great leader. But all that's in service of a mission, which is to make sure that the American people can achieve their dreams through hard work and responsibility.

And I was mentioning this to the other—we had a little event—larger event downtown; I guess we're now in River North. But I said to them that one of—we're all politicians; we're all members of parties. But one of the things that I'm proud of as a Democrat is the fact that at certain critical junctures, we're willing to put what is politically expedient aside to do what's right. And I've seen Nancy do that, consistently. I've seen her be willing, not just to stare down the other side and say, "No, this is what's important for the American people," I've seen her—to her own constituencies and her own base—say: "You know what? This is something that we need to do to compromise and get something done."

And I've got to tell you, I could not be prouder of Nancy Pelosi and the work that she's done, and I could not be more anxious and eager to have her back as Speaker of the House. She is a great friend. So, finally, before I just make some very brief remarks and then I want to spend some time on questions, I've got to talk about Bettylu and Paul. No, it's going to—you know, don't worry. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Saltzman. Should I leave the room?

The President. No, no, it's just an expression of love. The—I don't know if Bettylu actually told me that she thought I could be President. [*Laughter*] But what I do know is this, that I—when I had just gotten out of law school and was still finding my way, and I had come back here, and I was assigned to work to register voters with Project Vote, Bettylu even then was at the forefront of a nonpartisan effort to get people registered and voting, back in 1992. And right away, Bettylu treated me like a son and with the warmth and concern, and she was somebody who introduced me to so many of the people in this room and introduced me to so many people here in Chicago.

And so when I look around the room and I see folks like Joan Harris and Judy Gaynor and people who have been supporters of mine from the get-go, I can all trace that back to Bettylu. And we've got kind of a Obama cabal here in this room. [*Laughter*] But it's fitting that we're here, because she invested high hopes and expectations in me. And through all the ups and downs of my political career, she has been a constant, and she's always been there and has always been supportive. And when times have been tough, she was right there and stepping up all over again. And Paul, who may have been skeptical during this whole time—[*laughter*]—was kind enough to go along with it.

And so I make this point only—there are very few people—Steny or Nancy, you may have somebody in your life like this, where you can honestly say—it's not just words—you can honestly say, I probably would not be here today were it not for—I can honestly say I probably would not be President of the United States were it not for Bettylu Saltzman. And so I just wanted to say that. That's true. [*Applause*] That's true. That is true. Love that woman. Love Bettylu. It's true. Love that woman. [*Laughter*] All right.

Mrs. Saltzman. Thank you, thank you.

The President. It's true.

So we're going to have time for questions. I'm just going to make a couple of quick remarks to give you a sense of where we are now.

If you read the headlines over the last couple of days, you'd actually see housing recovering, the economy stronger than expected, stock market hitting record highs. And you'd have an impression, rightly, that having—after having gone through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, that we are—we have recovered faster, we have gone further, our economy is doing better than just about every industrialized country in the world, or at least a large portion of them. And that's good news, and we should celebrate that.

But if you go beneath the headlines, what we also know is that there are huge numbers of people all across America who are still seeing their house underwater, huge numbers of Americans who want to work, believe in the dignity of work, but no matter how hard they try right now, still can't find a job.

There are still kids just a few miles from here, who are threatened by gun violence, who aren't in a school that is giving them what they need to compete in this 21st century, and whose prospects are dim, if we're honest, not

because they don't have the innate capacity, but because we as a society have decided, that's not our priority.

We still have a situation in which, on the one hand, our energy future is more promising than we've ever allowed ourselves to believe. I mean, we will probably be a net exporter of traditional fossil fuels over the next 20 years—within the next 20 years; probably a net exporter of natural gas in the next 3 or 4 years—something that could not be imagined even 5, 10 years ago—because of the dynamism and technology that America has produced.

But the flipside is, we also know that the climate is warming faster than anybody anticipated 5 or 10 years ago, and that the future of Bettylu's grandkids, in part, is going to depend on our willingness to deal with something that we may not be able to see or smell, the way you could when the Chicago River was on fire, or at least could have caught on fire, but is in some ways more serious, more fundamental.

America is probably more tolerant, more accepting of difference than any time in our history. Obviously, you've got an African American President, a former and soon-to-be-again female Speaker of the House. The work that we did together to end "don't ask, don't tell" is something that I could not be prouder of. But we also know that there's still a lot of people who are excluded in our society and we've got more work to do.

Here in Illinois, we've got a vote on same-sex marriage that's going to be coming up in the State legislature. And I just want to say for the record, it's something that I deeply support. I wrestled with this for a long time, and I am absolutely convinced, it is the right thing to do. And we have to make sure that wherever we go, we are reminding people that the essence of America is that everybody is treated equally under the law, without exception.

And so, across the board—whether it's getting early childhood education done or rebuilding our infrastructure when we've got bridges that are buckling all across the country and airports that aren't working the way they're supposed to and ports that are too small to accommodate the big ships that are going to be coming through the Panama Canal; whether it's making sure that we've got job training for people who have to retrain for the jobs of the future—we have a lot of business to do.

And the good news is that we have all the ingredients for success. We've got the best cards. And there's not a country on Earth that would not gladly trade places with the United States of America. The bad news is, is that what's stopping us from making more progress than we've already made is a situation in Washington in which people are willing to put the next election ahead of the next generation.

And I've said this before, and I will say it again: I've run my last election. My only interest at this point is effective governance. My only interest is making sure that when I look back 20 years from now, I say I accomplished everything that I could while I had this incredible privilege to advance the interests of the broadest number of Americans and to make sure that this country was stronger and more prosperous than it was when I came into office. That's my only interest.

And that means that I am willing to work with anybody—Republican, Democrat, or Independent—to get stuff done. And I am not going to put the pause button on for the next year and a half or 2 years or whatever it is simply to position myself for the next election. If I've got a Republican who's willing to work with me to rebuild our infrastructure, let's go. I've got a Republican out there who's willing to get serious about what we need to deal with our long-term deficit challenges, I'm prepared; come on, let's talk. I've got somebody who has a different approach to dealing with climate change—I don't have much patience for people who deny climate change, but if you've got creative approaches, market-based approaches, tell me about them. If you think I'm doing it the wrong way, let me know. I'm happy to work with you.

But what I have not seen so far is the same willingness that I saw and continue to see in Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer and Jan Schakowsky and Sandy Levin, that same willingness to put party interests or political interests aside

to advance the interests of the American people. I have not seen that on the other side yet.

And what that tells me is, is that they've still got their minds on winning another election. And if that's the case, then even as we're doing everything we can to govern and even as I'm going to continue to reach out to the other side, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that we've got Nancy Pelosi back in the speakership, because that's where she belongs. And I know the American people will benefit from her leadership.

So, last thing I'll say, and then we'll open it up for questions: This will be hard. And frankly, the way gerrymandering now works and the geographical distribution of the population makes winning back the House a challenge. But you know what? Me winning the Presidency was a challenge. Nancy Pelosi becoming the first female Speaker, that was a challenge. It wasn't easy back in 2006. It wasn't easy back in 2008. So it's always challenging. Politics in America is tough, and it's competitive, and the country does have some very deep divisions on a whole range of issues. But it can be done.

And the question is going to be, are not only the folks in this room, who are the choir, but are we able and willing to mobilize friends, neighbors, coworkers, business partners, and grab them by the collar—not literally, necessarily, but figuratively—and say to them, "The stakes are big here, and we've got to stop fooling around"?

If all of you feel the same passion and intensity around this midterm election as so many of you felt in 2007, 2008 when I was running for President or in 2004 when I was running for Senate, then we're going to get the House back. And when we do, we're going to be in a position to deliver for that next generation. And nothing else should matter. Nothing else is more important.

Thank you. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:37 p.m. at the residence of Bettylu K. and Paul W. Saltzman. In his remarks, he referred to Joan W. Harris, chairwoman, Irving B. Harris Foundation; and Judith Gaynor, founding cochair, Human Rights Watch Chicago Committee.

Remarks on the Federal Student Loan Program
May 31, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Have a seat, have a seat. Welcome to the White House. I know it's a little warm. [*Laughter*]

One of my favorite things about this job is that I get to spend some time with remarkable young people from all across the country. It inspires me. It makes me feel good. Those of you who have had to put on suits and ties and show up at the White House first thing on a Friday morning may not feel the same way I do—[*laughter*]—but I appreciate all of you being here. You cleaned up very well.

And these students and graduates are here to talk about something that matters to millions of young people and their families, and that's the cost of a college education. Because this isn't just critical for their futures, but it's also critical for America's futures.

Over the past 4½ years, we've been fighting our way back from a financial crisis and an incredibly punishing recession—the worst since the Great Depression—and it cost millions of Americans their jobs and their homes, the sense of security that they'd spent their lives building up.

The good news is, today, our businesses have created nearly 7 million new jobs over the past 38 months. Five hundred thousand of those jobs are in manufacturing. We're producing more of our own energy, we're consuming less energy, and we're importing less from other countries. The housing market is coming back. The stock market has rebounded. Our deficits are shrinking at the fastest pace in 50 years. People's retirement savings are growing again. The rise of health care costs are slowing. The American auto industry is back.

So we're seeing progress, and the economy is starting to pick up steam. The gears are starting to turn again, and we're getting some trac-

tion. But the thing is, the way we measure our progress as a country is not just where the stock market is; it's not just to how well the folks at the top are doing; it's not just about the aggregate economic numbers; it's about how much progress ordinary families are making. Are we creating ladders of opportunity for everybody who's willing to work hard? Are we creating not only a growing economy, but also the engine that is critical to long-lasting, sustained economic growth, and that is a rising, thriving middle class. That's our focus. That's what we've got to be concerned about every single day. That's our north star.

And that means there are three questions we have to ask ourselves as a nation. Number one, how do we make America a magnet for good jobs in this competitive 21st-century economy? Number two, how do we make sure that our workers earn the skills and education they need to do those jobs? And number three, how do we make sure those jobs actually pay a decent wage or salary so that people can save for retirement, send their kids to college?

Those are the questions we've got to be asking ourselves every single day. So we're here today to talk about that second question: How do we make sure our workers earn the skills and education they need to do the jobs that companies are hiring for right now and are going to keep hiring for in the future? We know that the surest path to the middle class is some form of higher education: a 4-year degree, a community college degree, an advanced degree. You're going to need more than just a high school education to succeed in this economy.

And the young people here today, they get that. They're working through college—maybe just graduated—and earning their degree isn't just the best investment that they can make for their future, it's the best investment that they can make in America's future.

But like a lot of young people all across the country, these students have had to take on more and more and more debt to pay for this investment. Since most of today's college students were born, tuition and fees at public universities have more than doubled. And these days, the average student who takes out loans to pay for 4 years of college graduates owing more than $26,000. How many people are on track here for $26,000?

And that doesn't just hold back our young graduates, it holds back our entire middle class because Americans now owe more on our student loans than we do on our credit cards. And those payments can last for years, even decades, which means that young people are putting off buying their first car or their first house—the things that grow our economy and create new jobs. And I've said this before, I know this first hand, Michelle and I, we did not finish paying off our student loans until about 9 years ago. And our student loans cost more than our mortgage. Right when we wanted to start saving for Sasha and Malia's college education, we were still paying off our own college education.

And we were lucky. We had more resources than many. So we cannot price the middle class—or folks who are willing to work hard to get into the middle class—out of a college education. We can't keep saddling young people with more and more and more debt, just as they're starting out in life.

Now, the good news is, over the past 4 years, my administration has done a lot to address this. Working with Members of Congress, we've expanded student aid. We've reformed the student loan system. We've saved tens of billions of taxpayer dollars that were just going to big banks and made sure that the money went to helping more young people afford college.

We made it easier to pay back those loans by passing a law that says you'll only have to pay 10 percent of your monthly income towards your student—Federal student loans once you graduate. This is important to emphasize, by the way, because a lot of your peers, a lot of young people don't know this. Under existing law that we passed, you never have to pay more than 10 percent of your income in paying back your Federal student loans, which means if you want to be a teacher, you want to go into a profession that does not pay a lot of money, but

gives you a lot of satisfaction, you are still capable of doing that and supporting yourself.

We unveiled a new college scorecard that gives parents and students the clear, concise information that you need to shop around for a school with the best value for you. And I've made it clear that those colleges that don't do enough to keep college costs down should get less taxpayer support.

So we're doing what we can, but here's the thing: If Congress doesn't act by July 1, Federal student loan rates are set to double. And that means that the average student with these loans will rack up an additional $1,000 in debt. That's like a $1,000 tax hike. I assume most of you cannot afford that. Anybody here can afford that? No.

Now, if this sounds like déjà vu all over again, that's because it is. We went through this last summer. Some of you were here. It wasn't as hot. [*Laughter*] I don't think we did this event outside. [*Laughter*] But we went through this. And eventually, Congress listened to all the parents and young people who said, don't double my rate. And because folks made their voices heard, Congress acted to keep interest rates low. But they only did it for a year, and that year is almost up.

So the test here is simple: We've got to make sure that Federal student loan rates don't double on July 1. Now, the House of Representatives has already passed a student loan bill, and I'm glad that they took action. But unfortunately, their bill does not meet that test. It fails to lock in low rates for students next year. That's not smart. It eliminates safeguards for lower income families. That's not fair. It could actually cost a freshman starting school this fall more over the next 4 years than if we did nothing at all and let the interest rates double on July 1.

So the House bill isn't smart, and it's not fair. I'm glad the House is paying attention to it, but they didn't do it in the right way. So I'm asking young people to get involved and make your voices heard once again. Last year, you convinced 186 Republicans in the House and 24 Republicans in the Senate to work with Democrats to keep student loan rates low. You made something bipartisan happen in this town that is—that's a powerful thing. You guys were able to get Democrats and Republicans to vote for something that was important.

So this year, if it looks like your representatives have changed their minds, you're going to have to call them up again or e-mail them again or tweet them again and ask them what happened—what changed? You're still taking out these loans. You're still facing challenges.

Remind them that we're a people who help one another earn an education, because it benefits all of us. During the Civil War, Lincoln had the foresight to set up a system of land-grant colleges. At the end of World War II, we set up the GI bill so that people like my grandfather could come back from a war and get an education. All these things created the greatest middle class on Earth.

My mom, a single mom, was able to get the support that she needed through loans and grants—even while she was also working and raising two kids—to get her degrees. I'm only here, Michelle is only right over there on the East Wing, because we got great educations. We didn't come from privilege. And we want to make sure that the next generation has those same opportunities, because that has been good for the country as a whole.

It's up to us now to carry forward that tradition. Higher education cannot be a luxury for a privileged few. It is an economic necessity that every family should be able to afford, every young person with dreams and ambition should be able to access. And now is not the time for us to turn back on young people. Now is not the time to slash the investments that help us grow. Now is the time to reaffirm our commitment to you and the generation that's coming behind you, and that if we work together to generate more jobs and educate more kids and open up new opportunities for everybody who's willing to work and willing to push through those doors of opportunity, America can't be stopped. All right?

So I'm putting my faith in you. Let's work together. Let's get this done by July 1. Thank you everybody. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:26 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng. He also referred to H.R. 1911.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
May 31, 2013

President Obama. Well, it's a great pleasure once again to welcome our Secretary of NATO, Anders Rasmussen. He has been an extraordinary partner for us and, I believe, a great leader for NATO.

Over the last several years, he has helped to orchestrate a very successful Lisbon summit, a very successful Chicago summit. And in between, he has been able to mobilize and activate NATO members to take a whole host of actions that have resulted in a more secure world and has helped to underscore the importance of this alliance in the 21st century as a baseline whereby the United States and other member nations achieve security for their people. And so I'm very grateful for his extraordinary service.

We had an excellent discussion today focused on a number of issues that are of concern to all NATO members and are of great concern to the United States. Obviously, at the top of our list was Afghanistan, where the international coalition that has worked alongside our U.S. troops has achieved significant progress. And we are now looking over the next several weeks to a new milestone, one that was set in Chicago, where we are transitioning to Afghan lead for combat operations in Afghanistan and NATO members and ISAF members will be shifting into a train, assist, and advise mode.

We've seen great progress in the Afghan National Security Forces. We want to continue those—that progress. And central to that will be those NATO members, who are contributing, continuing to work effectively with their Afghan counterparts so that moving into next year, we have a successful Afghan election and we continue transition until the end of 2014 whereby our combat roles will be completed.

We had an opportunity to discuss not only the planning for the next year and a half, but also what kinds of steps we could take post-2014 to continue to ensure that Afghan security forces are effective and can control their own borders and that NATO members can be assured that Afghanistan will not be used as a base for terrorism in the future.

And what we've agreed to is that in order for us facilitate this entire process, that it would be appropriate for us to have another NATO summit next year. And so Secretary Rasmussen will be working diligently, as he always does, to identify a host country and to plan for a 2014 NATO summit, at which time not only will we be able to underscore this final chapter in our Afghan operations, but also to paint a picture of the future whereby we're partnering with the Afghan Government on behalf of the Afghan people and on behalf of world security.

In addition to talking about Afghanistan, we also discussed the importance of continuing to improve NATO defense capabilities in a new world with new threats. And Anders has taken the lead talking with all the NATO members about how we start building up greater and greater capacity and integration. That requires burden-sharing on the part of all NATO members. It means that even during times of austerity, that we work smarter together to ensure that we can meet and are prepared for any threats that may arise, whether it is improving our joint surveillance capabilities or addressing new threats like cybersecurity.

And because of Anders's leadership, I think we've made real progress on this front. One of the goals of a 2014 NATO summit would be to lock in some of the progress that's already been made into a set of commitments that are clearly understood by all the NATO members, and I very much appreciate the work that Anders has done on that front.

We had a chance to talk about Libya, where we obviously had a very successful NATO operation to liberate Libya from a decades-long dictatorship. We now have a Libyan Government that is in a transition process. And part of where we think we can be helpful is to assure that a democratically elected Libyan Government has the capacity to control its borders, to ensure that it does not become a safe haven for terrorism. And I think NATO has an important role to play on that front, and I know that Secretary Rasmussen recently met with the Prime Minister of Libya and had discussions about how we could provide assistance.

We are very supportive of those efforts because we think it's critical that we have strong partners in places like North Africa that are able to meet the security needs of their own people, but are also working with the international community to meet the security needs of all of us.

And finally, I congratulated Anders on the excellent work that was done to achieve an agreement with respect to the Kosovo situation that has the potential to be historic and indicates the degree to which NATO forces in that region continue to play a very important role in underwriting the security of people who historically, obviously, have been racked by all sorts of conflict and violence. And we're very supportive of those efforts.

It's one more example of the kind of leadership that Secretary Rasmussen has shown during the course of his tenure. We appreciate the fact that he has extended that tenure longer than he and his family originally anticipated, but we're all very fortunate that he's taken on this assignment. And I look forward to continuing productive work with him and his entire team at NATO over the next year of the—of his service.

Thank you very much, Anders.

Secretary General Rasmussen. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind words. Thank you for your support. Thank you for your strong commitment to a strong NATO.

NATO brings together 28 nations that share the same values: freedom, democracy, the rule of law. And those 28 nations offer a pool of forces and capabilities that is second to none. After almost two decades of operations, our forces are stronger and more experienced than ever. And in these tough economic times, NATO's collective and multilateral defense is far more effective and far more efficient than any individual national capability. Through NATO, you get more value for money; you get more security for money.

Now, our main operation is our ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Our goal is in sight. Soon, we will reach an important milestone. The Afghans will take the lead for security across the country. Our troops will move into a support role. By the end of 2014, our combat mission will be completed, our combat troops will return home, the Afghan security forces will take full responsibility for the security, but we will still be there to train, advise, and assist.

And to that end, we are now preparing a training mission to be established from 2015. It will be a very different mission: a noncombat mission with a significantly lower number of troops and trainers. So we are determinedly moving towards our goal: an Afghanistan that can stand on its own feet. But the Afghans will not stand alone. We are prepared for an enduring partnership with the Afghan people.

As we draw down our operations, we will enhance the modernization of our defense to ensure effective protection of our populations against new and emerging security threats and challenges. That's why we are building a NATO missile defense, strengthening cybersecurity, and we will step up joint military exercises, training, and education to maintain and further develop our ability to work and operate together.

Today the President and I have discussed this vision of change from a deployed NATO to a prepared NATO. And we look very much forward to further outlining and discussing this shared mission with NATO allies at a summit in 2014.

President Obama. Thank you, sir.

Secretary General Rasmussen. Yes, thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ali Zaydan of Libya.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting Designations Under the Kingpin Act
May 31, 2013

Dear _____:

This report to the Congress, under section 804(a) of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, 21 U.S.C. 1903(b)(1) (the "Kingpin Act"), transmits my designations of the following six foreign individuals and groups as appropriate for sanctions under the Kingpin Act and reports my direction of sanctions against them under the Act:

Mihael Karner (Slovenia)
Haji Khotwal Noorzai (Afghanistan)
Luis Fernando Sanchez Arellano (Mexico)
Los Caballeros Templarios (Mexico)
Los Urabeños (Colombia)
Los Cachiros (Honduras)

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Carl M. Levin, chairman, and James M. Inhofe, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Max S. Baucus, chairman, and Orrin G. Hatch, ranking member, Senate Committee on Finance; Robert Menendez, chairman, and Robert P. Corker, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Patrick J. Leahy, chairman, and Charles E. Grassley, ranking member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary; Dianne Feinstein, chair, and Saxby Chambliss, vice chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, chairman, and Adam Smith, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; Edward R. Royce, chairman, and Eliot L. Engel, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Robert W. Goodlatte, chairman, and John Conyers, Jr., ranking member, House Committee on the Judiciary; Michael J. Rogers, chairman, and C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger, ranking member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; and David L. Camp, chairman, and Sander M. Levin, ranking member, House Committee on Ways and Means. The related memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
June 1, 2013

Hi, everybody. Over the past 4½ years, we've been fighting our way back from an economic crisis and punishing recession that cost millions of Americans their jobs, their homes, and the sense of security they'd worked so hard to build.

But thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, our businesses have now created nearly 7 million new jobs over the past 38 months. An auto industry that was flatlining is once again the heartbeat of American manufacturing, with Americans buying more cars than we have in 5 years. Within the next few months, we're projected to begin producing more of our own crude oil at home than we buy from other countries, the first time that's happened in 16 years.

Deficits that were growing for years are now shrinking at the fastest rate in decades. The rise of health care costs is slowing too. And a housing market that was in tatters is showing new signs of real strength. Sales are rising, foreclosures are declining, construction is expanding, and home prices that are rising at the

fastest rate in nearly 7 years are helping a lot of families breathe a lot easier.

Now we need to do more. This week, my administration announced that we're extending a program to help more responsible families modify their mortgages so they can stay in their homes. But to keep our housing market and our economy growing, Congress needs to step up and do its part. Members of Congress will be coming back next week for an important month of work. We've got to keep this progress going until middle class families start regaining that sense of security. And we can't let partisan politics get in the way.

Congress should pass a law giving every responsible homeowner the chance to save about $3,000 a year on their mortgage by refinancing at historically low interest rates. Congress should put more Americans to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, like the one that collapsed last week in Washington State. We'd all be safer, and the unemployment rate would fall faster.

And Congress should fix our broken immigration system by passing commonsense reform that continues to strengthen our borders, hold employers accountable, and provides a pathway to earned citizenship and also modernizes our legal immigration system so that we're reuniting families and attracting the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers who will help our economy grow.

So there are a lot of reasons to feel optimistic about where we're headed as a country, especially after all we've fought through together. We've just got to keep going, because we've got more good jobs to create. We've got more kids to educate. We've got more doors of opportunity to open for anyone who's willing to work hard enough to walk through those doors.

And if we work together, I'm as confident as I've ever been that we'll get to where we need to be.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:50 p.m. on May 31 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on June 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 31, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 1.

Remarks at the National Conference on Mental Health
June 3, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you so much. Welcome to the White House. And thank you, Janelle, for that introduction and sharing your story and making such a difference through your organization. We're really proud to have you here.

I want to thank Secretary Sebelius, Secretary Arne Duncan, Secretary Ric Shinseki for their leadership and helping to organize this event. And I also want to acknowledge some outstanding Members of Congress who are here and who care deeply about this issue.

And finally, I want to thank all of you for participating in this National Conference on Mental Health. We wanted to bring together folks who've suffered from mental illness and families who've supported them. We wanted to bring together advocates and educators, faith leaders, veterans, local officials.

All of you have shown an extraordinary commitment to what is a critical goal, and that is to make sure that people aren't suffering in silence and that we have the capacity to pull together all the resources and support and love that's out there to go after an extraordinary challenge in our society.

The main goal of this conference is not to start a conversation; so many of you have spent decades waging long and lonely battles to be heard. Instead, it's about elevating that conversation to a national level and bringing mental illness out of the shadows.

We want to let people living with mental health challenges know that they are not alone, and we've got to be making sure that we're committed to support those fellow Americans,

because struggling with a mental illness or caring for someone who does can be isolating. And I think everybody here who's experienced this—the issue in one way or another understands that. It begins to feel as if not only are you alone, but that you shouldn't burden others with the challenge, and the darkness, day in, day out—what some call a cloud that you just can't seem to escape—begins to close in.

The truth is, in any given year, one in five adults experience a mental illness—one in five. Forty-five million Americans suffer from things like depression or anxiety, schizophrenia or PTSD. Young people are affected at a similar rate. So we all know somebody—a family member, a friend, a neighbor—who has struggled or will struggle with mental health issues at some point in their lives. Michelle and I have both known people who have battled severe depression over the years, people we love. And oftentimes, those who seek treatment go on to lead happy, healthy, productive lives.

So we know that recovery is possible, we know help is available, and yet, as a society, we often think about mental health differently than other forms of health. You see commercials on TV about a whole array of physical health issues, some of them very personal. [*Laughter*] And yet we whisper about mental health issues and avoid asking too many questions.

And the brain is a body part too; we just know less about it. And there should be no shame in discussing or seeking help for treatable illnesses that affect too many people that we love. We've got to get rid of that embarrassment; we've got to get rid of that stigma. Too many Americans who struggle with mental health illnesses are still suffering in silence rather than seeking help, and we need to see it that men and women who would never hesitate to go see a doctor if they had a broken arm or came down with the flu, that they have that same attitude when it comes to their mental health.

And we see it in veterans who come home from the battlefield with the invisible wounds of war, but who feel somehow that seeking treatment is a sign of weakness, when in fact it's a sign of strength. We see it in parents who would do anything for their kids, but who often fight their mental health battle alone, afraid that reaching out would somehow reflect badly on them.

We see it in the tragedies that we have the power to prevent. And I want to be absolutely clear: The overwhelming majority of people who suffer from mental illnesses are not violent. They will never pose a threat to themselves or others. And there are a whole lot of violent people with no diagnosable mental health issues. But we also know that most suicides each year involve someone with a mental health or substance abuse disorder. And in some cases, when a condition goes untreated, it can lead to tragedy on a larger scale.

We can do something about stories like these. Many cases, treatment is available and effective. We can help people who suffer from a mental illness continue to be great colleagues, great friends, the people we love. We can take out some pain and give them a new sense of hope. But it requires all of us to act. And there are a few ways we can do our part.

First, we've got to do a better job recognizing mental health issues in our children and making it easier for Americans of all ages to seek help. Today, less than 40 percent of people with mental illness receive treatment—less than 40 percent. Even though three-quarters of mental illnesses emerge by the end of—by the age of 24, only about half of children with mental health problems receive treatment. Now, think about it: We wouldn't accept it if only 40 percent of Americans with cancers got treatment. And we wouldn't accept it if only half of young people with diabetes got help. Why should we accept it when it comes to mental health? It doesn't make any sense.

But the good news is, there are plenty of groups that are stepping up to change that. So a former colleague of mine, Gordon Smith, a former Republican Senator, lost his son to suicide 10 years ago. And I remember him speaking so eloquently about it. Gordon is now the head of the National Association of Broadcasters, and today the National Association of Broadcasters is announcing a new campaign

designed to change attitudes about mental illness through TV ads and social media, because Gordon doesn't want other parents to go through the agonizing loss that he's endured. So we thank you, Gordon, for that great work.

You've got secondary school principals who are holding assemblies on mental health. You've got organizations like the YMCA who are volunteering to train staff to recognize the signs of depression and other mental illnesses in our young people. You got leaders from different faith communities who are getting their congregations involved. And dozens of other organizations have today made similar commitments, so we've very thankful to all of you.

There are other people who are leading by example. My great friend, Patrick Kennedy, when he was running for reelection back in 2006, he could have avoided talking about his struggles with bipolar disorder and addiction. Let's face it, he's a Kennedy. You know. [*Laughter*] He was—his seat was pretty safe. Everybody loved him. And yet Patrick used his experience as a way to connect and to lift up these issues, not hide from them.

And one day, a woman came up to Patrick at a senior center and told him she was afraid to tell her friends she was taking medication for a mental illness because they—she was worried they might treat her differently. She told Patrick, "You're the only one who knows aside from my son." And so Patrick started realizing how much power there could be for people to speak out on these issues. And Patrick carried these stories back with him to Washington, where he worked with a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including his dad, to make sure the mental health services you get through your insurance plan at work are covered the same way that physical health services are. A huge victory. So—[*applause*].

So because of Patrick's efforts and the colleagues who worked with him, it's easier for millions of people to join him on the road to recovery, which brings me to a second point. It's not enough to help more Americans seek treatment, we also have to make sure that the treatment is there when they're ready to seek it.

For years now, our mental health system has struggled to serve people who depend on it. That's why, under the Affordable Care Act, we're expanding mental health and substance abuse benefits for more than 60 million Americans. And new health insurance plans are required to cover things like depression screenings for adults and behavioral assessments for children. And beginning next year, insurance companies will no longer be able to deny anybody coverage because of a preexisting mental health condition.

We're also investing in science and basic research to make it easier to diagnose and treat disease early. And earlier this year, I announced an ambitious initiative to develop tools for mapping the human brain, which could help scientists and researchers unlock the answers to conditions that affect mental health.

We're also doing more to support our troops and our veterans who are suffering from things like traumatic brain disorder—or traumatic brain injury or PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder. Today, we lose 22 veterans a day to suicide—22. We've got to do a better job than that, of preventing these all too often silent tragedies. That's why we've poured an enormous amount of resources into high-quality care and better treatment for our troops.

And today, under Ric Shinseki's leadership, the VA is going even further. They're partnering with 24 communities in 9 States to help reduce wait times for veterans seeking mental health care. And they're—they've met their goal of hiring 1,600 new mental health providers, which means this summer, they're going to hold more than 150 summits like this one in communities all across the country so that every one of our servicemembers and veterans understand: Just like you take care of yourselves and each other on the battlefield, you've got to do the same thing off the battlefield. That's part of being strong.

For many people who suffer from a mental illness, recovery can be challenging. But what helps more than anything, what gives so many of our friends and loved ones strength, is the knowledge that you are not alone. You're not

alone. You're surrounded by people who care about you and who will support you on the journey to get well. We're here for you.

And that's what this conference is about. That's why these issues are so important. So if there's anybody out there who's listening, if you're struggling, seek help.

Audience member. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. You're welcome. If you know somebody who is struggling, help them reach out. Remember the family members who shoulder their own burdens and needs our support as well. And more than anything, let people who are suffering in silence know that recovery is possible. They're not alone. There's hope. There's possibility. And that's what all of you represent with the extraordinary advocacy and work that you've already done.

So thank you all for being here. Let's do everything we can to help our fellow Americans heal and thrive. And now I'd like to turn it over to Secretary Sebelius, who will be leading our opening panel. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Janelle Montano, speaker, Active Minds, Inc.; and former Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy.

Statement on the Death of Senator Frank R. Lautenberg
June 3, 2013

Michelle and I were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Senator Frank Lautenberg, a proud New Jerseyan who lived America's promise as a citizen and fought to keep that promise alive as a Senator.

The son of working class immigrants, Frank joined the Army during World War II, went to college on the GI bill, and cofounded one of America's most successful companies. First elected to the Senate in 1982, he improved the lives of countless Americans with his commitment to our Nation's health and safety, from improving our public transportation to protecting citizens from gun violence, to ensuring that members of our military and their families get the care they deserve. Michelle and I extend our deepest condolences to Bonnie, the Lautenberg family, and the people of New Jersey, whom Frank served so well.

NOTE: The statement referred to Bonnie Englebardt Lautenberg, wife of Sen. Lautenberg.

Message to the Congress on Authorizing Additional Sanctions With Respect to Iran
June 3, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") that takes additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12957 of March 15, 1995, and implements certain statutory requirements of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (subtitle D of title XII of Public Law 112–239) (22 U.S.C. 8801 *et seq.*) (IFCA), which amends the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–195) (22 U.S.C. 8501 *et seq.*) (CISADA).

In Executive Order 12957, the President found that the actions and policies of the Government of Iran threaten the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. To deal with that threat, the President declared a national emergency and imposed prohibitions on certain transactions with respect to the development of Iranian petroleum

resources. To further respond to that threat, Executive Order 12959 of May 6, 1995, imposed comprehensive trade and financial sanctions on Iran. Executive Order 13059 of August 19, 1997, consolidated and clarified the previous orders. To take additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12957 and to implement section 105(a) of CISADA, I issued Executive Order 13553 on September 28, 2010, to impose sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran and other persons acting on behalf of the Government of Iran determined to be responsible for or complicit in certain serious human rights abuses.

To take additional steps with respect to the threat posed by Iran and to provide implementing authority for a number of the sanctions set forth in the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172) (50 U.S.C. 1701 note) (ISA), as amended by CISADA, I issued Executive Order 13574 on May 23, 2011, to authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to implement certain sanctions imposed by the Secretary of State pursuant to ISA, as amended by CISADA. I also issued Executive Order 13590 on November 20, 2011, to take additional steps with respect to this emergency by authorizing the Secretary of State to impose sanctions on persons providing certain goods, services, technology, or support that contribute either to Iran's development of petroleum resources or to Iran's production of petrochemicals, and to authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to implement some of those sanctions. On February 5, 2012, in order to take further steps pursuant to this emergency, and to implement section 1245(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (Public Law 112–81) (22 U.S.C. 8513a), I issued Executive Order 13599 blocking the property of the Government of Iran, all Iranian financial institutions, and persons determined to be owned or controlled by, or acting for or on behalf of, such parties. On April 22, 2012, and May 1, 2012, I issued Executive Orders 13606 and 13608, respectively. Executive Orders 13606 and 13608 each take additional steps with respect to various emergencies, including the emergency declared in Executive Order 12957 concerning Iran, to address the use of computer and information technology to commit serious human rights abuses and efforts by foreign persons to evade sanctions.

To take additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12957, I issued Executive Order 13622 of July 30, 2012, imposing further sanctions in light of the Government of Iran's use of revenues from petroleum, petroleum products, and petrochemicals for illicit purposes; Iran's continued attempts to evade international sanctions through deceptive practices; and the unacceptable risk posed to the international financial system by Iran's activities.

Most recently, I issued Executive Order 13628 of October 9, 2012, to take additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12957 and to implement certain statutory requirements of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–158) (22 U.S.C. 8701 *et seq.*) (TRA), including its amendments to the statutory requirements of ISA and CISADA.

With respect to the order that I have just issued, section 1 of the order authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to impose financial sanctions on or to block all property and interests in property that are in the United States, that come within the United States, or that are or come within the possession or control of any United States person (including any foreign branch) of a foreign financial institution determined to have, on or after the effective date of the order:

- knowingly conducted or facilitated any significant transaction related to the purchase or sale of Iranian rials or a derivative, swap, future, forward, or other similar contract whose value is based on the exchange rate of the Iranian rial; or
- maintained significant funds or accounts outside the territory of Iran denominated in the Iranian rial.

Section 2 of the order authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to block all property and interests in property that are in the United States, that come within the United States, or that are or come within the possession or control of any United States person (including any foreign branch) of any person upon determining:

- that the person has materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, any Iranian person included on the list of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons maintained by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (SDN List) (other than an Iranian depository institution whose property and interests in property are blocked solely pursuant to Executive Order 13599) or any other person included on the SDN List whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this paragraph or Executive Order 13599 (other than an Iranian depository institution whose property and interests in property are blocked solely pursuant to Executive Order 13599); or
- pursuant to authority delegated by the President and in accordance with the terms of such delegation, that sanctions shall be imposed on such person pursuant to section 1244(c)(1)(A) of IFCA.

Section 3 of the order authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to impose financial sanctions on a foreign financial institution determined to have knowingly conducted or facilitated any significant financial transaction:

- on behalf of any Iranian person included on the SDN List (other than an Iranian depository institution whose property and interests in property are blocked solely pursuant to Executive Order 13599) or any other person included on the SDN List whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to subsection 2(a)(i) of the order or Executive Order 13599 (other than an Iranian depository institution whose property and interests in property are blocked solely pursuant to Executive Order 13599); or
- on or after the effective date of the order, for the sale, supply, or transfer to Iran of significant goods or services used in connection with the automotive sector of Iran.

Section 5 of the order authorizes the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the United States Trade Representative, and with the President of the Export-Import Bank, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and other agencies and officials as appropriate, to impose sanctions on a person upon determining that the person:

- on or after the effective date of the order, knowingly engaged in a significant transaction for the sale, supply, or transfer to Iran of significant goods or services used in connection with the automotive sector of Iran;
- is a successor entity to a person determined to meet that criterion;
- owns or controls a person determined to meet that criterion, and had knowledge that the person engaged in the activities referred to therein; or
- is owned or controlled by, or under common ownership or control with, a person determined to meet that criterion, and knowingly participated in the activities therein.

Sections 6 and 7 of the order provide that, for persons determined to meet any of these criteria, the heads of the relevant agencies, in consultation with the Secretary of State, shall implement the sanctions imposed by the Secretary of State. Those sanctions may include the following actions:

- the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank shall deny approval of the issuance of any guarantee, insurance, extension of credit, or participation in an extension of credit in connection with the export of any goods or services to the sanctioned person;
- agencies shall not issue any specific license or grant any other specific permission or authority under any statute that requires the prior review and approval of the United States Government as a condition for the export or reexport of goods or technology to the sanctioned person;
- for a sanctioned person that is a financial institution: the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York shall take such actions as they deem appropriate, including denying designation, or terminating the continuation of any prior designation of, the sanctioned person as a primary dealer in United States Government debt instruments; or agencies shall prevent the sanctioned person from serving as an agent of the United States Government or serving as a repository for United States Government funds;
- agencies shall not procure, or enter into a contract for the procurement of, any goods or services from the sanctioned person;
- the Secretary of State shall deny a visa to, and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall exclude from the United States, any alien that the Secretary of State determines is a corporate officer or principal of, or a shareholder with a controlling interest in, a sanctioned person;
- the heads of the relevant agencies, as appropriate, shall impose on the principal executive officer or officers, or persons performing similar functions and with similar authorities, of a sanctioned person any of the sanctions described above, as selected by the Secretary of State;
- the Secretary of the Treasury shall take actions where necessary to:
  - prohibit any United States financial institution from making loans or providing credits to the sanctioned person totaling more than $10,000,000 in any 12-month period, unless such person is engaged in activities to relieve human suffering and the loans or credits are provided for such activities;
  - prohibit any transactions in foreign exchange that are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and in which the sanctioned person has any interest;
  - prohibit any transfers of credit or payments between financial institutions or by, through, or to any financial institution, to the extent that such transfers or payments are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and involve any interest of the sanctioned person;
  - block all property and interests in property that are in the United States, that come within the United States, or that are or come within the possession or control of any United States person, (including any foreign branch) of the sanctioned person, and provide that such property and interests in property may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in;
  - prohibit any United States person from investing in or purchasing significant amounts of equity or debt instruments of a sanctioned person;
  - restrict or prohibit imports of goods, technology, or services, directly or indirectly, into the United States from the sanctioned person; or
  - impose on the principal executive officer or officers, or persons performing similar functions and with similar authorities, of a sanctioned person any of the sanctions described above, as appropriate.

Section 7 of the order also provides that, when the Secretary of State or the Secretary of the Treasury pursuant to authority delegated by the President and in accordance with the terms of such delegation, has determined that sanctions shall be imposed on a person pursuant to sections 1244(d)(1)(A), 1245(a)(1), or 1246(a)(1) of IFCA (including in each case as informed by section 1253(c)(2) of IFCA), such Secretary may select one or more of the sanctions described above for which the Secretary of the Treasury shall take such action, and the Secretary of the Treasury shall take actions where necessary to implement those sanctions.

Sections 8 and 11 of the order implement the statutory requirements of CISADA, as amended by section 1249 of IFCA. They authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to block all property and interests in property that are in the United States, that come within the United States, or that are or come within the possession or control of any United States person (including any foreign branch), and the Secretary of State to suspend entry into the United States, of persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with or at the recommendation of the Secretary of State:

- to have engaged, on or after January 2, 2013, in corruption or other activities relating to the diversion of goods, including agricultural commodities, food, medicine, and medical devices, intended for the people of Iran;
- to have engaged, on or after January 2, 2013, in corruption or other activities relating to the misappropriation of proceeds from the sale or resale of goods described above;
- to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, the activities described above or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to these provisions; or
- to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to these provisions.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA, as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order, other than the purposes described in sections 5, 6, and 11 of the order. All agencies of the United States Government are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

The order, a copy of which is enclosed, becomes effective at 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time on July 1, 2013.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 3, 2013.

NOTE: The related Executive order and memorandum are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Memorandum on the Emergency Leave Transfer Program for Federal Employees Adversely Affected by the Severe Storms and Tornadoes in Oklahoma
June 3, 2013

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Emergency Leave Transfer Program for Federal Employees Adversely Affected by the Severe Storms and Tornadoes in Oklahoma

I am deeply saddened by the devastating losses caused by the severe storms and

tornadoes in Oklahoma and their aftermath. The Federal Government has mobilized to respond to this major disaster, and many Federal employees are dealing with overwhelming personal losses.

To further assist Federal employees and their family members adversely affected by the storms and tornadoes in Oklahoma, I hereby direct the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish an emergency leave transfer program, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 6391. The program will permit employees in the executive and judicial branches, or an agency leave bank established under 5 U.S.C. 6363, to donate unused annual leave for transfer to employees of the same or other agencies (or the judicial branch) who were adversely affected by the storms and tornadoes in Oklahoma and who need additional time off for recovery. I further direct OPM to provide additional guidance to agencies on the program's administration.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks on the Nominations of Patricia A. Millett, Cornelia T.L. "Nina" Pillard, and Robert L. Wilkins To Be Judges on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

June 4, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat.

So one of the most important responsibilities of a President is to nominate qualified men and women to serve as judges on the Federal bench.

And Congress has a responsibility as well. The Senate is tasked with providing advice and consent. They can approve a President's nominee, or they can reject a President's nominee. But they have a constitutional duty to promptly consider judicial nominees for confirmation.

Now, throughout my first term as President, the Senate too often failed to do that. Time and again, congressional Republicans cynically used Senate rules and procedures to delay and even block qualified nominees from coming to a full vote.

As a result, my judicial nominees have waited three times longer to receive confirmation votes than those of my Republican predecessor. Let me repeat that: My nominees have taken three times longer to receive confirmation votes than those of my Republican predecessor. These individuals that I nominate are qualified. When they were given an up-or-down vote in the Senate—when they were finally given an up-or-down vote in the Senate—every one of them was confirmed. So this is not about principled opposition, this is about political obstruction.

I recognize that neither party has a perfect track record here. Democrats weren't completely blameless when I was in the Senate. But what's happening now is unprecedented. For the good of the American people, it has to stop. Too much of the people's business is at stake. Our legal framework depends on timely confirmations of judicial nominees. And nowhere is this more apparent than with the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

The DC Circuit is known as the second highest court in the country, and there's a good reason for that. The judges on the DC Circuit routinely have the final say on a broad range of cases involving everything from national security to environmental policy, from questions of campaign finance to workers' rights. In other words, the court's decisions impact almost every aspect of our lives.

There are 11 seats on the DC Circuit Court. When I first took office, there were two vacancies. Since then, two more judges have retired. That means there are four vacancies that needed to be filled. And by February of this year, more than one-third of the seats on the Nation's second highest court were empty. I mean, imagine if a third of the seats on the highest court—the Supreme Court—were

empty. We would rightly consider that a judicial crisis. If we want to ensure a fair and functioning judiciary, our courts cannot be short staffed.

Now, in 2010, I put forward a highly qualified nominee for the DC Circuit: Caitlin Halligan. Caitlin's credentials were beyond question. She had bipartisan support from the legal and law enforcement communities. She had the support of a majority of Senators. Nobody suggested she was not qualified to serve on the court. If Caitlin had gotten a simple up-or-down vote before the full Senate, I am confident she would have been easily confirmed. But instead, for 2½ years, Senate Republicans blocked her nominations. It had nothing to do with Caitlin's qualifications. It was all about politics. And after 2½ years of languishing in limbo, this brilliant and principled lawyer asked me to withdraw her nomination.

Now, the good news is, last year, I put forward another highly qualified nominee: Sri Srinivasan. And Sri's credentials were also beyond question. And no doubt due to some mounting public pressure, along with the vocal bipartisan support that he received, Sri was unanimously confirmed a few weeks ago, becoming the first South Asian American to serve as a Circuit Court judge in our Nation's history.

So I'm pleased that the Senate acted. I'm glad Republicans chose not to play politics and obstruct Sri's nomination the way they did with Caitlin's. And I'm hopeful that we can now build on that progress, because Sri's confirmation was the first to the DC Circuit in 7 years. So out of the four vacancies that existed, one has now been filled. There are three seats still vacant on the DC Circuit Court—one of them, by the way—one of them has been vacant since Chief Justice Roberts was elevated to the Supreme Court in 2005. Anybody who values the role of our courts should find that unacceptable regardless of your party, which brings me to today. That's why today I'm nominating three outstanding, highly qualified individuals to fill those remaining seats.

Now, Patricia Millett is one of our Nation's finest appellate attorneys and, until recently, held the record for the most Supreme Court arguments by a female lawyer. She served in the Solicitor General's Office for 11 years for both Democratic and Republican Presidents. Since then, in private practice, she's represented everyone from large businesses to individual pro bono plaintiffs. And by the way, as the wife of a retired Navy officer, Patricia has served our Nation outside the courtroom, as well, as a member of a military family.

Nina Pillard's career has been defined by an unshakeable commitment to the public good. She twice served in the Department of Justice and was an attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. Her landmark successes before the Supreme Court include defending the constitutionality of the Family and Medical Leave Act and opening the doors of the Virginia Military Institute to female students. And today, Nina is a professor at Georgetown and, if confirmed, would continue the DC Circuit's strong tradition of distinguished scholars going on to serve as judges, from Antonin Scalia to Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

And finally, this is the second time I've called on Judge Robert Wilkins to serve, because in 2010, I nominated Robert to the DC District Court, and the Senate confirmed him without opposition. Before serving with distinction as a Federal judge, Robert spent 8 years in private practice and a decade as a public defender here in Washington, DC, providing legal representation to defendants who could not afford an attorney. And throughout his career, Robert has distinguished himself as a principled attorney of the utmost integrity.

So these three individuals are highly qualified to serve on the DC Circuit. They have broad bipartisan support from across the legal community. The nonpartisan American Bar Association have given them—each of them—its highest rating. These are no slouches. [*Laughter*] These are no hacks. These are incredibly accomplished lawyers by all accounts. And there are Members of Congress here today who are ready to move forward with these nominations, including the Chairman, Patrick Leahy. So there's no reason—aside from politics—for Republicans to block these individuals from getting an up-or-down vote.

Despite that, some Republicans recently have suggested that by nominating these three individuals, I'm somehow engaging in—and I'm quoting here—in "court-packing." [*Laughter*] No, I—people laugh, but this is an argument I've made. For those of you who are familiar with the history of court-packing, that involved Franklin Delano Roosevelt trying to add additional seats to the Supreme Court in order to water down and get more support for his political agenda. We're not adding seats here. We're trying to fill seats that are already existing. Each of the past five Presidents has seen at least three of their nominees confirmed to the DC Circuit. Since I've been President, obstruction has slowed that down to one.

Right now there are three open seats on a critical court. I didn't create these seats. I didn't just wake up one day and say, let's add three seats to the District Court of Appeals. These are open seats. And the Constitution demands that I nominate qualified individuals to fill those seats. What I am doing today is my job. I need the Senate to do its job.

The fact that Republican Senators are now pushing a proposal to reduce the number of judges on this independent Federal court also makes no sense. When a Republican was President, 11 judges on the DC Circuit Court made complete sense. Now that a Democrat is President, it apparently doesn't. Eight is suddenly enough. [*Laughter*] People are laughing because it's obviously a blatant political move.

We know that because some of the same Republicans behind this current proposal to reduce the number of seats on the DC Circuit Court voted in 2007 to keep 11 judges on the DC Circuit, same folks. They say the workload has decreased since then, but in April, the Judicial Conference of the United States—which, by the way, is led by Chief Justice John Roberts and includes judges from various levels of the Federal court system—told the Senate that the current workload before the DC Circuit requires 11 judges. So they should know. That was just 2 months ago.

Chief Justice John Roberts, the Chief Justice of the highest court in the land and former member of the DC Circuit Court, says they need 11 judges. So it's important we don't play games here, and it's important that we cut through the verbiage.

An essential part of our democracy is the separation of powers. The executive, the legislative, and the judiciary each have a role to play. And when it comes to judicial nominees, my responsibility is to put forward qualified individuals. These are threeof the most qualified individuals you'll ever meet. The Senate's responsibility in turn is to promptly give them an up or down vote.

So today I'm doing my part. I hope in the coming months that the Senate does its part, because I assure you, when these three outstanding individuals are on the bench, they will do their part. That's what the Constitution demands. It's what the American people expect. And I look forward to years of outstanding service by these outstanding lawyers of incredible integrity.

And I promised that I would mention this to—before all of you: They also have really good-looking families. [*Laughter*] Because I just saw their kids and—[*applause*]. All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:28 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Chief Judge David B. Sentelle and former Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit; and Robert King, husband of Judge-designate Millett.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Sebastian Piñera Echenique of Chile

June 4, 2013

President Obama. I want to welcome President Piñera and his delegation to the Oval Office. It gives me an opportunity to return the extraordinary hospitality that they showed during my visit to Santiago and the wonderful warmth that the Chilean people extended to me and my delegation during my visit.

Obviously, we've got strong relationships throughout the hemisphere, but the relationship between the United States and Chile is as strong and as important as any of the relationships that we have. Chile has been on a remarkable growth trajectory over several decades, and the progress that it's made in terms of strengthening its economy, pulling people out of poverty, establishing a strong manufacturing and industrial and service base, its strong exports sector are all proof of the talents of the Chilean people, but also Chile's embrace of democracy and human rights and a market economy. And as a consequence, Chile has become not only a leader in the hemisphere, but also a leader in the world.

President Piñera's outstanding leadership has continued and enhanced this process, and he and I have had an excellent relationship in a number of multilateral settings.

Today we had a wide-ranging discussion. Some of the topics were very specific: for example, the process whereby we anticipate Chile being able to achieve a membership in the Visa Waiver Program that will facilitate the freer flow of people between our two countries and, I know, is one of President Piñera's highest priorities.

We discussed the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a high-standard, a high-level trade agreement with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, which is the most dynamic and fastest growing region of the world. And Chile has been an excellent partner with us in trying to bring this multilateral trade agreement to a close.

I congratulated President Piñera on the work that Chile is doing in the Pacific partnership, in which Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru are joining together to create not only economic integration, but also educational and scientific exchanges that will not only enhance each member country, but also are pointing the way for a model of economic development and growth throughout the region that I think a lot of people are paying attention to.

And we also discussed the ways in which the United States and Chile can continue to strengthen its people-to-people exchanges and continue to deepen our cooperation on areas like energy that are so important to the continued prosperity of our people.

So overall, I think that the relationship between the United States and Chile is extraordinarily strong. I want to thank President Piñera for his friendship and his leadership. I'm confident that during the remaining year in which he's in office, he's going to accomplish even more for the Chilean people and continue to project Chile on the world stage as a very positive force for good. And I hope that he has found this visit here to the United States useful.

I look forward to an opportunity at some point to returning to Chile, one of my favorite visits during the course of my travels. And I look forward to a lot of good work in the years ahead.

So thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Piñera. Well, thank you very much, President Obama. You know that you are always welcome in Chile. Your visit was a very important one, not only for Chile, but for the whole hemisphere.

We have confirmed once again that the United States and Chile, we share the same values: our commitment with democracy, human rights, rule of law, our market-oriented economy, our commitment with world peace. And therefore, we will keep collaborating with the U.S. in strengthening and promoting these values all over the world.

Of course, we discussed many different aspects; one of them was the Trans-Pacific

Partnership. And Chile is fully committed, not only with a Chilean agreement and create the largest free trade zone in the world, which would be the case if the Trans-Pacific Partnership is approved, but also we want to approve it within the timeframe that we have set.

So we hope that in the near future we will be able to make the progress necessary to get that Trans-Pacific Partnership deal done.

On the other hand, we have a free trade agreement with the U.S., was signed in 2004. Since then, we have more than tripled our trade with U.S. The U.S. has a very significant surplus in its trade with Chile; we are very happy with that. But it's not only in trade. We're interested in many other things. That's why this conversation has been extremely helpful, because we have discussed other issues like economy—the education, clean renewable energies, science, technology. In all those areas, we have a lot to learn from the U.S., and we have a lot to collaborate with the U.S.

We are very happy that we have signed special agreements with two States: with California and with Massachusetts. And therefore, I would like to emphasize, President Obama, that we are following what you are doing in the U.S. Of course, it has been a difficult task, because the world is going through difficult times. But we are very optimistic that the U.S. economy is picking up. It's growing. It's creating jobs. And that's good for the U.S. people, but also for the whole world.

A little bit in Spanish.

[*At this point, President Piñera made remarks in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Obama. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Honoring the 2013 Super Bowl Champion Baltimore Ravens
June 5, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Welcome to the White House. And welcome to the Super Bowl champion—world champion—Baltimore Ravens. Everybody can have a seat. That's why we set up chairs. [*Laughter*]

Now, I suspect that these guys are wondering, what kind of introduction is that? No smoke machine. [*Laughter*] No fire cannons. Obama didn't even tear up chunks of turf and rub them on his suit. [*Laughter*]

Team member. Man, that's rough.

The President. That reminds me, by the way, please don't do that on the South Lawn. [*Laughter*]

I want to congratulate Coach John Harbaugh, an outstanding coach, and general manager, Ozzie Newsome, outstanding general manager. I know there's some very proud Ravens fans in the house today, including—you got the entire delegation from Maryland here, and they're a little puffed up.

I notice, though, I'm the only one wearing purple. [*Laughter*] Some of you guys didn't get the memo.

Now, I imagine there were times last year when these players were the only ones who knew that they'd make it here to show off this trophy. Because, during the year, they lost player after player to injury; they dropped four of their last five regular season games. In the playoffs, they trailed Denver by a touchdown with 70 yards and less than a minute to go. And I still don't know how, well—[*laughter*]. And then, in the Super Bowl, just when it looked like they had the momentum, the lights went out for a half hour.

Team member. They call you for that?

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*]

But these Ravens always pulled through. In that playoff game against Broncos, Jacoby Jones—those are all fans of "Dancing With the Stars"—[*laughter*]—he slipped behind the defense to catch a Joe Flacco Hail Mary to force overtime. I'm trying to figure out whether he was doing the two-step or the fox trot. But somehow he got open and Joe got him the ball.

And then, in the Super Bowl, after the lights came back on and 49ers came storming back, this team's defense—the pride and joy of Baltimore—stopped a fierce offense four straight times inside the 10-yard line: one of the most dramatic goal line stands in Super Bowl history.

Joe was named the game's MVP. Where's Joe?

Team member. Easy Joe. Easy Joe.

The President. There he is. Good timing with that contract up. [*Laughter*] That was some good timing. [*Laughter*] Capped off one of the greatest postseasons ever by a quarterback: more than 1,100 passing yards, 11 touchdowns, no interceptions. I don't know about you, Joe, but I would say that qualifies as elite. [*Laughter*] And I'd say that if you keep on playing like that, you're going to challenge Biden for the most popular person from Delaware. [*Laughter*]

After the Super Bowl, Joe said: "The win was representative and symbolic of our city. We're a blue-collar city, and I know that we had to keep grinding it out."

You see that same attitude, great pride but humility in Coach Harbaugh, a guy who responds to all the attention he got for coaching against his brother in the Super Bowl by saying, "This isn't exactly Churchill and Roosevelt, just a couple of football coaches coming together."

You see that grit in team advisor O.J. Brigance, a former Raven whose courageous fight against ALS is an inspiration to Americans all across the country.

You see the resilience in players like Torrey Smith who lost his younger brother in a motorcycle accident the night before the game against the Patriots, but Torrey wanted to play, and he responded with 127 yards and two scores. So we're so proud of Torrey.

And then, of course, you can't think about Baltimore without thinking of Ray Lewis and Ed Reed, two of the greatest defenders who ever played the game. Now, these two won't be wearing purple next year. Everybody is going to have to get used to that. It's welcome news for quarterbacks.

Ray retired on top, coming back from a tricep injury, which, I believe, was caused by that dance he does. [*Laughter*]

Team member. You've got to do that——

The President. But—no, I'm not doing that dance. [*Laughter*] It caused him to miss most of the regular season.

Ed sprained ligaments in both of his knees during the Super Bowl, but he still made the game's only interception. And before he left Houston, where he'll be playing next year, Ed took out a full-page ad in the Baltimore Sun to thank Ravens fans, saying, "I have such deep love for all of you." So that's a class act. Thank you.

I will point out, by the way, that Ed is getting some gray hair, though. [*Laughter*] I'm not the only one. [*Laughter*]

Former Safety Edward E. Reed, Jr. No, not at all.

The President. Huh? You're like an old man. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Reed. You know what they'll do to you.

The President. I'm telling you. That makes me feel better. [*Laughter*] I thought I was the only guy. No. All right.

Well, but that's the spirit of the entire team. Last year, this team donated more than $1 million to charitable causes. They helped young people get active through the Play 60 campaign. Over Thanksgiving, they Skyped with a Maryland National Guard unit stationed in Afghanistan. Later this month, Coach Harbaugh will host a youth football clinic that emphasizes player safety and proper tackling technique.

And today I'm proud to announce that the Ravens will be donating brand new uniforms for varsity football and girls' basketball teams at public schools all across Baltimore; that's a total of 42 teams. We're glad to have some high school athletes from Baltimore here to celebrate with us here today.

So this year, Baltimore won't just be seeing the Ravens on Sundays or Monday night or Thursday night. You'll see their impact in high schools under Friday night lights. And that's a testimony to the connection they feel to this city.

You'll see players spending their Tuesdays—normally, their only day off during the season—visiting hospitals and schools and senior centers, and day after day, you'll see a team that loves Baltimore as much as Baltimore loves the Ravens. So I want to thank all of you for the good work that you're doing.

Congratulations again on your Super Bowl Championship. Best of luck next season; you're going to need it in week 11 when you go to my hometown of Chicago to play the Bears. I brought some Chicago fans in here. Just so we weren't overwhelmed—[*laughter*]—and keep things in proper perspective. But with that, I would like to have Ozzie Newsome and Coach Harbaugh come up and just say a few words, and then I'm going to get my spiffy jersey. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, General Manager Ozzie Newsome, Jr., and Head Coach John Harbaugh made brief remarks.*]

The President. Fantastic. All right. Let's strike the podium here, and we'll get some pictures.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:11 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jacoby R. Jones and J. Torrey Smith, wide receivers, Joseph V. Flacco, quarterback, and Raymond A. Lewis, Jr., former linebacker, Baltimore Ravens; James J. Harbaugh, head coach, National Football League's San Francisco 49ers; and Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks on the Resignation of Thomas E. Donilon as National Security Adviser, the Appointment of Susan E. Rice as National Security Adviser, and the Nomination of Samantha Power To Be United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations

June 5, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. Well, good afternoon. It is a beautiful day, and it's good to see so many friends here.

Of all the jobs in government, leading my national security team is certainly one of the most demanding, if not the most demanding. And since the moment I took office, I've counted on the exceptional experience and insights of Tom Donilon. Nearly every day for the past several years, I've started each morning with Tom leading the Presidential daily brief, hundreds of times, a sweeping assessment of global developments and the most pressing challenges. As my National Security Adviser, his portfolio is literally the entire world.

He has definitely advanced our strategic foreign policy initiatives while at the same time having to respond to unexpected crises, and that happens just about every day. He's overseen and coordinated our entire national security team across the Government, a Herculean task. And it's nonstop, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Today I am wistful to announce that after more than 4 years of extraordinary service, Tom has decided to step aside at the beginning of July. And I am extraordinarily proud to announce my new National Security Adviser, our outstanding Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, as well as my nominee to replace Susan in New York, Samantha Power.

When I first asked Tom to join my team, I knew I was getting one of our Nation's premier foreign policy leaders, somebody with a deep sense of history and a keen understanding of our Nation's place in the world. He shared my view that in order to renew American leadership for the 21st century, we had to fundamentally rebalance our foreign policy. And more than that, he knew how we could do it.

See, Tom is that rare combination of the strategic and the tactical. He has a strategic sense of where we need to go, and he has a tactical sense of how to get there.

Moreover, Tom's work ethic is legendary. He began his public service in the Carter White House when he was just 22 years old, and somehow, he has been able to maintain the same drive and the same stamina and the same enthusiasm and reverence for serving in Government. He has helped shape every single national security policy of my Presidency, from forging a new national security strategy rooted in our economic strength here at home to ending the war in Iraq. Here at the White House, Tom oversaw the operation that led us to bin Laden. He's helped keep our transition on track as we wind down the war in Afghanistan.

At the same time, Tom has played a critical role as we've bolstered the enduring pillars of American power: strengthening our alliances from Europe to Asia, enhancing our relationship with key powers, and moving ahead with new trade agreements and energy partnerships. And from our tough sanctions on Iran to our unprecedented military and intelligence cooperation with Israel——

[*At this point, a baby in the audience cried out.*]

It's true—[*laughter*]—from New START with Russia to deeper partnerships with emerging powers like India, to stronger ties with the Gulf States, Tom has been instrumental every step of the way.

I'm especially appreciative to Tom for helping us renew American leadership in the Asia-Pacific, where so much of our future security and prosperity will be shaped. He has worked tirelessly to forge a constructive relationship with China that advances our interests and our values. And I'm grateful that Tom will be joining me as I meet with President Xi of China this week.

And finally, Tom, I am personally grateful for your advice, for your counsel, and most of all, for your friendship. Whenever we sit down together—whether it's in the Oval Office or the Situation Room—I do so knowing that you have led a rigorous process, that you've challenged assumptions, that you've asked the tough questions, that you've led an incredibly hard-working national security staff, and presented me with a range of options to advance our national interests. A President can't ask for anything more than that, and this is a testament to your incredible professionalism, but also your deep love of country.

I know that this relentless pace has meant sacrifices for your family: for Cathy, who is here, Dr. Biden's former Chief of Staff, who I was proud to nominate as our new Global Ambassador for Women; and for Tom and Cathy's wonderful children Sarah and Teddy. So today I want to publicly thank all the Donilons for their abiding commitment to public service that runs through the family.

You've been with me every step of the way these past 4 years, and the American people owe you an enormous debt of gratitude for everything that you've done. You've helped to restore our Nation's prestige and standing in the world. You've positioned us well to continue to lead in the years ahead. I think that Tom Donilon has been one of the most effective National Security Advisers our country has ever had, and he's done so without a lot of fanfare and a lot of fuss. So, Tom, on behalf of us all, thank you for your extraordinary service.

Now, I am proud that this work will be carried on by another exemplary public servant, Ambassador Susan Rice. Susan was a trusted adviser during my first campaign for President. She helped to build my foreign policy team and lead our diplomacy at the United Nations in my first term. I'm absolutely thrilled that she'll be back at my side, leading my national security team in my second term.

With her background as a scholar, Susan understands that there is no substitute for American leadership. She is at once passionate and pragmatic. I think everybody understands Susan is a fierce champion for justice and human dignity, but she's also mindful that we have to exercise our power wisely and deliberately.

Having served on the National Security Council staff herself, she knows how to bring people together around a common policy and then push it through to completion so that we're making a difference where it matters most, here in the country that we've pledged to

defend and in the daily lives of people we're trying to help around the world.

Having served as an Assistant Secretary of State, she knows our policies are stronger when we harness the views and talents of people across Government. So Susan's the consummate public servant: a patriot who puts her country first. She is fearless; she is tough. She has a great tennis game and a pretty good basketball game. [*Laughter*] Her brother is here, who I play with occasionally, and it runs in the family, throwing the occasional elbow—[*laughter*]—but hitting the big shot.

As our Ambassador to the U.N., Susan has been a tireless advocate in advancing our interests. She has reinvigorated American diplomacy in New York. She's helped to put in place tough sanctions on Iran and North Korea. She has defended Israel. She has stood up for innocent civilians from Libya to Côte d'Ivoire. She has supported an independent South Sudan. She has raised her voice for human rights, including women's rights.

Put simply, Susan exemplifies the finest tradition of American diplomacy and leadership. So thank you, Susan, for being willing to take on this next assignment. I'm absolutely confident that you're going to hit the ground running. And I know that after years of commuting to New York while Ian, Jake, and Maris stayed here in Washington, you will be the first person ever in this job who will see their family more by taking the National Security Adviser's job.

Now, normally, I'd be worried about losing such an extraordinary person up at the United Nations and be trying to figure out, how are we ever going to replace her? But fortunately, I'm confident we've got an experienced, effective, and energetic U.N. Ambassador-in-waiting in Samantha Power.

Samantha first came to work for me in 2005 shortly after I became a United States Senator, as one of our country's leading journalists; I think she won the Pulitzer Prize at the age of 15 or 16. One of our foremost thinkers on foreign policy, she showed us that the international community has a moral responsibility and a profound interest in resolving conflicts and defending human dignity.

As a senior member of my national security team, she has been a relentless advocate for American interests and values, building partnerships on behalf of democracy and human rights, fighting the scourge of anti-Semitism, and combating human trafficking. To those who care deeply about America's engagement and indispensable leadership in the world, you will find no stronger advocate for that cause than Samantha.

And over the last 4 years, Samantha's worked hand in glove with Susan in her role because Samantha has been the lead White House staffer on issues related to the United Nations. And I'm fully confident she will be ready on day one to lead our mission in New York, while continuing to be an indispensable member of my national security team.

She knows the U.N.'s strengths. She knows its weaknesses. She knows that American interests are advanced when we can rally the world to our side. And she knows that we have to stand up for the things that we believe in. And to ensure that we have the principled leadership we need at the United Nations, I would strongly urge the Senate to confirm her without delay.

So, Samantha, thank you to Cass and you and Declan and Rian, for continuing to serve our country.

This team of people has been extraordinarily dedicated to America. They have made America safer. They have made America's values live in corners of the world that are crying out for our support and our leadership. I could not be prouder of these three individuals, not only their intelligence, not only their savvy, but their integrity and their heart.

And I'm very, very proud to have had the privilege of working with Tom. I'm very proud that I'll continue to have the privilege of working with Samantha and with Susan.

So with that, I'd invite Tom to say a few words. Tom.

National Security Adviser Donilon. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the many

hours that we've worked together in the Situation Room, put together here by John Kennedy and without windows.

The President. No windows.

National Security Adviser Donilon. No windows. So I would first like to thank you for this rare opportunity to be outside and experience the natural light. [*Laughter*]

[*Outgoing National Security Adviser Donilon made additional remarks. Then, Ambassador Rice and Ambassador-designate Power each made brief remarks, and the President concluded his remarks as follows.*]

The President. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:17 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Catherine M. Russell, wife of outgoing National Security Adviser Donilon; Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; E. John Rice, Jr., brother, Ian O. Cameron, husband, and Jake and Maris Rice-Cameron, children, of Ambassador Rice; and Cass R. Sunstein, husband of Samantha Power, National Security Council Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs, and their children Declan and Rian Power-Sunstein. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of outgoing National Security Adviser Donilon, Ambassador Rice, and Ambassador-designate Power.

Remarks at Mooresville Middle School in Mooresville, North Carolina
June 6, 2013

The President. Hello, Mooresville! Hello, Mooresville. It is good to be back in North Carolina. Now, first of all, I want to thank my staff for being smart enough to schedule a visit right before school lets out. [*Laughter*] Because that means everybody is in a good mood. [*Laughter*] However, Principal Tulbert told me that if I wanted to visit, I had to follow school rules. And since we just recited the Pledge of Allegiance, let me say that "it's always a great day to be a Red Imp." The—I gather some of you are going to be Blue Devils next year. I mean, being an Imp is okay, but I guess being a Devil—[*laughter*].

Now, I want to thank Maureen for the wonderful introduction, but more importantly, for the great work that she and all the staff at this school are doing. I could not be more impressed with the teachers and the administrators. So give it up for them. Students, clap for your teachers. You may not realize how lucky you are to have great, dedicated teachers, but as a parent, I realize how important that is. And so we can't thank them enough.

I want to make sure everybody knows that we've got one of the finest Secretaries of Education we've ever had in Arne Duncan, who's here. Your mayor, Miles Atkins, is in the house. And Superintendent Edwards is here, who's doing such great work. So give him a big round of applause.

So I want to thank you for inviting me here today. I know it's a little warm in here, as it always is in a school gym. But I was spending a lot of time talking to the students, and they were showing me such incredible work that I got kind of carried away.

I've come here to Mooresville to announce an important step that we're taking to grow our economy and to reignite the engine that powers our economy, and that's a rising and thriving middle class where everybody has opportunity.

Over the past 4½ years, we have been fighting back from the worst recession since the Great Depression, which cost millions of Americans their jobs and their homes and the sense of security that they'd worked so hard to build. And North Carolina got hit worse than a lot of States.

But thanks to the grit and the determination of the American people, folks are starting to come back. Our businesses have created nearly 7 million new jobs over the past 38 months;

530 [530,000]* of those jobs are new manufacturing jobs that help us sell goods made in America all around the world. We're producing more of our own energy. We're consuming less energy from other countries. The housing market and the stock markets are rebounding. Our deficit is shrinking. People's retirement savings are growing. The American auto industry has come roaring back.

So we're getting traction. The gears to the economy are turning. We're starting to make progress. But we've got to build on that progress. Because while the economy is growing, there's still a lot of families out there who feel like they're working harder and harder, but can't get ahead. And the middle class has to be prospering, not just folks at the very top. That's got to be our focus: a growing economy. We've got to have a growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs. That's got to be the north star that guides all of our efforts.

Now, what that means—I said this at my State of the Union Address—every day, we've got to ask ourselves three questions as a nation: Number one, how do we make America a magnet for good jobs? Number two, how do we make sure our workers, our people, have the skills and education they need to do those jobs? And then, number three, how do we make sure that those jobs pay well so that a hard work leads to a decent living?

But the reason I'm here today is because you are helping to answer that second question: How do we make sure Americans have the chance to earn the best skills and education possible? That's why I came to Mooresville. Because at a moment when the rest of the world is trying to outeducate us, we've got to make sure that our young people—all you guys—have every tool that you need to go as far as your talents and your dreams and your ambitions and your hard work will take you. All right?

So that's the spirit that's reflected in the motto of your school district: "Every Child, Every Day." It's that fundamental belief that no matter who you are, no matter what you like—look like, no matter where you come from, every child can learn. Every child can succeed. Every child, every day, deserves that chance. We've got an obligation to give every young person that chance.

That means making sure we've got the best teachers and giving those teachers support and paying them what they deserve. [*Applause*]

Audience member. Yes!

The President. Right? Yes. All the teachers say, amen.

Audience members. Amen!

The President. Amen. It requires parents who are more active and involved. Parents, school is not a passive thing where you just dump off your kids, they come back, and somehow, automatically they learn. You've got to be involved in the education process. It requires smarter schools that are safer places to learn. And in an age when the world's information is a just click away, it demands that we bring our schools and libraries into the 21st century. We can't be stuck in the 19th century when we're living in a 21st-century economy.

And that's why today we're going to take a new step to make sure that virtually every child in America's classrooms has access to the fastest Internet and the most cutting-edge learning tools. And that step will better prepare our children for the jobs and challenges of the future, and it will provide them a surer path into the middle class. And as a consequence, it will mean a stronger, more secure economy for all of us.

Specifically, today I am directing the Federal Communications Commission—which is the FCC—to begin a process that will connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed broadband Internet within 5 years. Within 5 years, we're going to get it done. [*Applause*] Within 5 years.

Now, those of you here at Mooresville understand why this is important, but I'm speaking to a larger audience, so I want to explain why this is important. Today, the average American school has about the same bandwidth as the average American home, even though obviously, there are 200 times as many people at school as there are at home. Only

* White House correction.

around 20 percent of our students have access to true high-speed Internet in their classroom. By comparison, South Korea has 100 percent of its kids with high-speed Internet. We've got 20 percent; South Korea 100 percent. In countries where we—in a country where we expect free Wi-Fi with our coffee, why shouldn't we have it in our schools? Right? Why wouldn't we have it available for our children's education?

So the good news is, here in Mooresville, you've committed yourself to this cause. Starting in the third grade, as all of you know because you've lived through it, every student in the district gets a laptop and high-speed, wireless Internet in the classroom.

And I just saw the ways that it's changing how you learn. You don't just write papers and take tests. You're working together on videos and presentations and movies and poetry. Your high school Spanish class might Skype with students in Barcelona or Buenos Aires. One student proudly said, "We're able to work on more projects and homework outside of class." Now, that's not normally something teenagers brag about. [*Laughter*] But that's exactly the attitude that's going to help you succeed and help your country succeed.

And as I was learning in talking to some of the teachers here, it's helping the teachers too, because if a student is falling behind, a teacher is seeing it in real time.

Somebody fall down? One thing you guys got to do, by the way, bend your knees a little bit when you're standing. If you stand up straight—yes. I'm just giving you a tip so you don't faint—[*laughter*]—which happens all the time, and it's really embarrassing. [*Laughter*] But if you already did, you should sit down.

But it gives teachers the ability to see in real time what students need help, who's falling behind, and then offer extra help. If you've already mastered a lesson, you can move on to the next one. So as one teacher said, "The thing I'm most proud of is not the technology, it's the relationships I can build with the students that I teach."

Now, here at this school, this has only been going on for a few years. But so far, the results have been remarkable. Graduation rates are up. Last year, out of 115 school districts in North Carolina, you ranked in the bottom 10 in the amount of money you spend per student, but you ranked number 2 in student achievement. All right? [*Applause*] Number two. So you're spending less money getting better outcomes. And around the country, educators have started to take notice. So many people want to see this school for themselves that there's a waiting list for tours all the way into 2014.

But here's the thing: As special as what you've done is, I don't want this success to be restricted to one school or one school district. There is no reason why we can't replicate the success you've found here. And imagine what that will mean for our country.

Imagine a young girl growing up on a farm in a rural area who can now take an AP biology or AP physics class, even if her school is too small to offer it. Imagine a young boy with a chronic illness that means he can't go to school, but now he can join his classmates via Skype or FaceTime and fully participate in what's going on.

Imagine educators spending fewer hours teaching to a test, more time helping kids learn in new and innovative ways. Imagine more businesses starting here and hiring here in this area, in North Carolina, because they know for a fact that we've committed ourselves to equipping all of our kids with better skills and education than any place else on Earth. That's what we need.

So, over the next 5 years, we're going to partner with private companies to put people to work laying fiber optic cables to our schools and setting up wireless connections in our schools with speeds 10 to 100 times faster than what most schools have today. We're going to work with States to give teachers who want to use these technologies in the classroom the professional development that they need, because I was talking to Ms. Tulbert, she said, for all the teachers here, it took some adaptation to get used to these new technologies.

Once all these classrooms are wired for superfast Internet, that means a big new market for private innovation—America's companies

who created the computers and smartphones and tablets that we all use——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. It's okay. It'll be—this happens. They'll be all right. Just give them a little space. That's why we've got the medics here. They'll be okay.

Oh, teachers give me some tips here. I've lost their attention. [*Laughter*] All right, everybody. Right over here.

So what we're going to be able to do is to get companies to compete to create affordable digital devices designed specifically to these new connected classrooms. I want to see a tablet that's the same price as a textbook. I want to see more apps that can be instantly updated with academic content the day it's available, so you don't have old, outdated textbooks with student names still in them from years ago. These are the tools that our children deserve.

And there's no reason why we can't do all this. If you think about the history of America, we united a continent by rail. We stretched a network of highways from sea to shining sea. We brought light to dark and remote areas. We connected the world through the Internet, through our imagination. All these projects created jobs. All these projects grew our economy. They also unified the country, and they are unifying the world. And this project we're talking about today can do the same thing. I am determined to see it through on behalf of our kids.

And for those of you who follow politics in Washington, here's the best news: None of this requires an act of Congress. We can and we will get started right away. Yes, we can. Now, look, there are all kinds of things I do need Congress to do, and I want to work with them everywhere I can. But where we've got an opportunity to just go ahead and do something that's going to help our young people, help our teachers, help our education system, help this economy, help our middle class, help to create jobs, we've just got to go ahead and do it. This is something we have to do for the sake of our kids and our future.

But there are other things that I'm going to be working with Congress to do that will improve our education system on behalf of our kids and our future. Because if we can bring our kids and our schools into the digital age, you can't tell me we can't start improving our early childhood education system and making high-quality preschool available to every child in America. You can't tell me that we can't find the wherewithal to hire even more good teachers in science and math and technology and engineering. You can't tell me that we can't rethink and redesign our high schools or partner with colleges and businesses to put our young people on the path of jobs, not just today's jobs, but tomorrow's jobs.

We can make sure that middle class families aren't priced out of a college education. We can make sure that interest rates on Federal student loans don't double for students and parents at the end of this month. I want to work with Democrats and Republicans to keep those rates low.

How many students here expect to go to college? I expect all of them to raise their hand. And so we've got to make sure that college is affordable for every young person, and that's going to require some help from Congress.

But we have to give every child, every day, the shot of—at success that they deserve.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. Every day. FDR once said, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." And as long as I'm President, I'm going to keep fighting with everything I've got to build a better future for our young people and to give them a chance to build their own future. That's how we're going to strengthen our middle class. That's how we'll secure America's future for generations to come. That's what I'm going to fight for as President of the United States. That's why I'm so proud of all of you here at Mooresville.

Congratulations, everybody. Have a great summer. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Carrie Tulbert, principal, and Maureen Fitzsimmons, mathematics chair, Mooresville Middle School; and Mark A. Edwards, superintendent, Mooresville Graded School District.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Palo Alto, California

June 6, 2013

Thank you, everybody! It is good to be back in California, especially when the weather is this good. [*Laughter*] And obviously, I want to first of all thank Mike and Marci and their two beautiful daughters and mom and uncles and aunt—[*laughter*]—and everybody who helped to participate.

And I also want to just acknowledge somebody who I think is one of the finest public servants we've got in Washington and was somebody who worked in the private sector, then took on an incredible job of running the public schools in Denver, helped to turn them around, is now representing the great State of Colorado and is a great friend: Michael Bennet. So give Michael a big round of applause.

Somebody was asking where I was earlier today and asking whether I got to sleep in between, and the answer is no, because, unfortunately, Air Force One is pretty loaded up. You can make phone calls, you can read e-mails, you can look at computers, so you don't rest on plane trips.

But earlier this morning I had a chance to visit a school in Mooresville, North Carolina, and the reason we were there is because they've undergone this amazing transformation. Several years ago, their superintendant made a decision that he was just going to get rid of textbooks. They were hugely expensive. Oftentimes, they were on a 7-year cycle so that kids were looking and there was still a map of the Soviet Union in there in their social studies class. [*Laughter*] And he made this radical decision that he was going to replace every textbook with a laptop for every student in the school, starting in third grade. And as a consequence of not just the technology, but training teachers to think entirely differently about curriculum and teaching, what they've done is, despite the fact that they—out of 115 districts, I think it is—they are 110th in spending per district, they now rank number 2 in performance.

The kids are unbelievably enthusiastic. And they showed me a whole range of things. One group of math students had started a business on their laptops—and this was for math class—and they were calculating their profits and their break-even point and when they go from red to black. It was an M&M's machine, not surprisingly. [*Laughter*]

Another group of kids were dissecting the Inaugural Address that had been done in my first—or the Inaugural poem that had been delivered at my first Inauguration by Elizabeth Alexander, but they were able to do it on the screen, make notes on the screen that were automatically transmitted onto all the laptops of the school. And you could see these kids just excited about learning and wanting to keep learning well after the school day was done.

And so what we announced was our initiative that we're going to make sure, in 5 years, every school across America has the highest speed, most state-of-the-art connections so that every classroom is wired and every student can take advantage of these technologies. And one of the great things about it is in order to do this, we don't need a vote from Congress, which means that we actually, I think, will be able to get it done on time. [*Laughter*]

But I tell this story because all around the country, in places like Austin and in North Carolina and here, obviously, in California, there are incredible things going on. And we've now gone through some of the toughest years economically that this country has ever gone through, and yet, after the worst recession since the Great Depression, we're now seeing the economy slowly regain steam. Not just the stock market, which has been hitting record highs, but housing is beginning to bounce back. We've now seen growth for 3½ years straight, jobs being created just about every month, and the auto industry come roaring back, the financial system stabilizing.

The truth of the matter is, is that because of the grit and determination of the American people, we've got all the cards we need in order to make sure that the 21st century is the

American century, just like the 20th. The only thing that's holding us back is our capacity to work together around a commonsense set of solutions. Whether it's in education, whether it's on clean energy, whether it's on spurring more technology and entrepreneurship that obviously this part of the country represents and has captured the imagination of the entire world, whether we're talking about how we deal with our infrastructure, how we make sure that our fiscal policies are in line so that we're not passing on debt to the next generation, but we're also making sure that we meet our commitments to current generations when it comes to things like Social Security and Medicare, on all of these issues, there is a range of commonsense solutions available to us right now. And if we implement them, then we're going to leave an America behind for our kids that—and our grandkids—that is stronger, more prosperous, more unified, more tolerant than ever before.

And so the reason I'm here today is to deliver the good news that we've got what we need in order to succeed. Now, I've got to leaven that with a little bad news. The bad news is that too often, Washington is getting in our way of this progress. And the reason it's getting in our way is not because, as some suggest, Government has no role to play in this process; Government has always had a role to play.

I come from Illinois, the great Land of Lincoln. And in the midst of civil war, Abraham Lincoln starts the land-grant colleges, helps to create the intercontinental railroad system that links our country together, starts the National Institute of Science, understanding that there are certain investments we can only make together; that although our economy is driven by entrepreneurship and risk-taking and the private sector—the greatest engine of prosperity the world has ever known—there are some things we do better together.

And people in this area understand that as well as anybody. The incredible prosperity that is generated from Silicon Valley in part is because we collectively—or at least our parents or our grandparents—made investments in things like DARPA and basic research and science and helped to facilitate the framework that created the world wide web and all the spinoffs that came out of that.

Oftentimes, the private sector cannot or will not make those investments because they don't automatically show a profit right away, because they may be too expensive for any single enterprise to invest in. But that's what then provides us the platform to do the incredible things that we do.

So the reason that Washington is a problem is not because Government generically is the problem, the reason Washington is a problem is right now it's broken. It's not working the way it needs to. And look, historically, I am a strong Democrat because I believe in the basic principle that everybody should have a chance. Everybody should have opportunity; it doesn't matter where they're born, what their last name is, what circumstances they started in, who they love. I want everybody to have a fair shot. But I'm the first one to admit Democrats don't have a monopoly on wisdom. I will say, though, right now—[*laughter*]—when it comes to doing the things that need to get done, we're just not getting a lot of cooperation from the other side. We're just not getting a lot of cooperation from the other side.

And I remain hopeful—because I've run my last campaign—that over the next 3 years, we're going to see more of the bipartisan efforts that we're seeing in some areas. For example, Michael Bennet is doing a great job working with the so-called Gang of Eight to finally get immigration reform done so that we're a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants and we are fixing a broken immigration system. So there are areas where we're starting to see glimmers of functionality in Washington.

But on too many area, we're not getting the kind of cooperation that we need, not because the Democrats are particularly ideological or left wing right now. The truth of the matter is, Michael and I—I know that there are a few Republicans here in the audience—if you talk to us, it turns out we're pretty commonsense folks. We don't think Government can do everything. We don't think that top-down solutions are the right way to go. We believe in the

free market. We believe in a light touch when it comes to regulations. We don't want to tax all businesses out of business. But we do think that there's a role to play for Government.

When it comes to, for example, making sure that every child in America has early childhood education so they're getting a healthy start and by the time they hit school they're prepared to learn, that's an investment we can make.

When it comes to making sure a nation this wealthy provides affordable, accessible health care for every American, that's something we can do. There's no other advanced nation on Earth where 10, 15 percent of the population doesn't have health care. None. Well, why should we be any different as the greatest nation on Earth? And Government has a role to play to make that happen.

We have to make sure that we keep our edge when it comes to research and development. This so-called sequester that has stayed in place—in part because of the stubbornness of the other side in negotiating a sensible budget framework—is freezing up research precisely at a time when it's never been more important. And you got brilliant young people all across the country, including in this area, who may not have the capacity to go into their chosen fields because the research grants have dried up. We have a role to play.

When it comes to what I think will be one of the most important decisions that we make as a nation—this generation makes—the issue of climate change, we're not going to be able to make those changes solely through a bunch of individual decisions that are made. We're going to have to make some collective decisions about how much do we care about this when the science is irrefutable. And that means Government is going to have a role to play in helping to organize clean energy research and making sure that we're taking into account the pollution that we're sending into the air and that we're encouraging new ways of delivering energy and using it more efficiently. We're going to have a role to play.

And obviously, our Government is going to have a role to play internationally, whether it's in making sure that we're keeping the American people safe or trying to make sure that we're delivering prosperity and hope to the parts of the world where people, religious minorities, young girls still don't have opportunity. Those are all things that we have to do together.

So here's the bottom line: I have never been more optimistic about America than I am right now. People sometimes ask me this. They notice my gray hair, and they say, boy—[*laughter*]—you've got a really hard job, and how do you put up with all the stuff that's going on all the time and everything that's said about you and this and that and the other? And I try to remind folks that in so many ways, this is the greatest time in human history. For all the tragedies that we witness, for all the terrible things that we read about, for all the millions of people here in America who are still locked out of opportunity and the struggles that middle class families are going through every single day, all the people who are still unemployed, folks whose houses are still underwater, the fact of the matter is, is that we're more inclusive, we're more prosperous, we are less violent now than just about any time in human history. And that should give us hope.

And when we see these beautiful kids running around, I suspect they will further improve on our—on this project. But we've got to get this right. And the only way I'm going to be able to do that is if I've got people in Congress who share my optimism and share a sense that there are practical solutions out there and that compromise is not a dirty word. That's the kind of Senator that Michael Bennet represents, and that's what we're going to need in the United States Senate. And I haven't even started talking about things like judicial nominations, which obviously are contingent on us maintaining a strong Democratic majority in the United States Senate.

So I would just ask all of you, number one, to be optimistic. Number two, I'd ask you all to stay engaged. Number three, I'd ask you to really focus on what you can do in order to ensure that the very best people who care deeply about this country, but also have a practical bent: how do we get those folks in the Senate,

staying in the Senate, working cooperatively. Because ultimately, our Government represents us, and if we neglect it, then it doesn't work. And when we're engaged, it works.

You showed that in 2008; that's how I got elected. You showed that in 2012; that's how I got reelected. I need you to show that one more time to make sure that we have a Democratic Senate, and having a Democratic House wouldn't be bad either. [*Laughter*]

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:39 p.m. at the residence of Mike and Marci McCue. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Michael F. Bennet, in his capacity as chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Lily and Katie McCue, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. McCue; Lucy McCue Allan, mother of Mr. McCue; Mark A. Edwards, superintendent, Mooresville Graded School District in Mooresville, NC; and Sens. Marco A. Rubio, Jeffrey L. Flake, John S. McCain III, Lindsey O. Graham, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, and Charles E. Schumer. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Portola Valley, California
June 6, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody. Well, first of all, I want to thank Vinod and Neeru and the entire family and these beasts—[*laughter*]—for hosting us here today. These two could eat Bo in one gulp. [*Laughter*] But it's wonderful to be here in this spectacular setting on such a beautiful day in Northern California, one of my favorite places.

There are a couple other people I want to acknowledge. First of all, we've got three of the finest Senators in the country who are here with us today. The person who has the thankless, but absolutely critical job of maintaining the Democratic majority in the Senate, Michael Bennet from Colorado is here. We've got my fellow midwesterner, who is doing wonderful work on a whole range of issues, Amy Klobuchar from Minnesota. Where's Maria? There she is. And from the closest thing to being your neighbor and somebody who obviously knows the extraordinary capacity, ingenuity, and entrepreneurship because she's been in the field herself and does great work in the Senate every day: Maria Cantwell.

We're going to have some time for questions and, hopefully, some answers in this great setting, so I'm going to be fairly brief. I was telling Vinod that this morning, I was in North Carolina at Mooresville Middle School. And Mooresville Middle School ranks 110th out of 115 districts in North Carolina when it comes to spending per pupil. They now rank second in performance in North Carolina. And the reason is, is because they have this incredible superintendent who, several years ago, made what many considered a pretty radical decision. He said: "We're just going to eliminate textbooks. We're going to use the money to buy a laptop for every student and we are going to completely redesign our curriculum and how we engage our young people, and we're going to train our teachers so that we completely transform the learning experience in this middle school."

Actually, it starts in 3d grade and continues all the way through 12th, but I went to the middle school. And so I had a chance to go from station to station: kids who were creating their own films and poetry based on a book that they had read in English class; kids who were designing their own business plans in math class, figuring out when they'd go from red to black; young people who were debating the merits of studying mythology, using research that had been done entirely online.

And what they've discovered is, is that the passion that young people now have for learning because of the—since the ownership that

they've got, because of the sense that instead of just sitting there passively with somebody at the front of the classroom, they are fully engaged in this constant creative exchange with each other and their teachers. Because of that, the school has transformed itself.

And so we were down there to announce our goal, which is that in 5 years, every school in America will be sufficiently equipped with broadband and wireless so that you've got 100-percent coverage or 99 percent coverage. This is something, it turns out, we can do without Congress. We're going to meet this deadline, and it has the potential to be transformational in our education system and save money in the process.

And I say that because, not only am I in Silicon Valley and around the world this is rightly viewed as the center of innovation, but also because so many of you who I've gotten to know over the years are yourselves innovators and entrepreneurs who have transformed the world because of the work that you've done.

The central question for America now is, how do we engage the entire country in a conversation about using this incredible advantage we've got of openness and inquiry and discovery, how do we use that to make ourselves more competitive? And how do we make sure that every single person in America has access to the platforms and the frameworks that they need so that if they're willing to work hard, they can succeed as well, the way Vinod succeeded, the way Mark succeeded, the way Steve succeeded, the way all of us in this room—so many of us who started with not too much—have been able to live out that American Dream.

Now, the good news is that after an extraordinary economic crisis, the economy has stabilized. We're growing; housing is coming back; deficits are going down; auto industry has recovered; we're creating jobs. And as I travel around the world, it turns out, actually, we've got probably the best cards out of any country. I know everybody worries about China—I'm going to be meeting with the President of China on——

Audience member. Tomorrow.

The President. ——tomorrow, on Friday. Tomorrow, right. [*Laughter*] And the transformation that's taking place in China is extraordinary. And never in the history of humanity have we seen so many people move out of poverty so rapidly, in part because of what's happening in China and what's happening in India. And yet, when you look at the challenges they face and you look at the challenges we face, I'll take our challenges any day of the week.

In order for us to meet those challenges, though, we've got to have a functioning Government. This is not an argument that Government can do it all. It's an argument that Government has a critical role to play in funding science and research, in creating the infrastructure, not only the old infrastructure of roads and bridges and ports, but the new infrastructure of smart grids and broadband. Government has a role in educating our kids, to make sure that they've got the skills they need to compete. Government has a role in creating a regulatory structure that ensures that we're encouraging the development of clean energy and that we're protecting intellectual property.

Government has a role in all these things. And if we're able to get that part of it right, nobody can stop us. Because the innovation that's taking place in places like Silicon Valley, they'll move it, but we've got to make sure that what happens here is happening in a small town in Ohio and in rural parts of North Carolina; that we're not creating two societies—one that's hypercompetitive and innovative and extraordinarily prosperous and then another half in which folks are struggling just barely to get by and are having a tough time competing—but rather a situation in which all of us have a chance of success.

That's what we're fighting for. And from my perspective, that's what it means to be a Democrat. And I think that I speak for Maria and Amy and Mike as well; that's what leads us to believe in this democratic ideal.

So in order for us to accomplish that we're going to need to have a Democratic Senate. In order for us to accomplish that, I'd also like a Democratic House. Not because Democrats

have a monopoly on wisdom and not because I'm more interested in politics than governance, because I've run my last election. I just want to get stuff done. And I'm going to be spending the next 3½ years, every day, reaching out to Republicans and seeing where we can agree.

Michael Bennet is doing some great work on immigration reform. I think we have a great chance of getting that done this year. We recently announced the need to pull together a bipartisan effort around dealing with patent trolls, something that everybody here is deeply interested in. We have a chance of getting that done.

But on too much of the big stuff, what we see coming out of the other party is an interest in winning elections or in obstruction, not enough interest in solving problems. And too often, what we see is the notion that compromise is a dirty word. And sometimes, we see just the denial of science around climate change, for example. And in that environment, it's going to be hard for us to make progress on things that all of us here care so deeply about.

So I'll just leave you with this thought. For all the frustrations of Washington, though, I've never been more optimistic about this country, because of those kids I saw in Mooresville, because of the businesses that I see popping up every single day here in Silicon Valley. We've got what it takes to make sure the 21st century is the American century, just like the 20th, and that impact ripples around the world.

But I'm going to need your help to make it happen. Michael, Amy, Maria, we're all going to need your help to make that happen. And if you're willing to engage and be involved and stay committed as deeply as you were in 2008 and 2012, then I think we'll be successful.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:56 p.m. at the residence of Vinod and Neeru Khosla. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Michael F. Bennet, in his capacity as chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Mark A. Edwards, superintendent, Mooresville Graded School District in Mooresville, NC; and President Xi Jinping of China. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Health Care Reform and an Exchange With Reporters in San Jose, California

June 7, 2013

The President. Good morning, everybody. It is wonderful to see all of you, and I want to thank everybody who is here. I think there's only one problem, and that is that my remarks are not sitting here. People! [*Laughter*] You know, things on—by Friday afternoon, things get a little challenged.

Q. Will you answer a question in the——

The President. I'm going to have a—I'm going to answer a question at the end of the remarks, but I want to make sure that we get the remarks out. People!

[*At this point, a staff member walked toward the podium.*]

Oh, goodness. [*Laughter*]

[*The staff member tripped.*]

Oh, somebody is tripping. I mean—[*laughter*].

[*The staff member handed the President a copy of his remarks.*]

Folks are sweating back there right now. [*Laughter*]

Well, good morning, everybody. This afternoon I'm going to be in Southern California to meet with President Xi of China. But before I leave Northern California, I wanted to take a minute to address something that's happening with the Affordable Care Act in this State, and I wanted to meet with a group of people who

are doing some very important work on behalf of California's middle class families.

These leaders from California's government, the California Endowment, and major Spanish language media outlets have joined together to help implement the Affordable Care Act here in California and to educate folks about how to sign up and shop for quality, affordable plans. And their efforts have already shown some excellent results in the biggest insurance market in the country.

There are two main things that Americans need to know when it comes to the Affordable Care Act and what it means for you.

First of all, if you're one of the nearly 85 percent of Americans who already have insurance, either through Medicare or Medicaid or your employer, you don't have to do a thing. You've just got a wide array of new benefits, better protections, and stronger cost controls that you didn't have before. And that will, over time, improve the quality of the insurance that you've got, benefits like free preventive care: checkups, flu shots, mammograms, and contraception.

You are now going to be able to get those things through your insurance where they previously were not—didn't have to be provided. Protections like allowing people up to the age of 26 to stay on their parents' health care plans, which has already helped 6 million Americans, including 6 million [1 million]* young Latino Americans.

Cost controls like requiring insurance companies to spend at least 80 percent of the money that you pay in premiums in your actual health care costs, as opposed to administrative costs or CEO pay: Not overhead, but that money has to be spent on you. And if they don't meet that target, they actually have to reimburse you. So, in California, we're already getting reports that insurers are giving rebates to consumers and small-business owners to the tune of $45 million this year. So already, we're seeing millions of dollars of rebates sent back to consumers by insurance companies as a consequence of this law.

Now, all of that is happening because of the Affordable Care Act. All of this is in place right now, already, for 85 percent of Americans who have health insurance. By the way, all of this is what the Republican Party has now voted 37 times to repeal, at least in the House of Representatives. And my suggestion to them has been, let's stop refighting the old battles and start working with people like the leaders who are on stage here today to make this law work the way it's supposed to.

We're focused on moving forward and making sure that this law works for middle class families. And that brings me to the second thing that people need to know about the Affordable Care Act.

If you're one of nearly 6 million Californians or 10 million—tens of millions of Americans who don't currently have health insurance, you'll soon be able to buy quality, affordable care just like everybody else.

And here's how. States like California are setting up new, online marketplaces where, beginning on October 1 of this year, you can comparison shop an array of private health insurance plans side by side, just like you were going online to compare cars or airline tickets. And that means insurance companies will actually have to compete with each other for your business. And that means new choices.

See, right now most States don't have a lot of competition. In nearly every State, more than half of all consumers are covered by only two insurers. So there's no incentive to provide you a lot of choices or to keep costs down. The Affordable Care Act changes that.

Beginning next year, once these marketplaces are open, most States will offer new private insurance choices that don't exist today. And based on early reports, about 9 in 10 Americans expected to enroll in these marketplaces live in States where they'll be able to choose between five or more different insurers. So, for example, here in California, 33 insurers applied to join the marketplace. Covered California then selected 13 based on access, quality,

* White House correction.

and affordability, four of which are brand new to your individual market.

So what's happening is, through the Affordable Care Act, we're creating these marketplaces with more competition, more choice, and so the question is, what happens to cost?

Now, a lot of the opponents of the Affordable Care Act said, they had all kinds of sky-is-falling, doom-and-gloom predictions that not only would the law fail, but what we'd also is costs would skyrocket for everybody. Well, it turns out we're actually seeing that in the States that have committed themselves to implementing this law correctly, we're seeing some good news. Competition and choice are pushing down costs in the individual market just like the law was designed to do.

The 13 insurance companies that were chosen by Covered California have unveiled premiums that were lower than anybody expected. And those who can't afford to buy private insurance will get help reducing their out-of-pocket premiums even further with the largest health care tax cut for working families and small businesses in our history. So about 2.6 million Californians—nearly half of whom are Latinos—will qualify for tax credits that will in some cases lower their premiums a significant amount.

Now, none of this is a surprise. This is the way that the law was designed to work. But since everybody has been saying how it's not going to happen, I think it's important for us to recognize and acknowledge, this is working the way it's supposed to. We've seen similar good news, by the way, not just here in California, but in Oregon and Washington. In States that are working hard to implement this law properly, we're seeing it work for people: for middle class families, for consumers.

Now, that's not to say that everything is going to go perfectly right away. When you're implementing a program this large, there will be some glitches. There are going to be some hiccups. But no matter what, every single consumer will be covered by the new benefits and protections under this law permanently.

So the bottom line is, you can listen to a bunch of political talk out there—negative ads and fearmongering geared towards the next election—or alternatively, you can actually look at what's happening in States like California right now. And the fact of the matter is, through these exchanges, not only are the 85 percent of people who already have health insurance getting better protections and receiving rebates and being able to keep their kids on their health insurance until they're 26 and getting free preventive care, but if you don't have health insurance and you're trying to get it through the individual market and it's too expensive or it's too restricted, you now have these marketplaces where they're going to offer you a better deal because of choice and competition.

And if—even if these lower rates and better insurance that you're getting through these marketplaces, you still can't afford it, you're going to be getting tax cuts and tax credits through the Affordable Care Act that will help you afford it. And that's how we're going to make sure that millions of people who don't currently have health insurance or are getting a really bad deal on their health insurance are finally going to get it.

But—and here's my final point—to take advantage of these marketplaces, folks are going to need to sign up. So you can find out how to sign up at healthcare.gov—healthcare.gov—or here in California, you can sign up at coveredCA.com—coveredCA.com. Because quality care is not something that should be a privilege, it should be a right. In the greatest country on Earth, we've got to make sure that every single person that needs health care can get it. And we've got to make sure that we do it in the most efficient way possible.

One last point I'm going to make on this, because there are a lot of people who currently get health insurance through their employers—the 85 percent who are already out there—and they may be saying, well, if this law is so great, why is it that my premiums still went up? Well, part of what's happening across the country is, in some cases, for example, employers may be shifting more costs through higher premiums or higher deductibles or higher copays, and so there may still be folks

who are out there feeling increased costs not because of the Affordable Care Act, but because those costs are being passed on to workers or insurance companies, in some cases. Even with these laws in place, they're still jacking up prices unnecessarily.

So this doesn't solve the whole problem, but it moves us in the right direction. It's also the reason why we have to keep on implementing changes in how our health care system works to continually drive better efficiency, higher quality, lower cost. We're starting to see that. Health care cost inflation has gone up at the lowest rate over the last 3 years that we've seen in many, many years. So we're making progress in actually reducing overall health care costs while improving quality, but we're going to have to continue to push on that front as well. That's also part of what we're doing in the Affordable Care Act. All right?

But the main message I want for Californians and people all across the country, starting on October 1, if you're in the individual market, you can get a better deal. If you're a small business that's providing health insurance to your employees, you can get a better deal through these exchanges. You've got to sign up: healthcare.gov, or here in California, coveredCA.com.

All right? So thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President?

The President. I'm going to take one question. And then, remember, people are going to have opportunities to also answer questions when I'm with the Chinese President today. So I don't want the whole day to just be a bleeding press conference. But I'm going to take Jackie Calmes's [New York Times] question.

National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. Mr. President, could you please react to the reports of secret Government surveillance of phones and Internets? And can you also assure Americans that the Government—your Government—doesn't have some massive secret database of all their personal online information and activities?

The President. Yes. The—when I came into this office, I made two commitments that are more important than any commitment I made: number one, to keep the American people safe; and number two, to uphold the Constitution. And that includes what I consider to be a constitutional right to privacy and an observance of civil liberties.

Now, the programs that have been discussed over the last couple days in the press are secret in the sense that they're classified. But they're not secret in the sense that when it comes to telephone calls, every Member of Congress has been briefed on this program. With respect to all these programs, the relevant intelligence committees are fully briefed on these programs. These are programs that have been authorized by broad bipartisan majorities repeatedly since 2006.

And so I think, at the outset, it's important to understand that your duly elected representatives have been consistently informed on exactly what we're doing. Now, let me take the two issues separately.

When it comes to telephone calls, nobody is listening to your telephone calls. That's not what this program is about. As was indicated, what the intelligence community is doing is looking at phone numbers and durations of calls. They are not looking at people's names, and they're not looking at content. But by sifting through this so-called metadata, they may identify potential leads with respect to folks who might engage in terrorism. If these folks—if the intelligence community then actually wants to listen to a phone call, they've got to go back to a Federal judge, just like they would in a criminal investigation.

So I want to be very clear—some of the hype that we've been hearing over the last day or so—nobody is listening to the content of people's phone calls. This program, by the way, is fully overseen not just by Congress, but by the FISA Court, a court specially put together to evaluate classified programs to make sure that the executive branch, or Government generally, is not abusing them and that it's being carried out consistent with the Constitution and rule of law.

And so not only does that court authorize the initial gathering of data, but I want to repeat: If anybody in Government wanted to go further than just that top-line data and want to, for example, listen to Jackie Calmes's phone call, they would have to go back to a Federal judge and indicate why, in fact, they were doing further probing.

Now, with respect to the Internet and e-mails, this does not apply to U.S. citizens, and it does not apply to people living in the United States. And again, in this instance, not only is Congress fully apprised of it, but what is also true is that the FISA Court has to authorize it.

So, in summary, what you've got is two programs that were originally authorized by Congress, have been repeatedly authorized by Congress, bipartisan majorities have approved on them, Congress is continually briefed on how these are conducted. There are a whole range of safeguards involved, and Federal judges are overseeing the entire program throughout. We're also setting up—we've also set up an audit process, when I came into office, to make sure that we're, after the fact, making absolutely certain that all the safeguards are being properly observed.

Now, having said all that, you'll remember when I made that speech a couple of weeks ago about the need for us to shift out of a perpetual war mindset, I specifically said that one of the things that we're going to have to discuss and debate is how were we striking this balance between the need to keep the American people safe and our concerns about privacy? Because there are some tradeoffs involved.

Now, I welcome this debate. And I think it's healthy for our democracy. I think it's a sign of maturity, because probably 5 years ago, 6 years ago, we might not have been having this debate. And I think it's interesting that there are some folks on the left, but also some folks on the right, who are now worried about it, who weren't very worried about it when there was a Republican President. I think that's good that we're having this discussion.

But I think it's important for everybody to understand—and I think the American people understand—that there are some tradeoffs involved. I came in with a healthy skepticism about these programs. My team evaluated them. We scrubbed them thoroughly. We actually expanded some of the oversight, increased some of safeguards. But my assessment and my team's assessment was that they help us prevent terrorist attacks. And the modest encroachments on the privacy that are involved in getting phone numbers or duration without a name attached and not looking at content, that on net, it was worth us doing. Some other folks may have a different assessment on that.

But I think it's important to recognize that you can't have a hundred-percent security and also then have a hundred-percent privacy and zero inconvenience. We're going to have to make some choices as a society. And what I can say is, is that in evaluating these programs, they make a difference in our capacity to anticipate and prevent possible terrorist activity. And the fact that they're under very strict supervision by all three branches of Government and that they do not involve listening to people's phone calls, do not involve reading the e-mails of U.S. citizens or U.S. residents absent further action by a Federal court that is entirely consistent with what we would do, for example, in a criminal investigation, I think, on balance, we have established a process and a procedure that the American people should feel comfortable about.

But again, this—these programs are subject to congressional oversight and congressional reauthorization and congressional debate. And if there are Members of Congress who feel differently, then they should speak up. And we're happy to have that debate.

Okay? All right. And we'll have a chance to talk further during the course of the next couple of days.

Classified National Security Information/Privacy

Q. You welcome the debate, sir? Do you welcome the leaks, if you welcome the debate?

The President. I don't welcome leaks, because there's a reason why these programs are classified. I think that there is a suggestion that

somehow any classified program is a quote, unquote "secret" program, which means it's somehow suspicious.

But the fact of the matter is in our modern history, there are a whole range of programs that have been classified because, when it comes to, for example, fighting terror, our goal is to stop folks from doing us harm. And if every step that we're taking to try to prevent a terrorist act is on the front page of the newspapers or on television, then presumably, the people who are trying to do us harm are going to be able to get around our preventive measures. That's why these things are classified.

But that's also why we set up congressional oversight. These are the folks you all vote for as your representatives in Congress, and they're being fully briefed on these programs. And if in fact there was—there were abuses taking place, presumably those Members of Congress could raise those issues very aggressively. They're empowered to do so.

We also have Federal judges that we put in place who are not subject to political pressure. They've got lifetime tenure as Federal judges, and they're empowered to look over our shoulder, at the executive branch, to make sure that these programs aren't being abused.

So we have a system in which some information is classified, and we have a system of checks and balances to make sure that it's not abused. And if in fact this information ends up just being dumped out willy-nilly without regard to risks to the program, risks to the people involved—in some cases, on other leaks, risks to personnel in very dangerous situations—then it's very hard for us to be as effective in protecting the American people.

That's not to suggest that you just say trust me, we're doing the right thing, we know who the bad guys are. And the reason that's not how it works is because we've got congressional oversight and judicial oversight. And if people can't trust not only the executive branch, but also don't trust Congress and don't trust Federal judges to make sure that we're abiding by the Constitution, due process, and rule of law, then we're going to have some problems here.

But my observation is, is that the people who are involved in America's national security, they take this work very seriously. They cherish our Constitution. The last thing they'd be doing is taking programs like this to listen to somebody's phone calls.

And by the way, with respect to my concerns about privacy issues, I will leave this office at some point, sometime in the last—next 3½ years, and after that, I will be a private citizen. And I suspect that, on a list of people who might be targeted so that somebody could read their e-mails or listen to their phone calls, I'd probably be pretty high on that list. It's not as if I don't have a personal interest in making sure my privacy is protected.

But I know that the people who are involved in these programs, they operate like professionals. And these things are very narrowly circumscribed. They're very focused. And in the abstract, you can complain about Big Brother and how this is a potential program run amok, but when you actually look at the details, then I think we've struck the right balance. All right?

Thank you very much, guys. That's it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. at the Fairmont San Jose hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Peter V. Lee, executive director, Covered California; Robert K. Koss, president and chief executive officer, California Endowment; Manuel Abud, president, Telemundo Station Group; Monica K. Lozano, chief executive officer, impreMedia; and Stephen Keppel, economics editor and director of financial content, Univision News. He also referred to former President George W. Bush.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Santa Monica, California

June 7, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Oh, we're okay, guys. Sit down. Thank you. Thank you.

Well, to Peter and Meg, I just want to thank them so much. Not only have they been longtime supporters, back when a lot of people couldn't pronounce my name—[*laughter*]—but more importantly, they have supported so many good causes, most recently Meg's unbelievable work on education here in Los Angeles. We truly appreciate it. They are not only great friends, but they're great citizens. And for them to open up their home like this we very much appreciate. So give them a big round of applause.

As has already been mentioned, we've got your current mayor, who has been able to overcome his natural reticence, his shyness—[*laughter*]—to somehow become one of the finest leaders that we have in this country. We could not be prouder of his tenure, Mayor Villaraigosa. We're grateful for him.

Eric Garcetti and I rode over here together, and we were reminded that the last time I think I was in this neighborhood, I was riding with Eric Garcetti—[*laughter*]—who, at the time, I was still a candidate for President and Eric was doing great work on the city council and one of my earliest supporters. And to see him now have the opportunity to take on all the enormous challenges, but also realize the unbelievable potential of this great city is just really encouraging. So I'm looking for great things out of Eric Garcetti. We're really proud of him.

And I don't remember whether she was in the car or not, but I know she was part of that same team back when we were running, and since that time, she has been elected to Congress, and she is doing great work day in and day out fighting on behalf of working families. So I could not be more grateful for her friendship: Karen Bass is here as well.

Now, Peter gave a pretty exhaustive summary of what we need to do and what we've done, and I'm not sure I've got a lot to add. [*Laughter*] And yet I feel obligated to—[*laughter*]—since you guys wrote these big checks to the DNC—to say something. [*Laughter*] So let me give it a shot. What I'll do is I'll tell—I'll start with a story of what I did yesterday.

Yesterday morning—because I know there are a lot of folks here who are interested in education—yesterday morning I visited a town, Mooresville, North Carolina. And the reason we went down there was because Mooresville ranks 110th, I think, out of 115 school districts in North Carolina when it comes to funding, and yet, in terms of student performance, they rank number 2.

And the reason is, is that the superintendent—and your superintendent, I know, is probably familiar with some of what's happened there—the superintendent there made a radical decision to replace all textbooks with laptops. They just stopped buying textbooks. The theory was, is that textbooks were only being renewed every 7 years. By the time you got it, some third-grader is looking at geography, and the Soviet Union is still around—[*laughter*]—and it's out of date. And so he said, we're just going to move to laptops; we're going to entirely reshape our teacher training process so that they understand how to interact with young people in this new medium.

And so I went from station to station, meeting kids who, in math class, were starting their own businesses on their laptops and tracking profits and losses and inputs and outputs and marketing. In English class, a group was evaluating the Inauguration poem that was read in my first Inauguration, except one of the students was leading the class, writing notes on a board that was automatically transmitted onto the laptops of every student in the class. You had students who said—who bragged about the fact that, we keep on learning even after school is finished, which is not what normally teenagers brag about.

And you have this distillation of what I see as I travel all across the country, which is incredible people, remarkable youth, energy, dynamism, creativity, enthusiasm, optimism about the country. And sometimes, when people ask me, how do you manage through all the crises and so on that you have to deal with every day, I tell them stories like that because it reminds me, as Peter and I were talking about before we walked out, sometimes, we do not fully appreciate what a good hand we've been dealt here in this country.

We have so much going for us, starting with our people. We have a sense of energy and dynamism and creativity that is not matched anywhere in the world. We have a system that is open and creative and disruptive, that when it's operating at its best, gives every single person the chance, if they work hard and they've got a new idea, to achieve their dreams.

When you look at our position in the world, we have been blessed with incredible natural resources. We have an unparalleled university system. We've got the best researchers, the best scientists. We've got incredibly hard workers and an incredibly hard work ethic. And when you add all this up, there's absolutely no reason why the 21st century shouldn't be the American century just like the 20th century.

The one place where we're challenged is not on a particular issue, it's the fact that over the last several years, we've got a Federal Government that has been gridlocked and a political culture that makes it difficult for us to make common cause and make commonsense, smart decisions that would serve those kids that I saw yesterday well.

And that's the reason you're here. That's the reason I ran in 2008. That's the reason I ran in 2012. That's the reason Antonio has been fighting the good fight and Eric is about to take up the challenge and Karen slugs it out in Congress, is because we're interested in changing a political culture in which the focus is on how do we score political points, and instead we focus on how do we get things done on behalf of the next generation. And if we get that right, we cannot be stopped.

On every issue that Peter mentioned, there are solutions that we know can work. You care about education? We have models of schools where kids from the poorest backgrounds, if they're getting early childhood education, if they're getting high-quality teachers, they're going to succeed. They can overcome—they are so resilient, that can overcome stuff that most of us can't even imagine.

You care about climate change? We've doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars and trucks. We have doubled the production of clean energy. We have actually reduced carbon emissions down to 1994 levels, and the entire economy has become more energy efficient. And if we just take a few steps that don't require any reduction in growth or diminution in our standard of living, we can make real progress, and we can lead the world. We know what we need to do.

If you care about jobs and the economy, manufacturing has come roaring back. We've created over half a million new manufacturing jobs at a time when people said, there's no way for manufacturing to succeed in this country. It turns out, actually, that folks are insourcing; they're bringing jobs back here to the United States because of low energy costs, because we've got incredibly productive workers, and we remain a massive market. And if we change our Tax Code, for example, to incentivize manufacturing here in the United States, there's no reason that can't continue.

When it comes to fiscal issues, you'll recall that we had this big debate as recently as 6 months ago about the deficit and the crisis and disaster. Well, it turns out we've actually reduced the deficit now at the fastest pace since World War II. By 2015, the deficit is projected to be 2.1 percent of GDP. It was 10 percent when I came into office.

And if we had just made some sensible decisions with respect to our health care programs and with respect to our Tax Code, the truth of the matter is, is that we can make every investment that we need to make to ensure long-term growth and ensure fiscal stability for generations. We don't have to make the kinds of adjustments that you're seeing Europe have to

make. We don't have to radically transform our economy in ways that the Chinese are going to have to make decisions about over the never several years, because the basic framework that we've got is sound. We just have to buck up and make some sensible decisions.

So there is not a single issue out there where I look at it and I say we can't make progress. And by the way, there's not a single issue out there in which I say what's needed is some deeply ideological, top-down approach. There are a bunch of sensible, commonsense, centrist approaches that would do just fine.

So that's all by way of saying that the reason we're here today is, we've got to figure out how we change that political culture. Now, I've run my last campaign. I have a friend Ab Mikva, in Chicago, a former Congressman, Federal judge, White House Counsel. Ab came from the same neighborhood in Hyde Park where I live. And Ab used to say that being friends with a politician is like perpetually having a kid in college. [*Laughter*] They just—every so often, you got to write this big check. And you're trying to figure out, where is this money going. [*Laughter*] Now, the good news is, I'm about to graduate. [*Laughter*] So—I can't say the same for the rest of these elected officials here, but I've run my last campaign. So all I care about right now is governance and getting things right so that I can look back at this time where I had this incredible privilege of leading this country and say the country is better because of my tenure. That's all I care about, which means that for the next 3 years, every single time I've got an opportunity to do some work with Republicans and they're game to do something sensible, I'm ready to do it.

So, for example, we have seen some hopeful signs that we can get finally a broken immigration reform system fixed, and I intend to get that done before the end of the summer. And for us to be able to accomplish that, we've got to have Republicans who are willing to take what, for them, are some difficult votes and some tough stands. And we've seen some good leadership from people like John McCain and Jeff Flake, but also from folks like Marco Rubio.

And every time I see that opportunity to work with Republicans, I will seize it. And my hope is, is that on things like early childhood education and rebuilding America's infrastructure that traditionally have not been ideological issues that I can get some cooperation out of them.

But I have to say that right now the nature of the Republican Party makes it very difficult for them to engage in commonsense discussions around solving problems. And all of you see it. I don't have to spell it out for you. But within their ranks there is a tendency to believe that compromise is a dirty word and that government is something to be torn down, as opposed to something to be embraced as a facilitator for the private sector and ordinary citizens to be able to achieve their dreams.

And so what that means is, is that I will get a lot more done with a Democratic House, and I sure need to keep a Democratic Senate.

And there shouldn't be any contradiction for people to recognize that wherever I can get cooperation from Republicans, I want cooperation, regardless of the politics. If I've got a bunch of Republicans who, just for purely political reasons, decide we've got to get right with immigration communities and so we're going to pass immigration reform, I'm not concerned about their motives—although, I think the folks who so far have stood up are deeply sincere about what needs to be done—but even if it's political calculation, I'm game.

But what I also know is that deep down, there are some contradictions right now in the Republican Party that makes it hard for them to do what needs to get done in this country. And that's why I'm going to be fighting as hard as I can to make sure that we send to Congress people who share my values and share a sense of America's promise and understand that America's promise is based entirely on the notion that everybody gets a fair shot, regardless of where they came from, what they look like, what their last name is, who they love.

And then, those kids that I saw in Mooresville, there are kids just as gifted, just as talented, just as promising in East L.A. or in South Side of Chicago or in some rural community in

Arkansas, and that we've got to be working for all those kids. That's what, for me, it means to be a Democrat. And I think that's what it means for a lot of you as well.

So I want to thank you for your efforts. I appreciate what Peter said about donor fatigue. On the other hand, we don't have time to be fatigued, because we've got too much to do. And everybody here has been blessed in ways that require us to give something back. Everybody here has got a story to tell, but the truth of the matter is we're here in part because we were lucky enough to be born in a country where if we worked hard and we had a big dream, we could make it happen.

We were lucky. And we've got an obligation then to make sure that folks coming behind us are blessed with that same good luck. And it's within our capacity. So we don't have time to be tired and we don't have excuses. We know what needs to be done. I intend to make sure that it gets done. And I'm going to need your help.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:16 p.m. at the residence of Peter F. and Megan Chernin. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa and Mayor-elect Eric M. Garcetti of Los Angeles, CA; Mark A. Edwards, superintendent, Mooresville Graded School District in Mooresville, NC; John E. Deasy, superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District; and former White House Counsel Abner J. Mikva. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Xi Jinping of China in Rancho Mirage, California

June 7, 2013

President Obama. Well, it gives me great pleasure to welcome President Xi back to the United States. We first met during my visit to China in 2009, and I had the opportunity to welcome him to the Oval Office last year when he was still Vice President and a guest of Vice President Biden's.

I think some of you may know that President Xi is no stranger to the United States. He's remembered fondly in Iowa, where he once visited and stayed with a local family, and on his trip last year, he had a chance to come to California, including, I understand, going to a Lakers game, which I was very jealous of. [*Laughter*]

President Xi just took office in March. Our decision to meet so early, I think, signifies the importance of the U.S.-China relationship. It's important not only for the prosperity of our two countries and the security of our two countries, but it's also important for the Asia-Pacific region and important for the world.

And the importance of this relationship, in some ways, is reflected with this somewhat unusual setting that we are hosting the President in. Our thought was that we would have the opportunity for a more extended and more informal conversation in which we were able to share both our visions for our respective countries and how we can forge a new model of cooperation between countries based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

I think both of us agree that continuous and candid and constructive conversation and communication is critically important to shaping our relationship for years to come.

And for my part, this will give me an opportunity to reiterate how the United States welcomes the continuing peaceful rise of China as a world power and that, in fact, it is in the United States interest that China continues on the path of success, because we believe that a peaceful and stable and prosperous China is not only good for Chinese, but also good for the world and for the United States.

Of course, as two of the largest economies in the world, we're going to have a healthy economic competition, but we also have a whole range of challenges on which we have to

cooperate, from nuclear—North Korea—or North Korea's nuclear and missile programs to proliferation, to issues like climate change.

And the United States seeks an international economy and an international economic order where nations are playing by the same rules, where trade is free and fair, and where the United States and China work together to address issues like cybersecurity and the protection of intellectual property.

In addition to the strategic concerns that we share and the economic challenges that each of our countries face, I will continue to emphasize the importance of human rights. President Xi has spoken of a nation and a people that are committed to continuous self-improvement and progress, and history shows that upholding universal rights are ultimately a key to success and prosperity and justice for all nations.

So I want to again welcome President Xi to the United States. We're very glad that he's here. Inevitably, there are areas of tension between our two countries, but what I've learned over the last 4 years is both the Chinese people and the American people want a strong, cooperative relationship and that I think there's a strong recognition on the part of both President Xi and myself that it is very much in our interests to work together to meet the global challenges that we face. And I'm very much looking forward to this being a strong foundation for the kind of new model of cooperation that we can establish for years to come.

So welcome very—and thank you very much for being here.

Thank you.

President Xi. Honorable President Obama, it's my great pleasure to meet you. We're meeting with each other earlier than people might have expected. They thought that we might have to wait until the Saint Petersburg G–20 summit to wait—to meet with each other, but here we are. I want to thank you for your invitation, and it's my great pleasure to meet you here at the Sunnylands, the Annenberg Estate.

This is a wonderful place, a place of sunshine, and it's very close to the Pacific Ocean. And on the other side of the ocean is China. When I visited the United States last year, I stated that the vast Pacific Ocean has enough space for the two large countries of China and the United States. I still believe so. And, Mr. President, we're meeting here today to chart the future of China-U.S. relations and draw a blueprint for this relationship and continue our cooperation across the Pacific Ocean.

And this reminds us of what happened over 40 years ago, when the leaders of China and the United States, with the strategists' political courage and wisdom, realized a handshake across the Pacific Ocean, and it reopened the door of exchanges between China and the United States. And in the more than 40 years since then, the China-U.S. relationship has gone through winds and rains, and it made historical progress. And our two peoples and the people elsewhere in the world have reaped huge benefits from this.

And at present, the China-U.S. relationship has reached a new historical starting point. Our two countries have vast convergence of shared interests, from promoting our respective economic growth at home to ensuring the stability of the global economy, from addressing international and regional hotspots issues to dealing with all kinds of global challenges. On all these issues, our two countries need to increase exchanges and cooperation.

And under the new environment, we need to take a close look at our bilateral relationship: What kind of China-U.S. relationship do we both want? What kind of cooperation can our two nations carry out for mutual benefit? And how can our two nations join together to promote peace and development in the world? These are things that not just the people in our two countries are watching closely, but the whole world is also watching very closely.

Both sides should proceed from the fundamental interests of our peoples and bear in mind human development and progress. We need to think creatively and act energetically so that working together, we can build a new model of major country relationship.

President Obama, I look forward to having in-depth communication with you on major strategic issues of common interest to deepen our mutual understanding and to push forward all-around cooperation. I'm confident that our meeting will achieve positive outcomes and inject fresh momentum into the China-U.S. relationship.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:21 p.m. at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands. President Xi spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on Representative John D. Dingell, Jr., Becoming the Longest Serving Member of Congress in United States History
June 7, 2013

I want to congratulate Congressman John Dingell on becoming the longest serving Member of Congress in our country's history. First elected in 1955 to the seat formerly held by his father, John Dingell, Sr., John has always worked tirelessly for people of his beloved Michigan and for working families across America. He has helped pass some of the most important laws of the last half-century, from Medicare to the Civil Rights Act to the Clean Air Act to the Affordable Care Act, and he continues to fight for workers' rights, access to affordable health care, and the preservation of our environment for future generations to enjoy.

Michelle and I send our warmest wishes to John and his family. And I look forward to congratulating him in person at the White House next week.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Supplemental Budget Proposal for the Judicial Branch for Fiscal Year 2013
June 7, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As a matter of comity, and consistent with 31 U.S.C. 1107, I am transmitting to the Congress, without modification, the enclosed supplemental proposal from the Judicial Branch for fiscal year 2013.

The details of this request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

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

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Xi Jinping of China and an Exchange With Reporters in Rancho Mirage, California
June 7, 2013

President Obama. Everybody ready? Well, I know we're a little behind, but that's mainly because President Xi and I had a very constructive conversation on a whole range of strategic issues, from North Korea to cyberspace to international institutions. And I'm very much looking forward to continuing the conversation, not only tonight at dinner, but also tomorrow.

But I thought we'd take a quick break just to take a question from both the U.S. and Chinese press. So what I'll do is, I'll start with Julie

Pace [Associated Press], and then President Xi can call on a Chinese counterpart.

Cybersecurity/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. How damaging has Chinese cyber-hacking been to the U.S.? And did you warn your counterpart about any specific consequences if those actions continue? And also, while there are obviously differences between China's alleged actions and your Government's surveillance programs, do you think that the new NSA revelations undermine your position on these issues at all during these talks?

And, President Xi, did——

President Obama. Why don't you let the interpreter——

Q. Sure.

[*At this point, an interpreter translated the questions into Chinese. The reporter then continued as follows.*]

And President Xi, did you acknowledge in your talks with President Obama that China has been launching cyber attacks against the U.S.? Do you also believe that the U.S. is launching similar attacks against China? And if so, can you tell us what any of the targets may have been? Thank you.

[*The interpreter translated the questions into Chinese.*]

President Obama. Well, Julie, first of all, we haven't had, yet, in-depth discussions about the cybersecurity issue. We're speaking at the 40,000-foot level, and we'll have more intensive discussions during this evening's dinner.

What both President Xi and I recognize is that because of these incredible advances in technology, that the issue of cybersecurity and the need for rules and common approaches to cybersecurity are going to be increasingly important as part of bilateral relationships and multilateral relationships.

In some ways, these are uncharted waters, and you don't have the kinds of protocols that have governed military issues, for example, and arms issues, where nations have a lot of experience in trying to negotiate what's acceptable and what's not. And it's critical, as two of the largest economies and military powers in the world, that China and the United States arrives at a firm understanding of how we work together on these issues.

But I think it's important, Julie, to get to the second part of your question, to distinguish between the deep concerns we have as a Government around theft of intellectual property or hacking into systems that might disrupt those systems—whether it's our financial systems, our critical infrastructure, and so forth—versus some of the issues that have been raised around NSA programs.

When it comes to those cybersecurity issues like hacking or theft, those are not issues that are unique to the U.S.-China relationship, those are issues that are of international concern. Oftentimes it's nonstate actors who are engaging in these issues as well. And we're going to have to work very hard to build a system of defenses and protections, both in the private sector and in the public sector, even as we negotiate with other countries around setting up a common rules of the road.

And as China continues in its development process and more of its economy is based on research and innovation and entrepreneurship, they're going to have similar concerns, which is why I believe we can work together on this rather than at cross purposes.

Now, the NSA program, as I discussed this morning, is a very limited issue, but it does have broad implications for our society, because you've got a lot of data out there, a lot of communications that are in cyberspace. And how we deal with both identifying potential terrorists or criminals, how the private sector deals with potential theft, and how the Federal Government, State governments, local governments, and the private sector coordinate to keep out some of these malicious forces while still preserving the openness and the incredible power of the Internet and the web and these new telecommunications systems, that's a complicated and important piece of business. But

it's different from these issues of theft and hacking.

And every government is then inevitably going to be involved in these issues, just like big companies are going to be involved in these issues. I mean, you've got private companies that have a lot more data and a lot more details about people's e-mails and telephone calls than the Federal Government does. And if we're called upon to—not only to make sure that we're anticipating terrorist communications, but we're also called upon to work with the private sector to prevent theft out of ATMs, et cetera, then we're going to have to find ways to deal with this big data in ways that are consistent with our values, in ways that protect people's privacy, that ensure oversight, and strike the right balance.

And as I indicated this morning, that's a conversation that I welcome having.

President Xi. As President Obama said in our meeting this afternoon, we just briefly touched upon the issue of cybersecurity. And the Chinese Government is firm in upholding cybersecurity, and we have major concerns about cybersecurity.

In the few days before President Obama and I meet today, I note sharply increased media coverage of the issue of cybersecurity. This might give people the sense or feeling that cybersecurity as a threat mainly comes from China or that the issue of cybersecurity is the biggest problem in the China-U.S. relationship.

The application of new technology is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it will drive progress in ensuring better material and cultural life for the people. On the other hand, it might create some problems for regulators, and it might infringe upon the rights of states, enterprises, societies, and individuals.

We need to pay close attention to this issue and study ways to effectively resolve this issue. And this matter can actually be an area for China and the United States to work together with each other in a pragmatic way. And I'm happy to learn that, within the context of the China-U.S. strategic and economic dialogue, a working group has been established to discuss cybersecurity issues. So this is an issue that the two sides will continue to discuss.

By conducting good-faith cooperation, we can remove misgivings and make information security and cybersecurity a positive area of cooperation between China and the U.S., because China and the United States both have a need and both share a concern, and China is a victim of cyber attacks, and we hope that earnest measures can be taken to resolve this matter.

Thank you.

China-U.S. Relations

Q. I'm with China Central Television and my question for President Xi is: What are the main issues that were discussed in the longer-than-expected meeting this afternoon? And what are the major areas of consensus that have emerged from the discussion? And last year, when you were visiting the United States, you raised the concept of the two sides working together to explore what you call a new model of major country relationship, something that is unprecedented in the relationship and that can inspire future generations. And after this concept was raised, there has been much discussion and comment on it, both in China and the United States and in the world more broadly. So did you have further discussion on this issue in your meeting this afternoon?

And my question for President Obama is, what will the United States do to contribute to the building of a new model of major country relationship between China and the U.S.?

President Xi. In the first meeting that I've had with President Obama this afternoon, we had an in-depth, sincere, and candid discussion on the domestic and foreign policies of China and the United States, on our joint work to build a new model of major country relationship, and our international and regional issues of mutual interest. And the President and I reached important consensus on these issues.

I stated very clearly to President Obama that China will be firmly committed to the path of peaceful development and China will be firm in deepening reform and opening up the country wider to the world. China will work hard to

realize the Chinese dream of the great national renewal and will work hard to push forward the noble cause of peace and development for all mankind.

By the Chinese dream, we seek to have economic prosperity, national renewal, and people's well-being. The Chinese dream is about cooperation, development, peace, and win-win, and it is connected to the American Dream and the beautiful dreams people in other countries may have.

President Obama and I both believe that in the age of economic globalization and facing the objective need of countries sticking together in the face of difficulties, China and the United States must find a new path, one that is different from the inevitable confrontation and conflict between the major countries of the past. And that is to say, the two sides must work together to build a new model of major country relationship based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation for the benefit of the Chinese and American peoples and people elsewhere in the world.

The international community looks to China and the United States to deliver this. When China and the United States work together, we can be an anchor for world stability and the propeller of world peace.

I stand ready to work with President Obama to expand on all levels of exchanges between the two sides. I look forward to maintaining close communication with the President through mutual visits, bilateral meetings, exchange of letters, and phone calls. And I invite President Obama to come to China at an appropriate time for a similar meeting like this. And we look forward to visiting each other's country.

At the same time, the two sides will work hard to make progress in the various bilateral mechanisms, such as the strategic and economic dialogue and the high-level consultation on people-to-people exchange. Also, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chinese Minister of National Defense will both make visits to the United States within the year.

Our two sides should also step up exchanges and cooperation in economy and trade, energy, environment, people-to-people, and cultural fields, as well as at the subnational level, so that we can deepen the shared interests of the two countries and expand them to all areas.

We should also improve and strengthen the military-to-military relationship between the two countries and promote the building of a new model of military relationship between the two sides. The two sides should also improve coordination on microeconomic policies so that, by strengthening cooperation, we can contribute to our respective development at home and promote strong, sustainable, and balanced economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region and the world at large.

And I'm confident in our joint effort to build a new model of major country relationship. I believe success hinges on the human effort. Firstly, both sides have the political will to build this relationship. Secondly, our cooperation in the last 40 years provides a good foundation for us to build on. Thirdly, between China and the United States, there are over 90 intergovernmental mechanisms which provide the institutional underpinning for our efforts.

Fourth, there is strong public support for this kind of relationship between China and the United States. There are 220 pairs of sister Provinces, States, and cities between China and the U.S. There are 190,000 Chinese students in the United States and 20,000 American students in China. And fifth, there is enormous scope for future cooperation between China and the U.S.

Of course, this endeavor is unprecedented and one that will inspire future generations. So we need to deepen our mutual understanding, strengthen our mutual trust, further develop our cooperation, and manage our differences so that we can avoid the traditional path of inevitable confrontation between major countries and really embark on a new path.

The Chinese nation and American nation are great nations, and the Chinese people and the American people are great peoples. As long as we stand high and look far, as long as we make specific progress and accumulate them over time, as long as we maintain confidence and determination, as long as we have wisdom

and patience, I'm confident that we will succeed in achieving this historical mission.

I'm sorry for going too long. Thank you.

President Obama. Well, I think President Xi summarized very well the scope of our conversations. We spoke about some very specific issues; for example, President Xi mentioned the importance of military-to-military communications. In the past, we've had high-level diplomatic communications about economic and strategic issues, but we haven't always had as effective communications between our militaries. And at a time when there's so much activity around the world, it's very important that we each understand our strategic objectives at the military as well as the political levels. So that's an example of concrete progress that can advance this new model of relations between the United States and China.

So we'll be taking steps to institutionalize and regularize such discussions. But more broadly, I think President Xi identified the essence of our discussions in which we shared our respective visions for our countries' futures and agreed that we're more likely to achieve our objectives of prosperity and security of our people if we are working together cooperatively, rather than engaged in conflict.

And I emphasized my firm belief to President Xi that it is very much in the interest of the United States for China to continue its peaceful rise, because if China is successful, that helps to drive the world economy, and it puts China in the position to work with us as equal partners in dealing with many of the global challenges that no single nation can address by itself.

So, for example, neither country by itself can deal with the challenge of climate change. That's an issue that we'll have to deal with together. China, as the largest country, as it continues to develop, will be a larger and larger carbon emitter unless we find new mechanisms for green growth. The United States, we have the largest carbon footprint per capita in the world; we've got to bring down our carbon levels in order to accommodate continued growth. And so that will translate then into opportunities for specific work around green technologies and research and development and interactions between our scientists so that we can, together, help advance the goal of a sustainable planet, even as we continue to grow and develop.

We've got a lot of work to do to take these broad understandings down to the level of specifics and that will require further discussions not only today and tomorrow, but for weeks, months, years to come. But what I'm very encouraged about is that both President Xi and myself recognize we have a unique opportunity to take the U.S.-China relationship to a new level. And I am absolutely committed to making sure that we don't miss that opportunity.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:09 p.m. at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands. President Xi referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Yi Wang and Minister of National Defense Chang Wanquan of China. President Xi and a reporter spoke in Chinese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's Weekly Address
June 8, 2013

Hi, everybody. In the next few days, America will take an important step towards fixing our broken immigration system. The entire United States Senate will begin debating a commonsense immigration reform bill that has bipartisan support.

We define ourselves as a nation of immigrants. The promise we find in those who come from every corner of the globe has always been one of our greatest strengths. It's kept our workforce vibrant and dynamic, it's kept our businesses on the cutting edge, and it's helped build the greatest economic engine the world has ever known. But for years, our out-of-date immigration system has actually harmed our economy and threatened our security.

Now, over the past 4 years, we've taken steps to try to patch up some of the worst cracks in the system. We strengthened security on the southern border by putting more boots on the ground than at any time in our history. And in part by using technology more effectively, today, illegal crossings are near their lowest level in decades. We focused enforcement efforts on criminals who are here illegally—who endanger our communities—and today, we deport more criminals than ever before.

And we took up the cause of DREAMers, the young people who were brought to this country as children. We said that if they're able to meet certain criteria, we'd consider offering them the chance to come out of the shadows so they can continue to work here and study here and contribute to our communities legally.

But if we're going to truly fix a broken system, we need Congress to act in a comprehensive way. And that's why what's happening next week is so important. Now, the bill before the Senate isn't perfect; it's a compromise. Nobody will get everything they want: not Democrats, not Republicans, not me. But it is a bill that's largely consistent with the principles I've repeatedly laid out for commonsense immigration reform.

This bill would continue to strengthen security at our borders, increase criminal penalties against smugglers and traffickers, and hold employers more accountable if they knowingly hire undocumented workers. If enacted, it would represent the most ambitious enforcement plan in recent memory.

This bill would provide a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million individuals who are already in this country illegally, a pathway that includes passing a background check, learning English, paying taxes and a penalty, and then going to the back of the line, behind everyone who's playing by the rules and trying to come here legally.

This bill would modernize the legal immigration system so that, alongside training American workers for the jobs of tomorrow, we're also attracting highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers who will grow our economy, and so that our people don't have to wait years before their loved ones are able to join them in this country that we love.

That's what immigration reform looks like: smarter enforcement, a pathway to earn citizenship, improvements to the legal immigration system. They're all commonsense steps. They've got broad support from Republicans and Democrats, CEOs and labor leaders, law enforcement and clergy. So there is no reason that Congress can't work together to send a bill to my desk by the end of the summer.

We know the opponents of reform are going to do everything they can to prevent that. They'll try to stoke fear and create division. They'll try to play politics with an issue that the vast majority of Americans want addressed. And if they succeed, we will lose this chance to finally fix an immigration system that is badly broken.

So if you agree that now is the time for commonsense reform, reach out to your representatives. Tell them we have to get this done so that everyone is playing by the same rules. Tell them we have the power to do this in a way that lives up to our traditions as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

In the end, that's what this is all about. Men and women who want nothing more than the chance to earn their way into the American story, just like so many of our ancestors did. Throughout our history, that has only made us stronger. And it's how we'll make sure that America's best days always lie ahead.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:25 p.m. on June 6 in the band room at Mooresville Middle School in Mooresville, NC, for broadcast on June 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 8.

Remarks on the 50th Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act
June 10, 2013

The President. Thanks so much, everybody. Everybody have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House. It is wonderful to see all of you. Thank you, Joe, for that kind introduction. Thank you, Valerie, for the great leadership you've shown on this. And to all of you—business leaders and advocates, Members of Congress who are here, members of my administration—I am so glad that all of you could be here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act.

Now, when you think about it, we're not just celebrating a law, we're honoring the heroes who made that law possible, the fierce determination of Americans who saw a wrong and worked to right it. There were women who were sick and tired of being sick and tired—[*laughter*]—of seeing the same jobs advertised with different pay scales; women who were tired of being treated like second-class workers; women like Dorothy Height and Congresswoman Edna Kelly and Esther Peterson, all who pushed to make the Equal Pay Act a reality. And today we recognize the work of those brave women. But until equal pay truly is a reality, we're also here to recommit ourselves to the work that remains to be done.

Fifty years ago today, President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law, right here in the White House. He said it was basic to our democracy. It's the idea that all of us are created equal. And as I said in my Inaugural Address this year, our journey to equality is not complete until our wives, our mothers, our daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts.

The day that the bill was signed into law, women earned 30—59 cents for every dollar a man earned, on average. Today, it's about 77 cents. So it was 59, and now it's 77 cents. It's even less, by the way, if you're an African American or a Latina. So I guess that's progress, but does anybody here think that's good enough?

Audience members. No!

The President. I assume everybody thinks we can do better.

Audience members. Yes!

Audience member. We can.

The President. Yes, we can. [*Laughter*] So—[*applause*]. That's right.

Over the course of her career, a working woman with a college degree will earn, on average, hundreds of thousands of dollars less than a man who does the same work. Now, that's wrong. I don't want that for Malia and Sasha. I don't want that for your daughters. I don't want that to be an example that any child growing up ends up accepting as somehow the norm. I want every child to grow up knowing that a woman's hard work is valued and rewarded just as much as any man's.

Now, what's important to realize also, though, is this is not just an issue of fairness. This is a family issue. This is a middle class issue. This is an economic issue. Just last week, a report confirmed what we already know: that women are increasingly the breadwinners for American families. Women are now the primary source of income for nearly 40 percent of American families. Forty percent, almost half.

That's not something to panic about or to be afraid about, that's a sign of the progress and the strides that we've made. But what it does mean is that when more women are bringing home the bacon, they shouldn't just be getting a little bit of bacon. [*Laughter*] If they're bringing home more of the income and that income is less than a fair share, that means that families have less to get by on for childcare or health care or gas or groceries. It makes it harder for middle class families to save and retire. It leaves small businesses with customers who have less money in their pockets, which is not good for the economy. That's not a good example to set for our sons and daughters, but it's also not a good recipe for long-term, stable economic growth.

So to anyone who says 77 cents on the dollar sounds pretty close to equal, I say, you're math is bad. [*Laughter*] You wouldn't like it if your

vote only counted in three out of four elections. [*Laughter*] You wouldn't like it if your daughters or sons went to school, but they only got taught 3 out of 4 days a week or 4 out of 5 days a week. You wouldn't like it if you were forced to work every fourth day without pay. Men would be complaining about that. [*Laughter*] They wouldn't think that was equal or fair.

So this is the 21st century. It's time to close that gap. That's why the first bill I signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.

That's why, as Valerie mentioned, I created the first-ever White House Council on Women and Girls, which is working to close that gap. And Valerie's Council—this Council is doing a great job in bringing the experiences of women into our Federal policies as well.

It's why I established a National Equal Pay Task Force to help crack down on violations of equal pay laws, which, by the way, they're doing at a record rate. And through education and outreach, they're also helping employers develop tools to comply with the Nation's equal pay laws on their own. And that's why, earlier this year, I signed a Presidential memorandum directing the Federal Government to close that gap for good for its employees. Right? We have to set an example.

It's also why we're using the latest technology to help workers get the information they need to figure out if they're underpaid. And thanks to innovators like Rachel and Laquitta, who are up here, we can now say, "There's an app for that." [*Laughter*] But as long as this gap persists, we're going to have more work to do. And now is the time to keep up the work that all those trailblazers started 50 years ago.

Now is the time for Congress to step up and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act so women have better tools to fight for equal pay for equal work. Now is the time for us to encourage more young women to pursue math and science education. Now is the time for us to hire more STEM teachers so all our children are prepared for the high-tech, high-wage jobs of tomorrow.

Now is the time to make sure businesses offer men and women the flexibility to be good employees and good parents. And I really want to commend Deloitte and SumAll and the CEOs who are with us here today. They are creating exactly the kind of—kinds of innovative workplaces that help hard-working Americans thrive, and they're committed to pay equity. And so when you have a chance to talk to Joe, say thank you. And CEOs who are out there, if you want a first-class company that is tapping into the talents and resources of all your employees, make sure that you're putting in place systems so that they all feel like they're being treated fairly and equally. It's a simple principle, and it's a powerful one.

And now is the time to make sure that we are putting in place a minimum wage that you can live on, because 60 percent of those making the minimum wage are women.

We do all this, and this will be part of our broader agenda to create good jobs and to strengthen middle class security, to keep rebuilding an economy that works for everybody, that gives every American the chance to get ahead, no matter who you are or what you look like, what your last name is, who you love.

That's what I'm going to keep on fighting for. That's what you're going to keep on fighting for. And we have all of you and your predecessors to thank for the incredible progress this country has made in eliminating the barriers and injustices that might keep our daughters from enjoying the same rights, same chances, and same freedoms as our sons. I'm proud of you.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Joe Echevarria, chief executive officer, Deloitte LLP; White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett, in her capacity as Chair of the White House Council on Women and Girls; and Rachel Koch of Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College and Laquitta Martell-DeMerchant of Fuzion Apps, Inc., winners of the Department of Labor's Equal Pay App Challenge. He also referred to the May 10 memorandum on advancing pay equality in the Federal Government, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Resignation of Alan B. Krueger as Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and the Nomination of Jason L. Furman To Be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers

June 10, 2013

Good afternoon, all of you. It's now been nearly 5 years since an economic crisis and a punishing recession came together to cost far too many Americans their jobs and their homes and the sense of security that they had built up over time. And by the time I took office, my team and I were facing bubbles that had burst, markets that had cratered, bank after bank on the verge of collapse. And the heartbeat of American manufacturing, our auto industry, was flatlining. And all this meant that hundreds of thousands of Americans were losing their jobs each month. So this was a scary time. And nobody had any idea where the bottom would be.

Four and a half years later, our businesses have created nearly 7 million new jobs over the past 36 months. The American auto industry has come roaring back. We're producing more of our own energy; we're consuming less that we import from other countries. Our deficits are shrinking rapidly. The cost of health care is slowing. The housing market is rebounding. People's retirement savings are growing. The wealth that was lost from that recession has now been recovered.

All of this progress is a testament to the grit and resolve of the American people, most of all. But it's also due in some measurable way to the incredible dedication of the men and women who helped to engineer America's response. And two of those people are standing next to me, two very smart economists: Alan Krueger and Jason Furman.

Today I can announce that Alan is heading back to teach his beloved students at Michelle's alma mater, Princeton University. When they get together, all they can talk about is Princeton, and they're all very proud, and those of us who didn't go to Princeton have to put up with it. [*Laughter*] And I'm proud to say that Jason Furman has agreed to replace Alan as the Chairman of my Council of Economic Advisers.

Now, during the crisis, Alan stepped in initially to help engineer our response as Assistant Secretary and chief economist at the Treasury Department. He was so good that we then had to beg him to come back, extend his tour, to serve as the Chairman of my Council of Economic Advisers, where he's been the driving force behind actions that we've taken to help restart the flow of lending to small businesses and create new jobs and arm workers with the skills they need to fill them, to reduce income inequality, to rebuild our aging infrastructure, and to bring down our deficits in a responsible way.

And Alan is driven by the basic bargain at the heart of our economy: the idea that hard work should be rewarded. He's motivated by the principle that no one who works full time in the greatest nation on Earth should have to raise their families in poverty or below poverty levels. His commitment to a rising, thriving middle class shines through in his often passionate presentations and—at least for an economist, they're passionate—[*laughter*]—and in the policies that he's pushed, and I know this will continue to be a focus of his research.

Alan's wife and son are here today, and I know that they're all looking forward to having Alan back. [*Laughter*] And now that Alan has some free time, he can return to another burning passion of his: "rockonomics," the economics of rock and roll. This is something that Alan actually cares about; seriously, on Wednesday, he's giving a speech at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He's got a T-shirt under his suit—[*laughter*]—with a big tongue sticking out. [*Laughter*] Don't show it. [*Laughter*]

So Alan has become one of my most trusted advisers. He's become a wonderful friend. I'm sad to see him go. But I know that he will continue to do outstanding work, and fortunately, he'll still be available for us to consult with him periodically, because he's a constant font of

good ideas about how we can further help the American people. So thank you very much, Alan, for all the good work that you've done.

Now, I'm also proud to nominate another outstanding economist to take his place. Jason Furman is one of the most brilliant economic minds of his generation. Don't take my word for it: You can talk to other economists who know a lot more than I do about it. He's won the respect and admiration from his peers across the political spectrum. His Ph.D. thesis adviser, Greg Mankiw, chaired the Council of Economic Advisers under George W. Bush. Nobel Prize Winner Joe Stiglitz, on the other side of the economic spectrum, hired Jason to work for the CEA under President Clinton.

After leaving President Clinton's White House, Jason finished his Ph.D. in economics, quickly acquired a reputation as a world-class scholar and researcher. But public service kept calling, and Jason's kept answering that call because he believes deeply in it. So from working at the World Bank on issues of inequality and international finance to developing new proposals to strengthen our health and retirement programs, he helped to shape some of our most important economic policy debates.

And when I asked him to join my team in 2008, even though his baby daughter—that's right—[*laughter*]—you were this big, had just been born—he agreed to serve once again. And over the last 5 years, I've come to trust not only his head, but also his heart, because Jason never forgets who it is that we're fighting for: middle class families, folks who are working hard to climb their way into the middle class, the next generation.

And when the stakes are highest, there's no one I'd rather turn to for straightforward, unvarnished advice that helps me to do my job. He understands all sides of an argument, not just one side of it. He's worked tirelessly on just about every major economic challenge of the past 4½ years, from averting a second depression to fighting for tax cuts that help millions of working families make ends meet, to creating new incentives for businesses to hire, to reducing our deficits in a balanced way that benefits the middle class.

And so Eve, Jason's wife, who is an accomplished writer herself, has put up with a lot of hours with Jason away. Henry and Louisa, who are here, they've made a lot of sacrifices so that their husband and dad could be here working for the American people. So I appreciate you guys for sharing daddy—[*laughter*]—just a little bit longer. [*Laughter*] And the reason it's important is because, while we've cleared away the rubble of crisis and laid a new foundation for growth, our work is nowhere near done.

Even though the economy is growing, too many middle class families still feel like they're working harder and harder and can't get ahead. Inequality is still growing in our society. Too many young people aren't sure whether they'll be able to match the living standards of their parents. We have too many kids in poverty in this country still.

There are some basic steps that we can take to strengthen the position of working people in this country, to help our economy grow faster, to make sure that it's more competitive. And some of that requires political will. Some of it requires an abiding passion for making sure everybody in this country has a fair shot. But it also requires good economists. I know it's called a dismal science, but I don't find it that dismal. [*Laughter*] I think it's actually pretty interesting. Alan and Jason appreciate that. [*Laughter*] So sometimes, the rest of my staff thinks, oh, Obama is getting together with his economists, and they're going to have a wonkfest for the next hour. [*Laughter*]

But this stuff matters. It's not just numbers on a page. It makes a difference in terms of whether or not people get a chance at life and also, how do we optimize opportunity and make sure that it—we don't have a contradiction between an efficient, growing, free market economy, and one in which everybody gets a fair shot and where we're caring for the vulnerable and the disabled and folks in our society who need help.

So a growing economy that creates good middle class jobs, that rewards hard work and responsibility, that's our north star. Jason shares that focus. I know Alan shares that passion. In Jason's new role as the Chairman of

the Economic—Council of Economic Advisers, he'll be working with some of our country's leading economists, including Jim Stock, who has joined us. And I'm relying on them to provide analysis and recommendations with just one thing in mind: What's going to do the most good for the most people in this country, not what's best for a political party, not what's best for a special interest. I don't have another election. It's not what's best for me—what's best for our middle class, and everybody who is working hard to get there. That's what the American people deserve.

So I would urge the Senate to swiftly confirm Jason Furman. And I want to again thank Alan for his outstanding service. I want to thank Jason and his family for continuing to serve the country they love. And for all the economists in the room, thank you for the occasionally underappreciated work that you do. [*Laughter*]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lisa Simon Krueger, wife, and Benjamin, son, of Chairman Krueger; Eve Gerber, wife, and Louisa and Henry, children, of Chairman-designate Furman; and James H. Stock, member, Council of Economic Advisers.

Remarks on Immigration Reform
June 11, 2013

Well, good morning, everybody. Welcome to the White House. It is a pleasure to have so many distinguished Americans today from so many different walks of life. We've got Democrats and Republicans; we've got labor and business leaders up on stage; we have law enforcement and clergy—Americans who don't see eye to eye on every issue, in fact, in some cases, don't see eye to eye on just about any issue—[*laughter*]—but who are today standing united in support of the legislation that is front and center in Congress this week: a bipartisan bill to fix our broken immigration system.

And I have to say, please give Tolu another round of applause. She did a wonderful job. It takes a lot of courage to do what Tolu did: to step out of the shadows, to share her story, and to hope that, despite the risks, she could make a difference. But Tolu, I think, is representative of so many DREAMers out there who have worked so hard—and I've had a chance to meet so many of them—who've been willing to give a face to the undocumented and have inspired a movement across America. And with each step, they've reminded us, time and again, what this debate is all about. This is not an abstract debate. This is about incredible young people who understand themselves to be Americans, who have done everything right, but have still been hampered in achieving their American Dream.

And they remind us that we're a nation of immigrants. Throughout our history, the promise we found in those who come from every corner of the globe has always been one of our greatest strengths. It's kept our workforce vibrant and dynamic. It's kept our businesses on the cutting edge. It's helped build the greatest economic engine that the world has ever known.

When I speak to other world leaders, one of the biggest advantages we have economically is our demographics. We're constantly replenishing ourselves with talent from all across the globe. No other country can match that history.

[*At this point, a beeping noise came from the audience.*]

And what was true years ago is still true today. Who's beeping over there? [*Laughter*] You're feeling kind of self-conscious, aren't you? [*Laughter*] It's okay.

In recent years, one in four of America's new small-business owners were immigrants. One in four high-tech startups in America were founded by immigrants. Forty percent of Fortune 500 companies were started by a first- or second-generation

American. Think about that: Almost half of the Fortune 500 companies, when they were started, were started by first- or second-generation immigrants. So immigration isn't just part of our national character, it is a driving force in our economy that creates jobs and prosperity for all of our citizens.

Now, here's the thing: Over the past two decades, our immigration system hasn't kept pace with changing times and hasn't matched up with our most cherished values.

Right now our immigration system invites the best and the brightest from all over the world to come and study at our top universities, and then once they finish—once they've gotten the training they need to build a new invention or create a new business—our system too often tells them to go back home so that other countries can reap the benefits: the new jobs, the new businesses, the new industries. That's not smart. But that's the broken system we have today.

Right now our immigration system keeps families apart for years at a time, even for folks who, technically, under the legal immigration system, should be eligible to become citizens, but it is so long and so cumbersome, so byzantine, that families end up being separated for years. Because of a backlog in visas, people who come here legally—who are ready to give it their all to earn their place in America—end up waiting for years to join their loved ones here in the United States. It's not right. But that's the broken system we have today.

Right now our immigration system has no credible way of dealing with the 11 million men and women who are in this country illegally. And yes, they broke the rules; they didn't wait their turn. They shouldn't be let off easy. They shouldn't be allowed to game the system. But at the same time, the vast majority of these individuals aren't looking for any trouble. They're just looking to provide for their families, contribute to their communities.

They're our neighbors. We know their kids. Too often, they're forced to do what they do in a shadow economy, where shady employers can exploit them by paying less than the minimum wage, making them work without overtime, not giving them any benefits. That pushes down standards for all workers. It's bad for everybody, because all the businesses that do play by the rules, that hire people legally, that pay them fairly, they're at a competitive disadvantage. American workers end up being at a competitive disadvantage. It's not fair. But that's the broken system that we have today.

Now, over the past 4 years, we've tried to patch up some of the worst cracks in the system. We made border security a top priority. Today, we have twice as many border patrol agents as we did in 2004. We have more boots on the ground along our southern border than at any time in our history. And in part, by using technology more effectively, illegal crossings are near their lowest level in decades.

We focused our enforcement efforts on criminals who are here illegally and who are endangering our communities. And today, deportation of criminals is at its highest level ever.

And having put border security in place, having refocused on those who could do our communities harm, we also then took up the cause of the DREAMers, young people like Tolu who were brought to this country as children. We said that if you're able to meet some basic criteria, like pursuing a higher education, then we'll consider offering you the chance to come out of the shadows so you can continue to work here and study here and contribute to our communities legally.

So my administration has done what we can on our own. And we've got members of my administration here who've done outstanding work over the past few years to try to close up some of the gaps that exist in the system. But the system is still broken. And to truly deal with this issue, Congress needs to act. And that moment is now.

This week, the Senate will consider a commonsense, bipartisan bill that is the best chance we've had in years to fix our broken immigration system. It will build on what we've done and continue to strengthen our borders. It will make sure that businesses and workers are all playing by the same set of rules, and it includes tough penalties for those who don't.

It's fair for middle class families, by making sure that those who are brought into the system pay their fair share in taxes and for services. And it's fair for those who try to immigrate legally by stopping those who try to skip the line. It's the right thing to do.

Now, this bill isn't perfect. It's a compromise. And going forward, nobody is going to get everything that they want: not Democrats, not Republicans, not me. But this is a bill that's largely consistent with the principles that I and the people on this stage have laid out for commonsense reform.

First of all, if passed, this bill would be the biggest commitment to border security in our Nation's history. It would put another $6.5 billion—on top of what we're already spending—towards stronger, smarter security along our borders. It would increase criminal penalties against smugglers and traffickers. It would finally give every employer a reliable way to check that every person they're hiring is here legally. And it would hold employers more accountable if they knowingly hire undocumented workers. So it strengthens border security, but also enforcement within our borders.

I know there's a lot of talk right now about border security, so let me repeat: Today, illegal crossings are near their lowest level in decades. And if passed, the Senate bill—as currently written and as hitting the floor—would put in place the toughest border enforcement plan that America has ever seen. So nobody is taking border enforcement lightly. That's part of this bill.

Number two, this bill would provide a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million individuals who are in this country illegally. So that pathway is arduous. You've got to pass background checks. You've got to learn English. You've got to pay taxes and a penalty. And then you've got to go to the back of the line behind everybody who's done things the right way and have tried to come here legally.

So this won't be a quick process. It will take at least 13 years before the vast majority of these individuals are able to even apply for citizenship. So this is no cakewalk. But it's the only way we can make sure that everyone who's here is playing by the same rules as ordinary families: paying taxes and getting their own health insurance.

That's why, for immigration reform to work, it must be clear from the outset that there is a pathway to citizenship. If we're asking everybody to play by the same rules, you got to give people a sense of certainty that they go through all these sacrifices, do all this, that there's, at the end of the horizon, the opportunity—not the guarantee, but the opportunity—to be part of this American family. And by the way, a majority of Americans support this idea.

Number three, this bill would modernize the legal immigration system so that, alongside training American workers for the jobs of tomorrow, we're also attracting the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers from around the world who will ultimately grow our economy. And this bill would help make sure that our people don't have to wait years before their loved ones are able to join them here in America.

So that's what immigration reform looks like: smarter enforcement, a pathway to earned citizenship, improvements to our legal system. They're all commonsense steps. They've got bipartisan support. They've got the support of a broad cross-section of leaders from every walk of life. So there's no reason Congress can't get this done by the end of the summer.

Remember, the process that led to this bill was open and inclusive. For months, the bipartisan Gang of Eight looked at every issue, reconciled competing ideas, built a compromise that works. Then the Judiciary Committee held numerous hearings. More than a hundred amendments were added, often with bipartisan support. And the good news is, every day that goes by, more and more Republicans and Democrats are coming out to support this commonsense immigration reform bill.

And I'm sure the bill will go through a few more changes in the weeks to come. But this much is clear: If you genuinely believe we need to fix our broken immigration system, there's no good reason to stand in the way of this bill. A lot of people—Democrats and Republicans—have done a lot of good work on

this bill. So if you're serious about actually fixing the system, then this is the vehicle to do it.

If you're not serious about it, if you think that a broken system is the best America can do, then I guess it might make sense to try to block it. But if you're actually serious and sincere about fixing a broken system, this is the vehicle to do it. And now is the time to get it done. There is no good reason to play procedural games or engage in obstruction just to block the best chance we've had in years to address this problem in a way that's fair to middle class families, to business owners, to legal immigrants.

And there's no good reason to undo the progress we've already made, especially when it comes to extreme steps like stripping protections from DREAMers that my administration has provided or asking law enforcement to treat them the same way they treat violent criminals. That's not who we are.

We owe it to America to do better. We owe it to the DREAMers to do better. We owe it to the young people like Tolu and Diego Sánchez, who's with us here today. Where's Diego? Right here. Diego came here from Argentina with his parents when he was just a kid, and growing up, America was his home. This is where he went to school. This is where he made friends. This is where he built a life. You ask Diego, and he'll tell you, he feels American in every way except one: on paper.

In high school, Diego found out that he was undocumented. Think about that. With all the stuff you're already dealing with in high school—[*laughter*]—and suddenly: "Oh, man. Really?" [*Laughter*] So he had done everything right—stayed out of trouble, excelled in class, contributed to his community—feeling hopeful about his future, and suddenly, he finds out he's got to live in fear of deportation: watching his friends get their licenses knowing he couldn't get one himself; seeing his classmates apply for summer jobs knowing he couldn't do that either.

When Diego heard that we were going to offer a chance for folks like him to emerge from the shadows, he went and signed up. All he wanted, he said, was a chance to, "live a normal life" and to "contribute to the country I love." And Diego, this year, was approved for deferred action. A few weeks ago, he graduated from St. Thomas University, where he was student body president and student of the year.

So now he's set his sights higher—master's degree and then law school—so he can pursue a career in public policy, help America shape its future. Why wouldn't we want to do the right thing by Diego? What rationale is there out there that we wouldn't want to make sure Diego achieves his dreams? Because if he does, that helps us all achieve our dreams.

So, in the weeks to come, you'll hear some opponents of immigration reform try to gin up fear and create division and spread the same old rumors and untruths that we've heard before. And when that happens, I want you to think about Tolu, I want you to think about Diego, and I want you to think about your own parents and your own grandparents and your own great-grandparents and all the men and women and children who came here. The notion that somehow those who came through Ellis Island had all their papers right—[*laughter*]—had checked every box and followed procedures as they were getting on that boat—they were looking for a better life just like these families. And they want to earn their way into the American story.

And if you're willing to stand with them—and if you're willing to stand with all these outstanding leaders up here—then now is the time to make your voice heard. You need to call and e-mail and tweet your Senators and tell them, don't kick this problem down the road. Come together. Work together. Do your job not only to fix a broken immigration system once and for all, but to leave something better for all the generations to come, to make sure we continue to be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. Do the right thing.

Thanks. God bless you. God bless America. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to immigration reform activist Tolu Olubunmi, who introduced the President;

Sens. Marco A. Rubio, Jeffrey L. Flake, John S. McCain III, Lindsey O. Graham, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, Charles E. Schumer, and Michael F. Bennet; and Luis Sánchez and Alejandra Saucedo, parents of immigration reform activist Diego N. Sánchez.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Ollanta Moises Humala Tasso of Peru

June 11, 2013

President Obama. I'm very happy to welcome President Humala and his delegation to the Oval Office. We've been able to work together and interact in a wide range of multilateral forums, but this is the first time that I've been able to have the President here in Washington.

Peru is one of our strongest and most reliable partners in the hemisphere. We have a strong commercial and trading relationship. We cooperate on a wide range of security issues, including our counternarcotics efforts. And we spent most of our discussion focused on how we can further deepen this important bilateral relationship.

I want to congratulate President Humala on being able to sustain strong growth rates in Peru and his focus on broad-based economic growth that includes all people. As a consequence, Peru has been able to see not only increased growth, but also reduced poverty and steps to reduce inequality.

For both the United States and Peru, growth is also dependent on our continued expansion in the global marketplace, and that's why I'm very glad that Peru and the United States are working so closely together in finalizing the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which offers the possibility of opening up markets throughout the Asia-Pacific region with high standards and protections for labor and the environment.

We've also agreed to a number of bilateral programs that will strengthen our cooperation. For example, as part of my 100,000 Strong in the Americas program, we're going to deepen education exchange programs between our two countries, and we're also focusing on how we work together to include small businesses and medium-sized businesses in a hemisphere-wide network that allows those businesses to access markets throughout the region.

And we also talked about how we can deepen, at a strategic level, our work together to continue to combat the scourge of transnational drug networks that have an adverse impact not only in Peru, but throughout the region.

So overall, the state of our relationship is very strong. I think it will become even stronger as a result of some of the initiatives that we've shaped in this meeting. And I'm very glad that President Humala was able to visit us. I also wish the Peruvian soccer team the best of luck this evening. [*Laughter*]

President Humala. Thank you very much, President Obama. My visit here is a sign of the strength that we want to carry out in our relationships between the United States and Peru.

We have found in your administration an open environment in which we can build on all the strategic areas so as to strengthen our bonds. I am convinced that under your administration, we will substantively and qualitatively fight against the scourge of drugs.

But that has not been the only topic that we have addressed during our talk. We have also discussed about education, training, science, technology, and strengthening the capacities of our young population. We wish to move forward on exchange programs and scholarships not only with the States—the United States, but also with the states of the union, so that way we can provide young people more opportunities.

We have agreed on the importance of building democracy, on respecting human rights, on improving economic openness, on working on trade, because this allows us to grow our economies and to develop further. In addition, we have highlighted that Peru is an important trade partner with the United States. We

provide economic growth. We have economic trust. We also provide a legal stability.

Finally, we have invited President Obama, despite his busy agenda, to visit Peru. I hope he does find the time to come down and visit us.

We would like to thank you for your well wishes for the match this afternoon. The referee is from the U.S. [*Laughter*] No, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. [*Laughter*] This is not true. I'm just kidding.

President Obama. Well, if it was, hopefully, the Peruvian team will be so strong that it doesn't need help from the referee. [*Laughter*]

Gracias. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Humala spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Ollanta Moises Humala Tasso of Peru

June 11, 2013

TOWARD A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

President Barack Obama and President Ollanta Humala reaffirmed today their desire to strengthen the U.S.-Peru relationship by further deepening cooperation on economic prosperity and social inclusion; education; science and technology; and citizen security. The two leaders resolved to continue working together on a diversified cooperative agenda to bolster our relationship and ensure it remains strong and relevant to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Both Presidents acknowledged the historic relationship between our two nations and reaffirmed their intent to strengthen and deepen it based on shared fundamental values and principles such as democracy, respect for human rights, belief in open markets, and the rule of law.

Both leaders also recognized that the United States and Peru are working to consolidate a strategic partnership for the 21st century that will further enhance security, prosperity and development in the hemisphere.

They also welcomed closer relationships at the state and local level to expand opportunities for mutual cooperation.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Underpinning our successful U.S.-Peru economic relationship is the successful implementation of the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement, which facilitated nearly $16 billion in bilateral trade in 2012 and supported robust job creation in both countries. The two Presidents noted that in the four years since the Agreement entered into force, the United States and Peru have made it easier for our businesses to trade, further diversified our trading relationship, and continue to work jointly to protect the environment. They reiterated the importance of maintaining regular dialogue on specific proposals for deepening the trading relationship. The two Presidents also reviewed Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, including at the 17th negotiating Round hosted by Peru in May, and reaffirmed their shared commitment to conclude negotiations this year.

Both Presidents discussed the importance of taking advantage of economic prosperity to also reduce poverty and inequality. In this context, the leaders noted the importance of public-private partnerships and expressed their belief in sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The United States welcomed Peru to the Small Business Network of the Americas, wherein the United States will support the establishment of small business development centers in Peru to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners with training and other job creating services.

The two leaders also highlighted joint efforts to expand internet connectivity to rural areas of Peru, apply science and technology to accelerate development, and provide support to 1,000 small- and medium-sized businesses led by Peruvian women entrepreneurs through the Pathways Access Initiative and ongoing Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas Initiative (WEAmericas). As founding members of the Equal Futures Partnership, Peru and the United States have committed to expand opportunities for women and girls and to promote gender equality across political, economic and social spheres.

The leaders reaffirmed their desire to boost sustainable, inclusive, and balanced growth and job creation; promote productive investment; reform and strengthen the international financial architecture; and enhance multilateral trade. They reiterated their support for a successful ninth WTO Ministerial Meeting, which will take place in December this year in Bali, Indonesia.

The Presidents also highlighted the importance of the "Pacific Alliance," one of the most innovative regional integration initiatives, and underscored its auspicious prospects for deepening trade liberalization and enhancing cooperation between its members.

EDUCATION

The two Presidents highlighted education as an increasingly important strategic priority for both countries, focusing particularly on science, technology, innovation, and competitiveness. Recognizing the economic advantages for both countries of increasing contact between Americans and Peruvians, the United States and Peru launched an Education Policy Dialogue to further facilitate information-sharing and best practices, and to promote linkages to President Obama's 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative, as well as Peruvian scholarship initiatives such as "Beca 18" and "Beca Presidente de la República." Both presidents also welcomed joint efforts to provide high-quality English language training and instruction to Peruvian teachers and students.

Both Presidents recognized the importance of cultural heritage to their respective nations and expressed willingness to continuously strengthen bilateral cooperation to prevent illicit traffic of cultural heritage property and restore it to its country of origin in accordance with bilateral and multilateral agreements to which both countries are party.

SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Both nations resolved to work together to address the impact of global climate change. The two leaders welcomed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding that lays out measures to enhance Peru's capacity to design and implement a Low Emissions Development Strategy. Through the design and implementation of such actions, the United States and Peru intend to work together to reduce emissions from Peru's largest greenhouse gas emission sources.

The two countries also intend promote clean energy and energy security throughout Peru under the auspices of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas, and the "Connecting the Americas 2022" initiative. President Obama and President Humala affirmed their decision to work together toward successful outcomes at the international negotiations on climate change. This cooperation includes working together to building a new international climate regime that is ambitious, effective, and can attract the participation of all parties.

They welcomed strong and deepening cooperation on environmental related science and technology issues between the two nations, including the ongoing collaboration and exchange of experts between the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Instituto del Mar del Perú in the field of maritime matters, and the further establishment of a framework agreement between both institutions.

ENHANCING CITIZEN SECURITY

The two leaders reiterated their shared interest in enhancing citizen security, highlighting the importance of strengthening institutions that build and sustain the rule of law, protect human rights, and improve public security over the long-term.

President Obama applauded Peru's participation in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, where Peruvian peacekeeping forces have been continuously deployed since the mission's establishment in 2004. President Humala welcomed U.S. support for the Peruvian National Police, including educational opportunities and training on enhanced community policing.

Highlighting the threat posed by narcotics trafficking to both countries, President Obama reaffirmed U.S. commitment to partnering with Peru to combat the production and trafficking of illicit narcotics. President Humala welcomed President Obama's intent to increase counternarcotics and alternative development assistance to Peru by more than $20 million to provide additional support for the implementation of the Government of Peru's counternarcotics strategy. The two leaders also applauded joint initiatives to: reduce the production of cocaine and further advance an inclusive and sustainable alternative development strategy in coca-growing regions, noting successes with cacao and coffee; investigate and prosecute organized criminal organizations; support Peru's transition to a new criminal procedure code; and strengthen cooperation to combat money laundering and financial crimes.

The two leaders agreed to develop closer bilateral defense ties, and welcomed the progress made in the negotiations toward a robust new Defense Cooperation Agreement between the United States and Peru intended to address shared security challenges and threats such as drug trafficking, terrorism, proliferation, and natural disasters.

The United States and Peru also welcomed the signature of the Megaports initiative agreement to begin a cooperative effort to detect, deter, and interdict illicit smuggling of nuclear and other radioactive material.

The presidents expressed their mutual commitment to the Open Government Partnership as a means of enhancing transparency, government accountability to citizens, fighting corruption and encouraging citizen participation.

Presidents Obama and Humala will remain in close consultation on these and other issues of mutual interest in order to further the partnership between our nations.

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

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senatorial Candidate Representative Edward J. Markey in Boston, Massachusetts
June 12, 2013

The President. Hello, Boston! It is great to be back in Boston. Good to be back in Massachusetts. And most of all, it is great to be here with the next Senator from Massachusetts: Ed Markey.

First of all, I want to thank Ed for that great introduction. Because I am here with my great friends from Boston, because I'm here to campaign on behalf of somebody who will be an outstanding Member of the United States Senate, I am not going to talk trash about the hockey game. [*Laughter*] I'm not going to say anything about the outstanding qualities of the Chicago Blackhawks. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Boo!

The President. I'm not going to say anything. I'm not going to do it. [*Laughter*] Because I don't want to make you all feel bad. [*Laughter*] I want you to feel good.

Part of the reason you should feel good is not only do you have an outstanding congressional delegation, you also have a great Governor, my good friend, Deval Patrick. You've got one of the finest mayors in the United States of America; we love Tom Menino. I was just

backstage talking to Tom, and he doesn't just inspire Boston and make it a better place, he inspires the country. And we're grateful for his lifetime of service.

The last time I saw Tom, the last time I saw a lot of you was for the memorial service honoring the victims of the marathon bombing. So this morning, before I came here, I wanted to spend some time with some Bostonians, so we stopped by Charlie's Sandwich Shoppe, and I got a burger and fries. And we were saying hi to everybody and hugging folks, and Ed was with me. And one of the people I met in the shop just by happenstance was a young man whose family had been injured by the bombing. And he was with a nurse who had been at Mass General the day those folks got brought in. And she was on her day off. But I gave her a big hug, and I reminded her of how much what she did had meant to so many people all throughout the city and she was an example of the spirit of Boston during a very difficult time. And I asked people, how is the city doing? And they said, you know, we're bouncing back.

Boylston Street may be open again. Life may be back to normal in a lot of ways. But we know there's still too many middle class families that aren't seeing their hard work rewarded, too many young people who are looking for work and can't find it, too many Americans who feel like the rungs on the ladder of opportunity have grown farther and farther apart. And that's why Ed and I are focused on building the true engine of long-term economic growth, and that is, a rising, thriving middle class.

And every day I wake up, I ask three questions: How do I make America a magnet for good jobs? How do we make sure our workers earn the skills and education they need for those jobs? How do we make sure those jobs are paying a decent living? And the answer to that is, government can't do it by itself. Obviously, the private sector is the driver of our economy. It's the engine of our growth.

But when people say the whole problem is government, they don't understand government can help by establishing smart priorities, by making smart choices: by investing in American manufacturing so we're bringing more of our jobs back from overseas; investing in our roads and our bridges and our ports to make sure that we are staying competitive all around the world; educating our children from the earliest years; keeping them safe from gun violence; rethinking our high schools; making college more affordable; making sure we stay at the cutting edge in science and technology; securing our energy future; addressing climate change. There are some things that government can do that will help middle class families, and that's what Ed Markey is committed to doing.

We can do all this. We have all the plans. We have all the policies. We have solutions to our challenges. We have all the ingredients for success. This is not only the greatest nation on Earth in the past, this is going to be the greatest nation on Earth for the foreseeable future. There's no country on Earth that would not gladly trade places with the United States. But what's holding us back right now is inaction in Washington, gridlock in Washington: too many folks in Washington who are putting the next election ahead of the next generation.

Now, Boston, I want you to know I've run my last campaign. Michelle is very happy about that. [*Laughter*] So my only concern is making sure that we advance the interests of the broadest number of Americans and we leave our children a stronger, safer, more prosperous country than the one we inherited. That's all I care about. And that means I'm willing to work with anybody; I'll work with Republicans, Democrats, Independents, anybody who wants to make progress. I'm ready to get going. I want to work with them.

So, for example, right now on immigration, we've got a good bipartisan bill moving through the Senate that strengthens our borders and reforms the system so that everybody is playing by the same rules, reform that will allow us to continue to attract talent from all around the world, the best and the brightest. And whenever Republicans are ready to work with me, I'm ready to work with them. I want to govern not just politic.

And I notice on gun violence, there are a lot of Republicans out there who recognize that we need some commonsense gun safety measures. Some Republicans may be rethinking the stances that they took in the past. That's the good news. We want to encourage that. But the fact of the matter is that a whole bunch of Republicans out there are not interested in getting things done. They think compromise is a dirty word. They think the problem we've got is just working people who join unions, that that's what holding us back. They think environmental regulations are what's holding us back. They think that we're spending, I guess, too much money on science and research and technology.

And because of those attitudes, we've got to have some Democrats like Ed Markey, who will stand up and do the right thing. That's what we need.

Ed mentioned that the idea of being a Democrat—look, I don't believe that any single party has a monopoly on wisdom. My favorite President is a guy from Illinois who founded the Republican Party, effectively: Abraham Lincoln, our first Republican President. But what does make me a Democrat is the basic idea that in this country, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter who you love, you should be able to get ahead if you're willing to work hard and act responsibly.

You should be able to buy a home and send your kids to college and save a little bit for retirement, make sure your kids get a good education, not go bankrupt when you get sick. Most Americans aren't asking for a lot. They know they've got to take care of themselves. They just want to make sure that if they're working hard, they can get ahead. That's the essence of what it means to be a Democrat.

And that's why we've got to have folks like Ed Markey, who are going to help keep weapons of war off the streets and out of our schools, make it harder for criminals to get a gun in their hands.

That's why we've got to have a Democrat who is going to make sure that we implement the Affordable Care Act, because in a nation this wealthy, nobody should have to go without affordable, accessible health care. They don't have to do it in Massachusetts. They shouldn't have to do it anywhere else. It's the right thing to do, and we need Ed Markey to make sure that it gets implemented.

We're fighting to make sure that when it comes to women's health, no employer or insurance company or politician gets to decide your health care. Women should make decisions about their health care, not some politician in Washington.

We need somebody who is going to be supportive of the Consumer Financial Protection Board that Elizabeth Warren and I started talking about even before I was elected President and that we've now implemented to make sure you're not getting cheated by unscrupulous financial practices. We need somebody who is going to support that robustly. That's what Ed is going to do.

We don't need politicians who are going to roll back these rights, we need somebody like Ed Markey who is going to fight to secure them, no matter how many times the Republicans in Washington want to refight the old battles.

Do you know that the House Republicans have held nearly 40 votes to repeal Obamacare? They did another one just 2 weeks ago because they figured that they were a couple new Representatives that hadn't had a chance to vote against Obamacare. That's not a productive thing to do, people.

This law is going to mean big things for the economic security of middle class families. We should be spending time figuring out how to spread the word that if you don't have health insurance, you can now get it.

We need a Senator from Massachusetts who will help me, work with me, to deal with climate change in an honest, realistic way. Ed has been fighting this battle for decades. If we want our children and our grandchildren to live in the same beautiful planet, the same abundance, and natural glory that we have enjoyed in our lives, we've got to double down on our investment in science and basic research. We can't just develop the energy sources of the

past. We've got to develop the energy sources of the future.

We've got the tools and the capabilities to make huge strides. We've already doubled the production of clean energy. We've already doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars. We've got to keep on going forward, not backwards. And that's what Ed Markey is going to help us do.

We've ended a war in Iraq; we're winding down the war in Afghanistan responsibly. Now we're going to have to take care of our veterans and keep Americans safe. And I will keep working with the other side of the aisle on these issues. But I want somebody like Ed Markey who every single day is going to be fighting on behalf of our veterans, going to be fighting on behalf of our first responders.

These budget battles we have in Washington, they have implications for whether or not we're helping cities and States fund their firefighters, fund their police officers. And everybody here in Boston knows how much those first responders mean to us when a crisis has hit. And we've got to make sure we're there for them.

So look, here's the bottom line: We've gone through some tough times over these last few years, and so many of you put your faith in me in 2008 and 2012. The folks here in Massachusetts were very kind to me back in 2004, when nobody could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*]

And every single day, I think about all of you. I look out on the faces in this crowd; some of you I know, some of you have knocked on doors for me, some of you poured your heart and soul into our efforts.

But here's the thing that I think all of us understand: The job of rebuilding America, the job of making sure our kids have a great education, the job of making sure everybody has health care, the job of making sure that financial institutions treat everybody fairly, the job of making sure our veterans have the care that they need, the job of making sure we have a bright energy future, the job of preserving our environment, the job of making sure we stay on the cutting edge when it comes to innovation, that job is not mine alone. I can't do it by myself. I've got to have folks with me who care as passionately about these things as I do. I've got to have folks in the United States Senate who are willing to stand up for working people just like I have. I need folks in the United States Senate who, every day, are waking up thinking about the people who sent them there and trying to figure out how do I make sure that they are getting a brighter future.

That's who Ed Markey is. I need Ed Markey in the United States Senate.

So this election is going to come down to turnout. We've got a whole lot of Democrats in this State and a whole lot of Obama voters, but you can't just turnout during a presidential election. You've got to turn out in this election. You can't think, oh, I did my work in 2012. You've got some work to do right now in 2013. You can't just pat your back and say, well, I knocked on some doors back in November. I need you knocking on some doors right now in June.

And if you work with the same focus and the same passion—if you are knocking on some doors and making some phone calls, if you're talking to your friends and you're talking to your neighbors, if you're talking to cousin Jimmy who doesn't always vote unless you give him a phone call—if you are making sure that people know Ed Markey's remarkable record in Congress, then I guarantee you, he will be the next United States Senator from Massachusetts. He'll join Elizabeth Warren. He'll carry on the legacy of Ted Kennedy and John Kerry. He will be my partner, and we will continue the march forward on behalf of not just this generation, but future generations.

Thank you. Let's get to work. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. at the Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jessica Wiggins, nurse, Massachusetts General Hospital; Sen. Elizabeth Warren, in her former capacity as Assistant to the President and Special Adviser to the Secretary of the Treasury on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; and Secretary of State John F. Kerry, in his former capacity as U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami, Florida
June 12, 2013

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. Well, Tom, thank you so much for that introduction and the great support that you've given me and the incredible innovation that you and your company represents.

There are a couple of other people I want to thank. In addition to Shasta and Azza, who's back there and is growing like a weed—[*laughter*]—we've got our outstanding DNC chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Florida's own. Where's Debbie? She was here. I don't know where she is now.

Our DNC finance chair—don't blame him for the fact that he's from San Antonio—Henry Muñoz is here. Our Florida finance chair, J.P. Austin, is here. And our Florida Democratic Party chair, Allison Tant, is here.

So the story that Tom describes is the story of America. Somebody starts off selling lumber on the back of a pickup truck, and they end up in Florida with some really nice artwork. [*Laughter*] But in so many ways, Tom has lived out the American Dream, but there are two elements that Tom describes that go to the heart of why I think most of you are here today.

Number one, the idea that anybody can make it if they've got a good idea. That's what America is about. That you don't have to be born into fame and fortune in order to succeed. If you work hard, we have the most open, most innovative, most entrepreneurial society on Earth.

Number two, that we bet on technology. That's what's always driven progress in this country; that we believe in the idea that we can do something better. That we may have figured out how to mass-produce automobiles, but we also can figure out how to mass-produce better automobiles. That we can invent communications systems that ultimately bring the entire world together. And that's always been part of who we are: at the cutting edge.

And then there's a third thing that Tom represents, and that is, a belief that there's no contradiction between doing well and doing good. The idea that those of us who have been blessed in this society—we work hard, we succeed—we've got to give thing back. And that there are broader issues about how we make sure that we're passing on to the next generation the same opportunities that were given to us.

Now those are all American values. But part of the reason we're here is because we believe that the Democratic Party best represents those values right now. I always say this: That hasn't always been the case. I come from Illinois, and we had a pretty good Republican President named Lincoln.

But right now I think that when you look at who's pushing to make sure that we're investing in research and technology, who's serious about discovering the new sources of energy, energy of the future and not just energy of the past; who's serious about making sure that every young person has educational opportunities, so that if they work hard they can succeed, that's us. That's what the Democratic Party is all about.

And most of all, who believes that every single person in this country—not just some of us—but everybody should have a chance at success. No matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter what your last name, no matter who you love, if you work hard, if you take responsibility, you can succeed. That's what we stand for.

That's why I ran in 2008. That's why I ran for reelection in 2012. And obviously, we've made enormous progress over the last 4½ years, with the help of folks like Debbie Wasserman Schultz, making sure that every single person in America can get affordable, accessible health care we're implementing right now, making sure that we double fuel efficiency standards on cars and double the production of clean energy.

Hey, Azza. You want to come up and say something? [*Laughter*] Daddy is right over here. Yes, she's right over there. [*Laughter*]

You can't beat daughters. I mean, sons are okay, but—[*applause*].

We were able to restore growth to an economy that was crashing: 39 consecutive months of job growth, the stock market exceeding where it was before the financial crisis. Housing beginning to bounce back. So we've made progress. But what we also know is that we've still got an awful lot of work to do. And the only way we're going to get that done is if I stay focused, as President, on those issues that got people to send me to Washington: making sure that we're focused on bringing manufacturing back, making sure that we're focused on making college more affordable, making sure that we're reforming our K–12 system so that our kids get what they need, making sure that we're investing in clean energy, dealing with climate change. But I can't do it by myself. I've got to have partners.

Now, in some cases, we're seeing Republicans willing to work with us and compromise. I'm pleased to see that we got a good vote this week so far on immigration. That immigration bill is on the floor, and I think we have an enormous opportunity to get a bipartisan immigration bill done. And that will be not just an enormous political achievement, but an important economic foundation for us to continue to attract the best and the brightest from all around the world.

But sadly, all too often, we're not getting much cooperation from the other side. They seem more interested in winning the next election than helping the next generation. And so I will spend the next 3½ years doing everything I can to work with anybody—Democrat, Republican, or Independent—to advance the cause of middle class families and everybody who's willing to work hard to get into the middle class. I will be doing that. But I tell you what: It would be a lot easier if I had a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate to do it.

So to all of you who have invested in me and invested in our vision for the future, I want to say thank you. But I also want to tell you that we've got a lot more work to do and it's going to be absolutely critical that everybody here feels the same urgency and intensity over the next year and a half leading up to the midterm elections as you did in 2008 and 2012.

If you do, then we can take back the House, we can keep the Senate in Democratic hands. That will allow me to appoint outstanding judges to the Federal bench. That will allow us to make sure that we are advancing issues like climate change that are critically important for the next generation. And it can be done, but it can only be done with you.

And for all that you've done, but also for all that you're going to be doing, I want to just say how much I appreciate it, and I'm looking forward to us partnering together for several more years so that we can get that whole agenda in place and make sure that Azza and all her peers can look back and say, you know what, our parents and our grandparents, they took care of business.

So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:08 p.m. at the residence of Thomas D. Sullivan. In his remarks, he referred to Shasta Montes de Oca, girlfriend, and Azza Sullivan, daughter, of Mr. Sullivan.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami Beach, Florida

June 12, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. It is good to be back in Miami. Don't worry, I still think it's going to be a seven-game series. I'm just saying. [*Laughter*] I know everybody in Miami is feeling a little stressed right now, but—[*laughter*]—you've got two great teams playing.

I want to, first of all, just say thank you to Joe for hosting us. Opening up your house is a

big deal on any occasion. When you've got Secret Service and everybody else running around, moving furniture, potentially bumping into that painting that's probably worth a lot of money—[*laughter*]—that makes you more stressed. So can you all please move away from the painting? [*Laughter*] Just wanted to make that point. You're welcome, Joe. All right.

A couple of other people that I want to mention. We've got Debbie Wasserman Schultz here, the great Congresswoman and head of our DNC. We've got our DNC finance chair, Henry Muñoz, who's here. And we have the Florida Democratic Party chair, Allison Tant is here. And I am here. And you are here. So we've got a good party going on here tonight.

Audience member. Yes, we do!

The President. [*Laughter*] Happy birthday. [*Laughter*]

It's wonderful to be out of Washington and have a chance to see folks who are doing all kinds of great work in their communities. As I was taking pictures with some people, I talked to doctors, I talked to folks who are active in the community, people who are working on behalf of immigration reform, people who are working on behalf of low-income families, teachers. And so we've got a pretty good group here of folks who, aside from politics, are making a difference every single day. And that's what America is about, is neighbors helping neighbors, friends helping friends, communities figuring out how can we continually make ourselves a better place for our kids and for our grandkids.

And after having gone through the worst recession since the Great Depression, America, all across the country in communities north, south, east, and west are starting to slowly see recovery. We've now created jobs for 39 consecutive months, close to 7 million jobs. We have seen housing begin to come back. The stock market has recovered. The economy is growing. We're producing more energy than we have in years. We're importing less than we have in decades. We've doubled our production of clean energy. We've doubled the fuel efficiency standards on cars.

Across the board, people are feeling like, all right, America is moving, and it's moving in the right direction. But what we also know——

Audience member. Good job, Mr. President. Good job.

The President. What we also know is, is that we've got a lot more work to do. Because all across the country, we still have people who are looking for work and can't find it. We still have young people in schools that aren't learning what they need to compete in the 21st century. We still have young people who are burdened by massive college costs. We still have infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt. We've got research projects that could help to revolutionize our economy, but are not being adequately funded. We have folks whose homes are still underwater, and they're still struggling. And people are concerned about the possibilities of retiring with dignity and respect.

So we've got a lot more work to do. And the reason I'm here today is to ask for your help. I'm very proud of the record that we've been able to put together over the last 4½ years, making sure that every American in this country gets health care, and we are implementing health care reform so that every single American is able to get health care and won't go bankrupt when they get sick.

We're very proud of the work we've done on financial reform, setting up, for example, a consumer finance agency that for the first time will be protecting consumers from unscrupulous mortgage lenders or financial institutions. I couldn't be prouder of us repealing "don't ask, don't tell" and being at the forefront of making sure that in this country, it doesn't matter who you love, it matters whether you want to serve the country that you love.

We're making progress on reforming education. We've put billions of dollars that were previously going to banks into helping young people go to college. We're making progress. But with all the stuff that remains to be done, I can't do it by myself. Our system of government was designed to separate powers, and so you've got three coequal branches. And I can propose a whole bunch of good stuff, things that I know will make a difference in the lives

of middle class families and everybody who's working to get into the middle class. But if I don't have the kind of cooperation from Congress that I need, then all too often, those are just plans on the shelf.

Now, I've run my last campaign, and Michelle is very happy about that. [*Laughter*] And so what that means is, I think you can have confidence that all I care about right now is governing. All I care about right now is making sure that the country is stronger, more prosperous 3 years from now, 4 years from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now than it was before I took office. And I will work with everybody who's got that same attitude.

So the good news is, for example, right now Congress is working on a serious effort to reform our broken immigration system. And I actually am pretty confident that before the summer is over, I can sign into law comprehensive immigration reform that will strengthen our borders, fix our legal immigration system, and make sure that those who are here and are undocumented can earn their way—in an arduous process, but earn their way—to be full-fledged members of our country.

And that's an example of what we can accomplish when we work on a bipartisan basis. Unfortunately, all too often, Republicans aren't interested in the compromise that's required to get things done. They've got a different philosophical view on a whole lot of issues. I don't think the vision that they have is one that would make the country stronger and more prosperous, but I understand they're entitled to their opinion.

And no party has a monopoly on wisdom, but when you get to the point where the other party will not compromise at all; when you get to the point where you've got another party that is more interested in trying to roll back health care for 30 million Americans than provide health care for 30 million Americans; when you have a party that is trying to roll back Wall Street reform and trying to—instead of trying to implement it so that we don't have another batch of Wall Street bailouts; when you have a situation where folks are trying to make sure that women don't have the capacity to choose health care for themselves and make their own health care decisions and, in some cases, are on the wrong side of the issue when it comes to equality for the LGBT community; when folks aren't interested in compromising, then I want to make sure that I've got people there who are ready to do some work.

I want Members of Congress who are looking out for you, not looking out for special interests, not looking out for folks who frankly are doing just fine. But I want to make sure that we've got people who are looking out for those who need help and those who are committed to growing this economy in a broad-based way for everybody so that every child in America—doesn't matter what they look like, where they come from, what their last name is—that they can succeed. That's our goal. That's the kind of Congress I want.

And in order for that to happen, I'm going to need all of you to be just as engaged as you were in 2012 and 2008. Sometimes, the Presidential campaigns are the ones that get a lot of notice and a lot of fanfare. And what happens, particularly among Democrats, is when it's not a Presidential year, our turnout drops off. That's what happened in 2010. You had this big gap between the number of people who vote on a Presidential year and those who vote on a non-Presidential year. We can't think in those terms. It's like if—those of you who are basketball fans, you can't take off—[*laughter*]—you can't just play in the fourth quarter, you've got to play all the quarters. [*Laughter*] You've got to play hard the whole time, not just part of the time. Well, the same is true when it comes to being engaged in the political process.

And so I'm spending a lot of time traveling around the country. I was over in North Carolina looking at a school district that had transformed itself: gotten rid of textbooks, bought every child in the school district a laptop, and are now performing higher than every school district except one in North Carolina even though they're spending less money than almost every school district.

I was in Austin, Texas, and seeing an incubator where young entrepreneurs are inventing

new products and new systems—in part because of the research dollars that are flowing from the Federal Government—and are creating new businesses and jobs that will keep America at the cutting edge.

I have the honor of serving as Commander in Chief and meeting young men and women all across the country and all around the world who are putting their lives on the line every single day to protect us.

And I meet young people everywhere who are so inspiring because they have this innate optimism about what's possible in this country. They're not willing to settle for environmental degradation. They're not willing to settle for inequality. They're not willing to settle for people being treated differently because—or being bullied because of their sexual orientation.

And these young people, when you talk to them, it reminds you—just like it reminds you when you talk to our men and women in uniform, just like it reminds you when you talk to some of our small-business owners—America has got all the cards we need to succeed as long as everybody is involved. As long as everybody is engaged. As long as the vision that has driven this country all these years expresses itself not only in our neighborhoods, not only in our workplaces, not only in our churches or synagogues or mosques, not only in our day-to-day lives, but also expresses itself in Washington, expresses itself in Congress. That's what we're fighting for.

So I want to make sure everybody here understands our work is not done, and I'm not going to be able to do it by myself. We're going to need great Members of Congress who are passionate and motivated and thinking about how we build a thriving, growing middle class and providing ladders of opportunity for people to get into the middle class. And in order for me to have those Members of Congress, I'm going to need all of you active. So let's get to work. I hope you're still fired up.

I love you, Miami. Good luck in game four.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:26 p.m. at the residence of Joseph W. Blount. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception Celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month
June 13, 2013

The President. All right, I will not beat that act. [*Laughter*] We could not be prouder of Zea and Luna for the introduction. And welcome, all of you, to the White House for Pride Month.

Zea and Luna are here with their moms and also, I think, with Grandma and Grandpa, correct? And so feel free to congratulate them afterwards for their outstanding introduction.

There are a few other folks who don't have the same star wattage that I want to acknowledge: first of all, my Vice President, Joe Biden. [*Laughter*] We've got some outstanding Members of Congress here, including a record number from the Congressional Equality Caucus. Eric Fanning, the Under Secretary of the Air Force, is here. Major General Patricia Rose and her wife, Retired Lieutenant Julie Roth, are here. We've got Fred Hochberg and Elaine Kaplan, two outstanding members of my team, who are here. And John Berry is here; John is a former member of my team. You may not recognize him because he looks so well rested now that he's left the administration. [*Laughter*]

And even though she couldn't be here today, because she's getting ready to finally take her seat on the bench and get to work, I want to congratulate Nitza Quinones Alejandro, who, just a few hours ago, was confirmed by the Senate, making her the first openly gay Hispanic Federal judge in our country's history.

And what I'm especially excited about, in addition to Zea and Luna, we've got citizens from all across the country who wrote me letters over the last several years. In a letter from

Kathleen, a young woman from Massachusetts, I saw someone who had experienced too much discrimination and hatred at such a young age, at the age of 24. But I also read about someone who dreams of becoming a doctor so that she can help others and who is determined to make a difference because, as she put it, she is "hopeful of a world filled with love."

Love is what I saw in Valerie and Diane's letter from North Dakota, who've been together for 37 years. Their son Madison is here, 14. They told me that when Madison was little—he's not little now, by the way. [*Laughter*] He used to say that someday, he was going to become President and make it legal for his moms to get married. And now, they added, "I don't think we're going to have to wait that long."

Madison, I agree with you that it's time. I agree that you should run for President. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Does that include Joe?

Vice President Joe Biden. I agree too. [*Laughter*]

The President. And I agree that we're not going to have to wait that long, because from Minnesota to Maryland, from the United States Senate to the NBA, it's clear, we're reaching a turning point. We have—we've become not just more accepting; we've become more loving, as a country, and as a people. Hearts and minds change with time. Laws do too. Change like that isn't something that starts here in Washington, but it's something that has the power that Washington has a great deal of difficulty resisting over time.

It's something that comes from the courage of those who stood up and sat in and came out. It's something that comes from the compassion of family and friends and coworkers and teammates who show their love and support.

[*At this point, a baby cried.*]

Yes, it's true. [*Laughter*]

And it's something that can be traced back to our Declaration of Independence: the fundamental principle that all of us are created equal. And as I said in my Inaugural Address, if we truly are created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. And—[*applause*].

That's the principle that's guided my administration over the past four and a half years. We passed a hate crimes bill in Matthew Shepard's name. We lifted the HIV entry ban, released the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy. We strengthened the Violence Against Women Act to protect LGBT victims. We told Medicare that—we told hospitals that accept Medicare and Medicaid that they have to treat LGBT patients just like everybody else. Starting next year, the Affordable Care Act will ban insurance companies from denying someone for coverage—from coverage just for being LGBT. We put in place new policies that treat transgender Americans with dignity and respect. And because no one should have to hide who they love to serve the country that they love, we ended "don't ask, don't tell" once and for all.

But we're—but part of the reason we're here is because we know we're not done yet. When Zea and Luna wrote me last December, they told me they would have voted for me if they could have. Thanks, guys. [*Laughter*] They also laid out quite an agenda. I hope Congress is listening to them.

But I want them and all of you to know that I'm not giving up the fight to keep our kids safe from gun violence. I'm not giving up the fight for smarter and better schools. I'll continue to support marriage equality and States' attempts to legalize it, including in my own home State of Illinois. We're not giving up on that.

And as we saw earlier this year with the gun safety debate, sometimes, this stuff takes time, and it's frustrating. You take two steps forward, and sometimes, there's a step back. But I deeply believe in something that Martin Luther King, Jr., said often, and that is that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." Eventually, America gets it right.

Now, that doesn't mean we can be patient. We know from our own history that change happens because people push to make it happen. We've got to do the hard work of educating others, empathize—showing empathy to

others, changing hearts and minds. And when we do that, then change occurs. It doesn't come always as quickly as we like, but progress comes.

We've got to keep pushing. We've got to make access to health care more available and affordable for folks living with HIV. We've got to implement the protections in the Affordable Care Act. We've got to keep making our classrooms and our neighborhoods safe for all of our young people.

And I agree with Susan, a PFLAG mom from Ohio: We've got to end LGBT discrimination in the places where we work. Susan wrote me and said, "If I have a concern, it is that there are so many LGBT men and women who contribute to the wealth and growth of our Nation . . . but they're still not protected from harassment in the workplace."

And I share that concern. In 34 States, you can be fired just because of who you are or who you love. That's wrong. We've got to change it. There's a bipartisan bill moving forward in the Senate that would ban discrimination against all LGBT Americans in the workplace, now and forever. We need to get that passed. I want to sign that bill. We need to get it done now.

And I think we can make that happen, because after the last 4½ years, you can't tell me, things can't happen. Look around. We've got gay and lesbian soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines who are here today. We've got married couples from places like New York and Washington State. You've got a couple of guys here on stage who I don't think anybody in their high schools thought would be the President and the Vice President of the United States. [*Laughter*]

Vice President Biden. They thought about you. [*Laughter*]

The President. So don't tell me that things can't happen when we put our minds to them. [*Laughter*]

The genius of America is that America can change. And people who love this country can change it. And that's what we're called to do. And I hope that when we gather here next year and the year after that, we'll be able to say, with pride and confidence, that together we've made our fellow citizens a little more free. We've made this country a little more equal. We've made our world a little more full of love.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. Enjoy the party.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:21 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Arcata, CA, residents Zea and Luna Weiss-Wynne and their mothers Lara Weiss and Nora Wynne; Maj. Gen. Patricia A. Rose, USAF, mobilization assistant to the commander, Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, OH; Elaine Kaplan, Director, and M. John Berry, former Director, Office of Personnel Management; Nitza I. Quinones Alejandro, judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; Wahpeton, ND, residents Valerie Nelson and Diane Gira and their son Madison; and Susan Mason, president, Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Urbana Area in Urbana, OH.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons To Undermine the Democratic Processes or Institutions of Belarus

June 13, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the

Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2013.

In 2012, the Government of Belarus continued its crackdown against political opposition, civil society, and independent media. The September 23 elections failed to meet international standards. The government arbitrarily arrested, detained, and imprisoned citizens for criticizing officials or for participating in demonstrations; imprisoned at least one human rights activist on manufactured charges; and prevented independent media from disseminating information and materials. These actions show that the Government of Belarus has not taken steps forward in the development of democratic governance and respect for human rights.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 13, 2013.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Honoring the 2012 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Indiana Fever
June 14, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody. Welcome to the White House. Everybody, please have a seat. Congratulations to the 2012 WNBA champions, the Indiana Fever. [*Applause*] Hey! I told them, if you're from Indiana, you'd better have a good basketball team. [*Laughter*] They brought Indiana's other championship team with them, the Division III women's basketball champions, the 34-and-0 DePauw Tigers, who are in the audience. Where are you, Tigers? Tigers, right back here. How about that? Well, that's pretty cool. Well, we're going to have to get a picture after we do all this, with the Tigers. I don't know, by the way, if this is a recruiting violation, you guys bringing them here. [*Laughter*] This is—she's keeping her eye out for new talent.

This is not Coach Dunn's first trip to the White House. She came here when she was a Girl Scout; I won't say which administration that was. [*Laughter*]

Head Coach Lin Dunn. Thank you.

The President. I also want to recognize the WNBA President, Laurel Richie, and Fever team owner Herb Simons. Where are they? I didn't know where you went. Now, Herb is also the owner of the Indiana Pacers. I will not comment on that. [*Laughter*] Although, we do both have something in common, which is, our teams got knocked out by the Heat. [*Laughter*] But we will get even next year.

And while our towns have a friendly rivalry going on, I still recognize those Midwestern values when I see them. We saw it in the Indiana Fever, which is, you look out for your

teammates. You kept fighting, no matter what gets thrown at you. As Coach Dunn put it: "We are all blue collar. We work hard on defense. We rebound. We're tough."

And that toughness got this team through a season with more than its fair share of injuries. Nevertheless, whenever one player went down, another stepped up. So, in game 3 against Connecticut in the Eastern Conference Finals, hometown hero Katie Douglas was sidelined for the rest of the season. It looked the team might be in real trouble, and then players like Erin Philips came alive. They stormed back, won the game, then the series, earning a spot in the Finals.

That's when they had their "Hoosiers" moment. To be fair, you have a lot more court time under your belts than the team from Hickory High. But you came into the finals as underdogs. The Minnesota Lynx were the defending champions. They had won the season series 2–0. They knew that they had to step up their game, and that's what they did. They rallied behind my good friend—who I've had the pleasure of being on the court, and she took it easy on me—Tamika Catchings, MVP, who can now add a WBNA championship to her NCAA championship—three-time Gold Medalist. And all of you then brought in—home Indiana's first professional basketball title since 1973. That's a long time.

And obviously, the Fever's incredible season inspired your States, inspired your fans. But I was mentioning backstage, WNBA generally inspires a lot of young people. I occasionally coach Sasha's basketball team, and for her to have wonderful role models like this who work hard, know how to play like a team, are incredibly poised and competitors, but also show good sportsmanship, that's the kind of models you want for your children.

So Coach Dunn has 2 years—was 2 years into her coaching career when title IX was passed. Today we've got two women's basketball championships—championship teams here in the White House. And that's a reminder of the incredible progress that we've made, thanks to pioneers like Coach Dunn. And so we really thank you for that. And we appreciate that. And I want—[*applause*].

And I want to thank the entire Indiana Fever for giving back to their communities, not just being role models, but also taking time out off the court. Tamika has her own foundation, Catch the Stars, and she's helped the First Lady, Michelle, with the "Let's Move!" program to encourage kids to eat healthy and exercise. Players on the Fever have received a combined 13 WNBA Community Assist Awards for countless hours they spend volunteering. They visit local school kids as part of the Read to Achieve program. They've teamed up with the Habitat of Humanity to help build homes for folks in Indianapolis. And right after this, they're going to run a basketball clinic on the South Lawn for young people here in DC.

So it's that kind of commitment that makes the Fever not just a winning team, but a special team. So I really want to congratulate them on an incredible 2012 season. We wish them the best of luck in 2013. Everybody, give the Indiana Fever a big round of applause.

So yes! I've got mine, got my jersey. Here, let's take down the—Coach, do you want to say something?

Coach Dunn. Yes, I do.

The President. Yes, go ahead. [*Laughter*] Come on.

Coach Dunn. Well, first of all, on—I'm a little nervous. I haven't been to the White House since the fifth grade. [*Laughter*]

The President. Since the fifth grade.

Coach Dunn. But on behalf of our owner, Herb Simon, and the great leadership that we have at Pacers Sports and Entertainment—Rick Fuson, Jim Morris, Kelly Krauskopf—and all of our families and friends that are here today. We just want to thank you so much for inviting us here to see the White House, to meet you—that's really special too, because I'm a Democrat so—[*laughter*]—and to celebrate our championship season, our 2012 championship season.

And I just want you to know that this is an amazing group of women. What they did under just tremendous adversity—they kept fighting back, they kept fighting back. Nobody expect-

ed us to win the conference. And certainly no one, none of the reporters—you know all those people—[*laughter*]—none of them picked us to win and certainly not to upset the defending WNBA championship. So not only are they great players, great people, but they are tremendous role models. You're proud to meet a great group here. So I just want you to know how special they are.

And, Mr. President, the last thing I want to say is, I want to thank you personally, you and the First Lady, for all you do to empower women. You have no idea. Every day, every day, you both send a strong message that little girls can do anything they want to do and they can be anything they want to be.

The President. That's the truth.

Coach Dunn. And so we thank you.

The President. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Coach Dunn. We've got some gifts for you.

The President. Thank you. Got my ball, got my hat, got my jersey. I'm set. And I just want to say that I might try to recruit Coach Dunn to run for something. [*Laughter*]

All right, let's strike the podium, and let's get a good picture.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Herbert Simon, owner, chairman, and chief executive officer, Pacers Sports & Entertainment; and Katie Douglas, guard/forward, Erin Phillips, guard, and Tamika Catchings, forward, Indiana Fever. Coach Dunn referred to W.F. "Rick" Fuson, chief operating officer, and Jim Morris, president, Pacers Sports & Entertainment; and Kelly Krauskopf, president and general manager, Fever Basketball Corp.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployment of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces
June 14, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM OBJECTIVES

In furtherance of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's and U.S. Africa Command's areas of responsibility. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities and support the counterterrorism operations of our friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world. Specific information about counterterrorism deployments to select countries is provided below, and a classified annex to this report provides further information.

Military Operations Against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and Associated Forces and in Support of Related U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. In support of these and other overseas operations, the United States has deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation. Previously, such operations and deployments have been reported, consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution, and operations and deployments remain ongoing. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of

numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's leadership of Afghanistan. The United States is committed to thwarting the efforts of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces to carry out future acts of international terrorism, and we have continued to work with our counterterrorism partners to disrupt and degrade the capabilities of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. As necessary, in response to this terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter this terrorist threat to the United States.

Afghanistan. United States Armed Forces continue to pursue and engage remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan while transitioning to an Afghan security lead. The Afghanistan Force Management Level is approximately 62,000 U.S. forces. Approximately 49,000 of these forces are assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)–led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Further Presidentially directed force reductions will continue to the 34,000 level by February 12, 2014.

The U.N. Security Council most recently reaffirmed its authorization of ISAF for a 12-month period until October 13, 2013, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2069 (October 9, 2012). The mission of ISAF, under NATO command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for international terrorists. Fifty nations, including the United States and all 28 NATO members, contribute forces to ISAF. These forces broke Taliban momentum and trained additional Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The ANSF are now increasingly assuming responsibility for security on the timeline committed to at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, and renewed at the Summit in Chicago, by the United States, our NATO allies, ISAF partners, and the Government of Afghanistan. The nations contributing to ISAF will continue to support Afghanistan on its path towards self-reliance in security, improved governance, and economic and social development. This path will prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a safe haven for terrorists that threaten Afghanistan, the region, and the world.

On March 25, 2013, the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Afghan government under which the United States transferred all Afghan nationals detained by U.S. forces in Afghanistan to the custody and control of the Afghan government. Pursuant to the MOU, any new Afghan detainees are to be transferred to Afghan custody and control within 96 hours after capture. United States forces in Afghanistan continue to detain approximately 66 third-country nationals under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war.

Somalia. In Somalia, the U.S. military has worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab. As detailed in my report of January 13, 2013, and at my direction, on January 11, 2013, U.S. combat aircraft briefly entered Somali airspace and U.S. forces provided limited technical support to French forces conducting an operation in Somalia in which they attempted to rescue a French citizen being held hostage by al-Shabaab.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Yemeni government to dismantle operationally and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in Yemen who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for the approximately 166 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001

Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40) as informed by the law of war.

Military Operations in Niger in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

As detailed in my report of February 22, 2013, and at my direction, on February 20, 2013, the last elements of a deployment of 40 additional U.S. military personnel entered Niger with the consent of the Government of Niger. This deployment provides support for intelligence collection and facilitates intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in Mali, and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 180.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

In October and November 2011, U.S. military personnel with appropriate combat equipment deployed to Uganda to serve as advisors to regional forces that are working to apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and other senior Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders from the battlefield, and to protect local populations. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed for this mission, including those providing logistical and support functions, is approximately 100. United States forces are working with select partner nation forces to enhance cooperation, information-sharing and synchronization, operational planning, and overall effectiveness. Elements of these U.S. forces have deployed to forward locations in the LRA-affected areas of the Republic of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic to enhance regional efforts against the LRA. These forces will not engage LRA forces except in self-defense. It is in the U.S. national security interest to help our regional partners in Africa to develop their capability to address threats to regional peace and security, including the threat posed by the LRA. The United States is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to help the governments and people of this region in their efforts to end the threat posed by the LRA and to address the impact of the LRA's atrocities.

MARITIME INTERCEPTION OPERATIONS

As noted in previous reports, the United States remains prepared to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of each of the geographic combatant commands. These maritime operations are aimed at stopping the movement, arming, and financing of certain international terrorist groups, and also include operations aimed at stopping proliferation by sea of weapons of mass destruction and related materials. As detailed in my report of January 28, 2013, and at my direction, on January 23, 2013, a U.S. Navy warship with Yemeni Coast Guard personnel aboard entered Yemeni territorial waters, at the invitation of the Government of Yemen, to assist the Government of Yemen in intercepting and inspecting a vessel suspected of smuggling contraband into Yemen. Upon boarding and searching the vessel, a combined U.S. and Yemeni team discovered various conventional weapons and explosives, apparently of Iranian origin, concealed within the vessel. The vessel was escorted to Aden and turned over to the Yemeni Coast Guard on January 30, 2013.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 690 military personnel are assigned to the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while

maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities in cooperation with local authorities, bilateral partners, and international institutions. The principal military tasks of KFOR forces are to help maintain a safe and secure environment and to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo.

Currently, 23 NATO Allies contribute to KFOR. Seven non-NATO countries also participate. The United States contribution to KFOR is approximately 750 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 5,165 personnel.

REGIONAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

As detailed in my report of December 14, 2012, the security forces that deployed to Libya on September 12, 2012, and the security forces deployed to Yemen on September 13, 2012, to support the security of U.S. personnel remain in place and will remain until the security situation no longer requires them. On May 17, 2013, approximately 30 additional U.S. forces deployed to Libya to further support the security of U.S. personnel in Libya.

As detailed in my report of December 29, 2012, due to the deteriorating security situation in the Central African Republic and the potential threat to U.S. citizens, U.S. embassy personnel and several private U.S. citizens were evacuated on December 27, 2012, from Bangui, Central African Republic. On December 27, 2012, a standby response and evacuation force of approximately 50 U.S. military personnel from U.S. Africa Command deployed to Chad to support the evacuation of U.S. embassy personnel and U.S. citizens from the Central African Republic. The last of those forces departed Chad on December 29, 2012.

Additional information about regional security operations is provided in the classified annex.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107–40 and other statutes) and as Chief Executive, as well as my constitutional and statutory authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address
June 15, 2013

Hi, everybody. This Sunday is Father's Day, and so I wanted to take a moment to talk about the most important job many of us will ever have, and that's being a dad.

Today, we're blessed to live in a world where technology allows us to connect instantly with just about anyone on the planet. But no matter how advanced we get, there will never be a substitute for the love and support and, most importantly, the presence of a parent in a child's life. And in many ways, that's uniquely true for fathers.

I never really knew my own father. I was raised by a single mom and two wonderful grandparents who made incredible sacrifices for me. And there are single parents, like my mom, all across the country, who do a heroic job raising terrific kids. But I still wish I had a dad who was not only around, but involved; another role model to teach me what my mom did her best to instill—values like hard work and integrity, responsibility, delayed gratification—all of the things that give a child the foundation to envision a brighter future for themselves.

That's why I try, every day, to be for Michelle and my girls what my father was not for my mother and me. And I've met plenty of other people—dads and uncles and men without a family connection—who are trying to break the cycle and give more of our young people a strong male role model.

Being a good parent—whether you're gay or straight, a foster parent or a grandparent—isn't easy. It demands your constant attention, frequent sacrifice, and of course, a healthy dose of patience. And nobody's perfect. To this day, I'm still trying to figure out how to be a better husband to my wife and a better father to my kids.

And I want to do what I can as President, to encourage strong marriage and strong families. We should reform our child support laws to get more men working and engaged with their children. And my administration will continue to work with the faith and other community organizations, as well as businesses, on a campaign to encourage strong parenting and fatherhood.

Because if there's one thing I've learned along the way, it's that all our personal successes shine a little less brightly if we fail at family. That's what matters most. When I look back on my life, I won't be thinking about any particular legislation I passed or policy I promoted. I'll be thinking about Michelle and the journey we've been on together. I'll be thinking about Sasha's dance recitals and Malia's tennis matches, about the conversations we've had and the quiet moments we've shared. I'll be thinking about whether I did right by them and whether they knew, every day, just how much they were loved.

That's what I think about when I think about fatherhood. And if we can do our best to be a source of comfort and encouragement to our kids, if we can show them unconditional love and help them grow into the people they were meant to be, then we will have succeeded.

So happy Father's Day to all the dads out there, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:50 p.m. on June 14 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on June 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 14, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 15.

Remarks at a Youth Town Hall Meeting in Belfast, Northern Ireland
June 17, 2013

President Obama. Thank you. Please be seated. Please.

Well, hello, Belfast! Hello, Northern Ireland! You now know why it's so difficult to speak after Michelle; she's better than me. [*Laughter*] But on behalf of both of us, thank you so much for this extraordinarily warm welcome.

And I want to thank Hannah for introducing my wife. We had a chance to speak with Hannah backstage, and she's an extraordinary young woman, who I know is going to do even greater things in years to come.

I want to thank two men, who I've hosted at the White House on many a St. Patrick's Day, for their warm welcome: First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. I spend the whole year trying to unite Washington around things, and they come to visit on St. Patrick's Day, and they do it in a single afternoon. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers. To all the Ministers in the audience; to Lord Mayor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir. And I want to thank all the citizens of Belfast and Northern Ireland for your hospitality.

As our daughters pointed out as we were driving in, I cause a big fuss wherever I go. [*Laughter*] So traffic and barricades and police officers, and it's all a big production, a lot of people are involved, and I'm very, very grateful for accommodating us.

The first time Michelle and I visited this island was about 2 years ago. We were honored to join tens of thousands on College Green in

Dublin. We traveled to the little village of Moneygall, where, as it turned out, my great-great-great-grandfather was born. And I actually identified this individual in this place only a few years ago. When I was first running for office in Chicago, I didn't know this, but I wish I had. [*Laughter*] When I was in Chicago, as I was campaigning, they'd look at my last name, and they'd say: "Oh, there's an O'Bama from the homeland running on the South Side. So he must be Irish—[*laughter*]—but I've never heard the Gaelic name, Barack." [*Laughter*] But it pays to be Irish in Chicago.

So while we were in Moneygall, I had a chance to meet my eighth cousin, Henry, who's also known as Henry the Eighth. [*Laughter*] We knew he was my cousin because his ears flapped out just like mine. [*Laughter*] I leafed through the parish logs where the names of my ancestors are recorded. I even watched Michelle learn how to pull a proper pint of "black."

Audience member. Whoop! [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Who's cheering for that? [*Laughter*]

So it was a magical visit. But the only problem was it was far too short. A volcano in Iceland forced us to leave before we could even spend the night. So we've been eager for a chance to return to the Emerald Isle ever since. And this time, we brought our daughters too.

In particular, we wanted to come here, to Northern Ireland, a place of remarkable beauty and extraordinary history, part of an island with which tens of millions of Americans share an eternal relationship. America's story, in part, began right outside the doors of this gleaming hall. Three hundred and twenty-five years ago, a ship set sail from the River Lagan for the Chesapeake Bay, filled with men and women who dreamed of building a new life in a new land.

They, followed by hundreds of thousands more, helped America write those early chapters. They helped us win our independence. They helped us draft our Constitution. And soon after, America returned to Belfast, opening one of our very first consulates here in 1796, when George Washington was still President.

So today, names familiar to many of you are etched on schools and courthouses and solemn memorials of war across the United States: names like Wilson and Kelly, Campbell and O'Neill. So many of the qualities that we Americans hold dear we imported from this land: perseverance, faith, an unbending belief that we make our own destiny, and an unshakable dream that if we work hard and we live responsibly, something better lies just around the bend.

So our histories are bound by blood and belief, by culture and by commerce. And our futures are equally, inextricably linked. And that's why I've come to Belfast today: to talk about the future we can build together.

Your generation, the young generation, has come of age in a world with fewer walls. You've been educated in an era of instant information. You've been tempered by some very difficult times around the globe. And as I travel, what I've seen of young people like you around the world show me these currents have conspired to make you a generation possessed by both a clear-eyed realism, but also an optimistic idealism; a generation keenly aware of the world as it is, but eager to forge the world as it should be. And when it comes to the future we share, that fills me with hope. Young people fill me with hope.

Here in Northern Ireland, this generation has known even more rapid change than many young people have seen around the world. And while you have unique challenges of your own, you also have unique reasons to be hopeful. For you are the first generation in this land to inherit more than just the hardened attitudes and the bitter prejudices of the past. You're an inheritor of a just and hard-earned peace. You now live in a thoroughly modern Northern Ireland.

Of course, the recessions that spread through nearly every country in recent years have inflicted hardship here too, and there are communities that still endure real pain. But day to day, life is changing throughout the North. There was a time, people couldn't have

imagined Northern Ireland hosting a gathering of world leaders, as you are today. And I want to thank Chief Constable Matt Baggott for working to keep everyone safe this week.

Northern Ireland is hosting the World Police and Fire Games later this year, which Dame Mary Peters is helping to organize. Golf fans like me had to wait a long six decades for the Irish Open to return to the North last year. I am unhappy that I will not get a few rounds in while I'm here. [*Laughter*] I did meet Rory McIlroy last year, and Rory offered to get my swing "sorted"—[*laughter*]—which was a polite way of saying, "Mr. President, you need help." [*Laughter*]

None of that would have been imaginable a generation ago. And Belfast is a different city. Once-abandoned factories are rebuilt. Former industrial sites are reborn. Visitors come from all over to see an exhibit at the MAC, a play at the Lyric, a concert here at Waterfront Hall. Families crowd into pubs in the Cathedral Quarter to hear "trad." Students lounge at cafes, asking each other, "What's the *craic*?" Right? [*Laughter*] Hey! So to paraphrase Seamus Heaney, it's the manifestation of sheer, bloody genius. This island is now chic.

And these daily moments of life in a bustling city and a changing country, it may seem ordinary to many of you, and that's what makes it so extraordinary. For that's what your parents and grandparents dreamt for all of you: to travel without the burden of checkpoints or roadblocks or seeing soldiers on patrol; to enjoy a sunny day free from the ever-present awareness that violence could blacken it at any moment; to befriend or fall in love with whomever you want. They hoped for a day when the world would think something different when they heard the word "Belfast." And because of their effort, because of their courage, that day has come. Because of their work, those dreams they had for you became the most incredible thing of all: They became a reality.

It's been 15 years now since the Good Friday agreement, since clenched fists gave way to outstretched hands. The people of this island voted in overwhelming numbers to see beyond the scars of violence and mistrust and to choose to wage peace. Over the years, other breakthroughs and agreements have followed. That's extraordinary, because for years, few conflicts in the world seemed more intractable than the one here in Northern Ireland. So that when peace was achieved here, it gave the entire world hope.

The world rejoiced in your achievement, especially in America. Pubs from Chicago to Boston were scenes of revelry, folks celebrating the hard work of Hume and Trimble and Adams and Paisley and so many others. In America, you helped us transcend our differences, because if there's one thing on which Democrats and Republicans in America wholeheartedly agree, it's that we strongly support a peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland.

But as all of you know all too well, for all the strides that you've made, there's still much work to do. There's still people who haven't reaped the rewards of peace. There are those who aren't convinced that the effort is worth it. There are still wounds that haven't healed and communities where tensions and mistrust hangs in the air. There are walls that still stand. There are still many miles to go.

From the start, no one was naive enough to believe that peace would be anything but a long journey. Yeats once wrote, "Peace comes dropping slow." But that doesn't mean our efforts to forge a real and lasting peace should come dropping slow. This work is as urgent now as it has ever been because there's more to lose now than there's ever been.

In today's hyperconnected world, what happens here has an impact on lives far from these green shores. And if you continue your courageous path toward a permanent peace, and all the social and economic benefits that have come with it, that won't just be good for you, it will be good for this entire island. It will be good for the United Kingdom. It will be good for Europe. It will be good for the world.

We need you to get this right. And what's more, you set an example for those who seek a peace of their own. Because beyond these shores, right now, in scattered corners of the world, there are people living in the grip of conflict—ethnic conflict, religious conflict,

tribal conflicts—and they know something better is out there. And they're groping to find a way to discover how to move beyond the heavy hand of history, to put aside the violence. They're studying what you're doing. And they're wondering, "Perhaps if Northern Ireland can achieve peace, we can too." So you're their blueprint to follow. You're their proof of what is possible, because hope is contagious. They're watching to see what you do next.

Now, some of that is up to your leaders. As someone who knows firsthand how politics can encourage division and discourage cooperation, I admire the Northern Ireland Executive and the Northern Ireland Assembly all the more for making power-sharing work. That's not easy to do. It requires compromise, and it requires absorbing some pain from your own side. So I applaud them for taking responsibility for law enforcement and for justice, and I commend their effort to "Building a United Community," important next steps along your transformational journey.

Because issues like segregated schools and housing, lack of jobs and opportunity, symbols of history that are a source of pride for some and pain for others, these are not tangential to peace; they're essential to it. If towns remain divided, if Catholics have their schools and buildings and Protestants have theirs, if we can't see ourselves in one another, if fear or resentment are allowed to harden, that encourages division. It discourages cooperation.

Ultimately, peace is not just about politics, it's about attitudes; it's about a sense of empathy; it's about breaking down the divisions that we create for ourselves in our own minds and our own hearts, that don't exist in any objective reality, but that we carry with us generation after generation.

And I know, because America, we too have had to work hard over the decades, slowly, gradually, sometimes painfully, in fits and starts, to keep perfecting our Union. A hundred and fifty years ago, we were torn open by a terrible conflict. Our Civil War was far shorter than the Troubles, but it killed hundreds of thousands of our people. And of course, the legacy of slavery endured for generations.

Even a century after we achieved our own peace, we were not fully united. When I was a boy, many cities still had separate drinking fountains and lunch counters and washrooms for Blacks and Whites. My own parents' marriage would have been illegal in certain States. And someone who looked like me often had a hard time casting a ballot, much less being on a ballot.

But over time, laws changed, and hearts and minds changed, sometimes driven by courageous lawmakers, but more often driven by committed citizens. Politicians oftentimes follow rather than lead. And so, especially young people helped to push and to prod and to protest and to make common cause with those who did not look like them. And that transformed America, so that Malia and Sasha's generation, they have different attitudes about differences and race than mine and certainly different from the generation before that. And each successive generation creates a new space for peace and tolerance and justice and fairness.

And while we have work to do in many ways, we have surely become more tolerant and more just and more accepting, more willing to see our diversity in America not as something to fear, but as something to welcome, because it's a source of our national strength.

So as your leaders step forward to address your challenges through talks by all parties, they'll need you young people to keep pushing them to create a space for them, to change attitudes. Because ultimately, whether your communities deal with the past and face the future united together isn't something you have to wait for somebody else to do, that's a choice you have to make right now.

It's within your power to bring about change. Whether you are a good neighbor to someone from the other side of past battles, that's up to you. Whether you treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve, that's up to you. Whether you let your kids play with kids who attend a different church, that's your decision. Whether you take a stand against violence and hatred and tell extremists on both sides that no matter how many times they at-

tack the peace, they will not succeed, that is in your hands. And whether you reach your own outstretched hand across dividing lines—across peace walls—to build trust in a spirit of respect, that's up to you. The terms of peace may be negotiated by political leaders, but the fate of peace is up to each of us.

This peace in Northern Ireland has been tested over the past 15 years. It's been tested over the past year. It will be tested again. But remember something that President Clinton said when he spoke here in Belfast just a few weeks after the horrors of Omagh. "That bomb," he said, "was not the last bomb of the Troubles, it was the opening shot of a vicious attack on the peace."

And whenever your peace is attacked, you will have to choose whether to respond with the same bravery that you've summoned so far or whether you succumb to the worst instincts, those impulses that kept this great land divided for too long. You'll have to choose whether to keep going forward, not backwards.

And you should know that so long as you are moving forward, America will always stand by you as you do. We will keep working closely with leaders in Stormont, Dublin, and Westminster to support your political progress. We'll keep working to strengthen our economies, including through efforts like the broad economic initiative announced on Friday to unlock new opportunities for growth and investment between our two countries' businesses, because jobs and opportunity are essential to peace.

Our scientists will keep collaborating with yours in fields like nanotechnology and clean energy and health care that make our lives better and fuel economic growth on both sides of the Atlantic, because progress is essential to peace. And because knowledge and understanding is essential to peace, we will keep investing in programs that enrich both of us, programs like the one at Belfast Metropolitan College, which teaches students from West and North Belfast the skills they need for new jobs, and exchange programs that have given thousands in Northern Ireland and the United States the chance to travel to each other's communities and learn from one another.

Now, one of those young people are—is here today. Sylvia Gordon is the director of an organization called Groundwork Northern Ireland, which aims to bring about change from the ground up. Where's Sylvia? Where's Sylvia? Is Sylvia here somewhere? Where is she? She's here somewhere. Well, you're here too, yes. Some guy just waved; he said, "I'm here." [*Laughter*] Which is good, I appreciate you being here. [*Laughter*]

As someone who got my start as a community organizer, I was so impressed with what Sylvia has done, because a few years ago, Sylvia visited the United States to learn more about how Americans organize to improve their communities. So, after she came home, Sylvia rolled up her sleeves here in Belfast and decided to do something about Alexandra Park. Some of you may know this park. For years, it was thought to be the only park in Europe still divided by a wall. Think about that. In all of Europe, that one park has got a wall in the middle of it.

So Sylvia and her colleagues knew how hard it would be to do anything about a peace wall, but they reached out to the police; they reached out to the Department of Justice. They brought together people from across the communities. They knew it was going to be hard, but they tried anyway. And together, they all decided to build a gate to open that wall. And now people can walk freely through the park and enjoy the sun—when it comes out—[*laughter*]—just like people do every day in parks all around the world.

It's a small bit of progress. But the fact that so far we've only got a gate open and the wall is still up means there's more work to do. And that's the work of your generation. So long as more walls still stand, we will need more people like Sylvia. We'll need more of you, young people, who imagine the world as it should be, who knock down walls, who knock down barriers, who imagine something different and have the courage to make it happen. The courage to bring communities together, who make even the small impossibilities a shining example of

what is possible. And that, more than anything, will shape what Northern Ireland looks like 15 years from now and beyond.

All of you—every single young person here today—possess something the generation before yours did not, and that is, an example to follow. When those who took a chance on peace got started, they didn't have a successful model to emulate. They didn't know how it would work. But they took a chance. And so far, it has succeeded. And the first steps are the hardest and requires the most courage. The rest now is up to you.

"Peace is indeed harder than war," the Irish author Colum McCann recently wrote. "And its constant fragility is part of its beauty. A bullet need happen only once, but for peace to work, we need to be reminded of its existence again and again and again."

And that's what we need from you. That's what we need from every young person in Northern Ireland, and that's what we need from every young person around the world. You must remind us of the existence of peace, the possibility of peace. You have to remind us of hope again and again and again. Despite resistance, despite setbacks, despite hardship, despite tragedy, you have to remind us of the future again and again and again.

I have confidence you will choose that path, you will embrace that task. And to those who choose the path of peace, I promise you the United States of America will support you every step of the way. We will always be a wind at your back. And as I said when I visited 2 years ago, I am convinced that this little island that inspires the biggest of things—this little island—its best days are yet ahead.

Good luck. God bless you, and God bless all the people of Northern Ireland. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:58 a.m. at the Belfast Waterfront Conference Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Hannah Nelson, winner of an essay contest sponsored by the U.S. consulate in Belfast, Northern Ireland; Matt Baggott, chief constable, Police Service of Northern Ireland; British Olympic gold medalist and "Freedom of Belfast" honoree Mary Peters; poet Seamus Heaney; John Hume, former leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in Northern Ireland and former Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom; former First Ministers W. David Trimble and Ian R.K. Paisley of Northern Ireland; and Gerry Adams, president, Sinn Fein political party and organization. He also referred to his cousin Henry Healy. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks With Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, President José Manuel Durão Barroso of the European Commission, and President Herman Van Rompuy of the European Council in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland

June 17, 2013

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, good afternoon and welcome, everyone. Welcome to Lough Erne.

I always said that the whole point of this meeting in Lough Erne is to fire up our economies and drive growth and prosperity around the world, to do things that make a real difference to people's lives. And there is no more powerful way to achieve that than by boosting trade. And there's no better way than by launching these negotiations on a landmark deal between the European Union and the United States of America, a deal that could add as much as a £100 billion to the EU economy, £80 billion to the U.S. economy, and as much as £85 billion to the rest of the world.

And we should be clear about what these numbers could really mean: 2 million extra jobs, more choice and lower prices in our shops. We're talking about what could be the

biggest bilateral trade deal in history; a deal that will have a greater impact than all the other trade deals on the table put together.

When we last met at Camp David in the G–8 and we first suggested we could reach this moment here in Lough Erne, many doubted it would be possible. Everyone knows these trade deals are difficult. Some take years to get off the ground, and some never happen at all. So it's a testament to the leadership and the political will of everyone here that we've reached this point. We must maintain that political will in the months ahead. This is a once-in-a-generation prize, and we are determined to seize it.

President Barroso—José Manuel, over to you.

President Barroso. Thank you. Thank you, David.

Today is a special day for the relations between European Union and the United States. Today we announce we will start negotiations of a comprehensive Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement. Very frankly, 2 years ago, very few would have bet that today we'd be in the position to launch negotiations of an ambitious European Union-United States free trade agreement.

And when the teams of the European Commission and United States will meet for the first round of the negotiations next month, it will be the start of a joint undertaking of real strategic importance. Our joint endeavor is part of our overall agenda for growth and jobs to both sides of the Atlantic by boosting trade and investment. It is also a powerful demonstration of our determination to shape a open, rules-based world.

We intend to move forward fast. We can say that neither of us will give up content for the sake of speed, but we intend to make rapid progress. I do not underestimate the core challenge: moving our regulatory regimes closer and addressing the harmful effect of behind-the-border trade barriers. Huge economic benefits are expected from reducing redtape, avoiding divergent regulations for the future.

I would rather have our companies invest in new, innovative products and services and job creation, than in double-testing or multiple inspections or even separate manufacturing lines. Our regulators need to build bridges faster and more systematically. The current economic climate requires us to join forces and to do more with less. More importantly, in doing so, we will remain strong global players who set the standards for the 21st century.

Therefore, I call on our legislators—European side, especially the European Parliament—our regulators, our civil society to play a constructive and engaged part in these negotiations.

The business communities on both sides of the Atlantic, in particular, have been a strong advocate of free trade and investment between Europe and the United States. And this is also good for the rest of the world. Given the integrated supply chains in today's global markets, everyone can benefit from this agreement.

Integrating two of the most developed, most sophisticated, and certainly the largest economies in the world can never be an easy task, but we will find convincing answers to legitimate concerns. We will find solutions to thorny issues. We will keep our eyes on the prize, and we'll succeed. So even if these negotiations may not always be easy, I'm sure they will be worth it for the sake of the jobs it creates and because of the strategic dimension of what we are doing: to write the next chapter of what is our common history, also forged by the sense that we share the same principles and values, the principles and values of open economies and open societies.

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, thank you very much, José Manuel. President Obama—Barack.

President Obama. Thank you very much, David. And good afternoon. It is wonderful to be here in Lough Erne. And thank you so much to the people of Northern Ireland for their warm hospitality. And, Prime Minister Cameron, thank you for all the outstanding arrangements.

Among the things we'll discuss here are promoting new growth and jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. And I'm pleased to join these leaders to announce the launch of negotiations on a new trade agreement that will help us do

just that—the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, also known as T–TIP.

I want to thank not only the gentlemen on this stage, but also Presidents Hollande, Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister Letta, and Taoiseach Kenny. We just had an excellent meeting. And I'm proud to say that America will have the opportunity to host the first round of negotiations next month in Washington.

As has already been mentioned, the U.S.-EU relationship is the largest in the world. It makes up nearly half of global GDP. We trade about a trillion dollars in goods and services each year. We invest nearly $4 trillion in each other's economies. And all that supports around 13 million jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

And this potentially groundbreaking partnership would deepen those ties. It would increase exports, decrease barriers to trade and investment. As part of broader growth strategies in both our economies, it would support hundreds of thousands of jobs on both sides of the ocean.

So I'm pleased to hear that this negotiation enjoys the support not only of the countries that are here today, but also the broader EU membership. I can tell you that it's been warmly received in the United States as well, both in our Congress and in our business community.

And that broad support, on both sides of the Atlantic, will help us work through some of the tough issues that have already been mentioned. There are going to be sensitivities on both sides. There are going to be politics on both sides. But if we can look beyond the narrow concerns to stay focused on the big picture—the economic and strategic importance of this partnership—I'm hopeful we can achieve the kind of high-standard, comprehensive agreement that the global trading system is looking to us to develop.

America and Europe have done extraordinary things together before. And I believe we can forge an economic alliance as strong as our diplomatic and security alliances, which, of course, have been the most powerful in history, and by doing that, we can also strengthen the multilateral trading system.

So this Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is going to be a priority of mine and my administration. It is important that we get it right, and that means resisting the temptation to downsize our ambitions or avoid tough issues just for the sake of getting a deal. And then make sure also—it's important that we also make sure that it's part of an overall plan to do what it takes to promote growth and jobs. Trade is critical, but it is not alone a silver bullet; it has to be part of a comprehensive strategy that we pursue on both sides of the Atlantic. That's what our people deserve.

I very much look forward to working with my fellow leaders to make it happen. We're going to give a strong mandate to our negotiators, but occasionally, I suspect, we're going to have to intervene and break through some logjams. Nevertheless, I'm confident that we can get it done.

So thank you very much.

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you, Barack. And thank you very much for that. Now, we're going to hear from the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy. Herman.

President Van Rompuy. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is a special moment. At the last EU-U.S. summit with President Obama, we jointly decided to see if launching such historical negotiations would be possible. It was. And now we can already start the talks. A year and a half ago, we were not even sure the place had a door, and now we are entering the negotiating room together.

It's a sign of the strong political will on both sides. This February, in the European Council, our European heads of state and government reiterated their support for a comprehensive trade and investment deal with the United States. A political signal formalized last Friday by ministers under the Irish Presidency formally gave the EU negotiators the green light to start the talks.

It shows the political will to work together, to work together with our longstanding and most trusted partner on the essential objective

for governments on either side of the Atlantic: growth, jobs, and prosperity. We both know there are no magic solutions. Recent economic turbulence underlines it. But we cannot expect to harvest new jobs today; we can plant the seeds for the jobs of tomorrow. And that's exactly what the trade agreement is about.

Together, Europe and the United States are the backbone of the world economy. Opening up that space further for opportunities for business and consumers is simply common sense. Not just our own economies, but also those of our trading partners will benefit. The positive ramifications will even go beyond the economy as such.

We are making our economies all over the world more interdependent, and this will make the world safer. What is at stake with the transatlantic free trade area is to enshrine Europe and America's role as the world's standard-setters, beyond product specifications, by setting a positive force in shaping the way we work and the way we live our daily lives. This is of key strategic significance.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Atlantic is not the past; it is also the future. And that's why we are impatient to start, although we know that negotiations won't be a smooth ride. Obviously, there are and will be sensitive issues on each side. With flexibility, openmindedness and some creativity, the greatest asset for negotiators and statesmen, I'm confident we will find solutions. There is too much at stake.

We will find these solutions not only because we know the great benefit it will bring, not only because we share the same rules-based approach at home and abroad in these matters, but also because trade is one vital part of our overall relationship. It will knit our transatlantic destinies even closer together.

The launch of our negotiations, therefore, stands for our continued common commitment to engage with each other in order to engage with the world. The EU and its member states are ready to engage and look forward to the new trade landscape we will shape together.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you very much, Herman. We'll be now welcoming the other guests to the G–8, and we'll be taking questions at the end of the G–8 at the end of our discussions.Thank you very much, indeed.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:30 p.m. at Lough Erne Resort. In his remarks, he referred to President François Hollande of France; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy; and Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland.

Joint Statement by Group of Eight Leaders on the Global Economy
June 17, 2013

Following their discussion on the global economy this afternoon, G–8 leaders at Lough Erne, Northern Ireland, have concluded:

Promoting growth and jobs is our top priority. We agreed to nurture the global recovery by supporting demand, securing our public finances and exploiting all sources of growth. The fight against unemployment, particularly long-term and youth unemployment remains critical in our domestic and collective agendas.

Global economic prospects remain weak, though downside risks have reduced thanks in part to significant policy actions taken in the US, euro area and Japan, and to the resilience of major developing and emerging market economies. Most financial markets have seen marked gains as a result. However, this optimism is yet to be translated fully into broader improvements in economic activity and employment in most advanced economies. In fact, prospects for growth in some regions have weakened since the Camp David summit. While countries have taken steps to avoid the worst of the tail risks that faced the world economy in 2012, vulnerabilities remain in 2013, highlighting the need for countries to press ahead with the necessary reforms to restore sustainable growth and jobs.

Downside risks in the euro area have abated over the past year, but it remains in recession. Additional strengthening of the architecture of the European Economic and Monetary Union, including through the development of the agreed elements of a banking union, is strongly needed to contribute to further reducing financial fragmentation, and continued strengthening of banks' balance sheets. Fiscal sustainability and restoring financial stability need to go hand in hand with well-designed growth strategies, including growth-oriented structural reforms. The US recovery is continuing and the deficit is declining rapidly in the context of a continuing need for further progress towards balanced medium-term fiscal sustainability and targeted investments to enhance growth. Japan's growth will be supported by its near-term fiscal stimulus, bold monetary policy and recently announced strategy for promoting private investment. However it will need to address the challenge of defining a credible medium-term fiscal plan. Some of our central banks have continued to use highly accommodative monetary policy to support their domestic economies, including through unconventional means such as quantitative easing. Russia is experiencing low unemployment and a favourable fiscal position, but more moderate global growth and volatile commodity prices will be a challenge.

In light of this background we are committed to taking further action now to restore confidence, encourage investment and job creation, support the recovery and reduce global imbalances. We agreed today that:

- Decisive action is needed to nurture a sustainable recovery and restore the resilience of the global economy. Advanced economies need to balance supporting domestic demand with reforms to tackle structural weaknesses that weigh on growth, while implementing credible fiscal plans. We reaffirm our commitment to cooperate to achieve a lasting reduction in global imbalances, which surplus and deficit countries must address.
- Monetary policy should continue to support the recovery and be directed towards domestic price stability, according to the respective mandates of central banks.
- Restoring medium-term fiscal sustainability remains a priority. Fiscal policy should allow for near-term flexibility to accommodate economic conditions including through focusing on the structural deficit as appropriate. The pace of fiscal consolidation should be differentiated for our different national economic circumstances.
- Structural reforms are key to improving sustainable growth and long-term living standards, enhancing competitiveness, providing well-functioning credit channels for investment including by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and strengthening confidence. Urgent and specific measures are needed to create quality jobs, particularly for the young and the long-term unemployed. We are all committed to make the necessary reforms in our own economies to support stronger financial systems, healthy labour markets, jobs and growth, and bolster world trade.

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

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans
June 17, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary

date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the Western Balkans that was declared in Executive Order 13219 of June 26, 2001, is to remain in effect beyond June 26, 2013.

The crisis constituted by the actions of persons engaged in, or assisting, sponsoring, or supporting (i) extremist violence in the Republic of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans region, or (ii) acts obstructing implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia or United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, related to Kosovo, which led to the declaration of a national emergency on June 26, 2001, in Executive Order 13219 and to the amendment of that order in Executive Order 13304 of May 28, 2003, to include acts obstructing implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 in Macedonia, has not been resolved. The acts of extremist violence and obstructionist activity outlined in Executive Order 13219, as amended, are hostile to U.S. interests and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the Western Balkans.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 17, 2013.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland
June 17, 2013

President Putin. I've had detailed talks with the President of the United States on almost all the matters. We began with economy, and we had detailed discussions. We've agreed to launch new mechanisms of cooperation in this domain, including at the levels of the Chairman of Government of the Russian Federation and the Vice President of the U.S.

We have spoken in detail about the matters of security—of strategic security between the two countries and the world as such. I believe that we have an opportunity to move forward on most sensitive directions.

We also spoke about problem spots on the planet, including Syria. And of course, our opinions do not coincide, but all of us have the intention to stop the violence in Syria, to stop the growth of victims, and to solve the situation peacefully, including by bringing the parties to the negotiations table in Geneva. We agreed to push the parties to the negotiations table.

I hope that after the elections in Iran there will be new opportunities to solve the Iranian nuclear problem. And we'll be trying to do that bilaterally and in the international negotiations process.

We also spoke about the problem of North Korea, and we agreed to emphasize our interaction on all the directions.

And I am very grateful to the U.S. President for the detailed discussion and for the frank exchange of opinions on these matters.

President Obama. Well, I had a very useful conversation with President Putin, and I began by thanking him again for the cooperation that they've provided in dealing with the tragedy of the bombing at the Boston Marathon. We have a shared interest in countering terrorist violence, and we are continuing to strengthen our

cooperation on this issue, including as we welcome Russia hosting the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

As President Putin indicated, we had extensive discussions about how we can further deepen our economic and commercial relationships. With Russian accession to the WTO, the removal of Jackson-Vanik, I think we're poised to increase both trade and investment between our two countries. And that can create jobs and business opportunities, both for Russians and Americans.

Our discussions on North Korea and Iran were very productive, and we both agreed to consult closely on the North Korean issue. And in Iran, we both accept—expressed cautious optimism that with a new election there, we may be able to move forward on a dialogue that allows us to resolve the problems with Iran's nuclear program.

And with respect to Syria, we do have differing perspectives on the problem, but we share an interest in reducing the violence; securing chemical weapons and ensuring that they're neither used, nor are they subject to proliferation, and that we want to try to resolve the issue through political means, if possible. And so we will—have instructed our teams to continue to work on the potential of a Geneva follow-up to the first meeting.

And finally, we had a discussion about the fact—as the two nuclear superpowers, we have a special obligation to try to continue to reduce tensions, to build on the work that we did with New START, and to lead the world in both nuclear security issues and proliferation issues.

And one of the concrete outcomes of this meeting is that we'll be signing here the continuation of the cooperation that was first established through the Nunn-Lugar program to counter potential threats of proliferation and to enhance nuclear security.

And this, I think, is an example of the kind of constructive, cooperative relationship that moves us out of a cold war mindset into the realm where, by working together, we not only increase security and prosperity for the Russian and American people, but also help lead the world to a better place.

And finally, we compared notes on President Putin's expertise in judo and my declining skills in basketball. [*Laughter*] And we both agreed that as you get older, it takes more time to recover.

President Putin. The President wants to relax me with his statement that the age—[*inaudible*]. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:33 p.m. at the Lough Erne Resort. President Putin referred to Prime Minister Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev of Russia. President Putin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia on Enhanced Bilateral Engagement
June 17, 2013

The United States of America and the Russian Federation reaffirm their readiness to intensify bilateral cooperation based on the principles of mutual respect, equality, and genuine respect for each other's interests.

Guided by this approach, today we reached an understanding on a positive agenda for relations between our countries that encompasses the strategically important issues of arms control, nonproliferation, international security, increasing trade and investment, responding to global threats and challenges, countering terrorism and militant extremism, and enhancing tries between our societies and people. This wide-ranging program of action requires enhanced engagement at all levels.

To strengthen the constructive nature of our relations, we intend to maintain regular contacts at the highest level, and to hold a U.S.-Russia summit in Moscow on September 3–4,

2013, to discuss in greater detail the full range of bilateral and international issues.

We have also decided to expand the dialogue between the U.S. Vice President and the Russian Prime Minister to address our joint agenda, including discussion of the development and diversification of trade and investment links, to promote the strengthening of relations and economic growth in both countries.

An understanding was reached on launching a regular dialogue in the "two plus two" format between foreign and defense ministers to address issues of strategic stability, international security, and shared threats to our countries.

With a view to intensifying cooperation in the security realm, we instructed the Security Councils of the United States and Russia to maintain a regular dialogue to discuss issues of mutual interest.

The Bilateral Presidential Commission will continue to play an important role in developing engagement in various areas. More than sixty U.S. and Russian government agencies currently take part in its activities. To complement the governments' work on intensifying cooperation, we call on public and business communities in the United States and Russia to establish close links in the interest of bringing our countries closer together.

Expanding direct contracts between Americans and Russians, including through implementation of the bilateral Agreement on Simplifying Visa Formalities, which has been in force since 2012, will serve to strengthen mutual understanding and trust and make it possible to raise U.S.-Russian relations to a qualitatively new level.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to Prime Minister Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev of Russia. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia on Cooperation in Countering Terrorism
June 17, 2013

The United States and Russia resolutely condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The explosions in Boston on April 15, 2013, and the explosion of the terrorist suicide bomber in Makhachkala on May 25, 2013, have demonstrated anew that the global terrorist threat is not weakening and calls for a build-up of our joint efforts in countering it.

Terrorists do not acknowledge borders and seek to impose their extremist ideology of violence everywhere. We note with concern the cases in which terrorist groups have coalesced with transborder organized crime, in particular in the area of the illegal traffic in drugs and arms.

The terrorist threat calls for a concerted, comprehensive response that presupposes law enforcement measures for the protection of our citizens, as well as the implementation of a long-term strategy aimed at denying terrorists any social or material support, and working with societies to prevent the spread of the terrorist ideology. To that end, the United States and Russia intend to strengthen our counterterrorism cooperation on the basis of mutual trust, including the exchange of pertinent operational information between intelligence services and the conduct of coordinated operations.

We intend to continue to contribute to international endeavors to counter terrorism within the framework of the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), Russia-NATO Council, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and Group of Eight (G–8). By way of example, the United States and Russia are engaged in active joint work in the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council, as well as the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and the Taliban Sanctions Committee. Together, we work in the G–8 on

implementing the initiative for countering improvised explosive devices; in the GCTF, on strengthening the institutions of criminal justice and on the objective of countering violent extremism; and in APEC, on enhancing the security and stability of critical infrastructure. Our countries are cooperating closely as founders and co-chairs of the Global Initiative to Counter Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), which already counts 85 participant states.

The joint efforts of the United States and Russia, including in the context of the Counterterrorism Working Group of the Bilateral Presidential Commission, are focused on preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of terrorists, and halting the funding of terrorist activities, the recruitment and training of those who commit terrorist acts, and the actions of lone terrorists.

Another cause of serious concern is the terrorists' use of contemporary information and communication technologies for staying in touch, collecting information, spreading their ideology, attracting new adherents and financial resources, planning, organizing, and carrying out terrorist acts. With due respect for the freedom to express opinions, as provided for in international law, we intend to use all legal means to counter the abuse of the Internet for terrorist or other criminal purposes.

The United States and Russia intend to continue to develop their counterterrorism partnership with the business community, including in the field of protecting the tourist sector. Providing security for major sporting and public events, including the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, is to be an important area of interaction.

We reiterate our firm resolve to join in countering terrorism in accordance with national laws and the fundamental principles of international law, including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia on a New Field of Cooperation in Confidence Building
June 17, 2013

We, the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation, recognize the unprecedented progress in the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), the new capacity they create for the economies and societies of our countries, and the increasing interdependence of the modern world.

We recognize that threats to or in the use of ICTs include political-military and criminal threats, as well as threats of a terrorist nature, and are some of the most serious national and international security challenges we face in the 21st Century. We affirm the importance of cooperation between the United States of America and the Russian Federation for the purpose of enhancing bilateral understanding in this area. We view this cooperation as essential to safeguarding the security of our countries, and to achieving security and reliability in the use of ICTs that are essential to innovation and global interoperability.

Demonstrating our commitment to promoting international peace and security, today we affirm the completion of landmark steps designed to strengthen relations, increase transparency, and build confidence between our two nations:

- To create a mechanism for information sharing in order to better protect critical information systems, we have established a communication channel and information sharing arrangements between our computer emergency response teams;
- To facilitate the exchange of urgent communications that can reduce the risk of misperception, escalation and conflict, we have authorized the use of the direct communications link between our Nu-

clear Risk Reduction Centers for this purpose;

- Finally, we have directed officials in the White House and the Kremlin to establish a direct communication link between high-level officials to manage potentially dangerous situations arising from events that may carry security threats to or in the use of ICTs.

We have decided to create (in the framework of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission) a bilateral working group on issues of threats to or in the use of ICTs in the context of international security that is to meet on a regular basis to consult on issues of mutual interest and concern. This working group is to assess emerging threats, elaborate, propose and coordinate concrete joint measures to address such threats as well as strengthen confidence. This group should be created within the next month and should immediately start its practical activities.

These steps are necessary in order to meet our national and broader international interests. They are important practical measures which can help to further the advancement of norms of peaceful and just interstate conduct with respect to the use of ICTs. To further deepen our relationship, relevant agencies of our countries plan to continue their regular dialogue and to identify additional areas for mutually-beneficial cooperation in combating threats to or in the use of ICTs.

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

Remarks Following a Meeting With President François Hollande of France in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland
June 18, 2013

President Obama. Well, I just had an excellent conversation with President Hollande and his delegation. At the end of G–8, it's very important and appropriate that the United States meet with our oldest ally, France. And obviously, we coordinate on a whole range of international issues. And the bilateral relationship is as strong as ever.

The topics that we covered were wide ranging. Today we spent some time discussing the transition in Afghanistan, where there have been some important developments. Afghan forces are now in the lead in Afghanistan, fulfilling the milestone that we agreed to at the NATO summit in Chicago.

We also discussed Qatar's announcement that an office is opening in Doha for the purposes of negotiations between Afghans so that we have a parallel political track that matches up with the transition that's taking place militarily in Afghanistan and the elections that will be coming up next year. Both President Hollande and I agree that an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process is the best way to end the violence and to ensure lasting stability in Afghanistan and the region. And so this is an important first step towards reconciliation. Although it's a very early step—we anticipate there will be a lot of bumps in the road—but the fact that the parties have an opportunity to talk and discuss Afghan—the Afghanistan's future I think is very important.

The one thing that we do believe is that any insurgent group, including the Taliban, is going to need to accept an Afghan Constitution that renounces ties with Al Qaida, ends violence, and is committed to the protection of women and minorities in the country.

And over the last several months, I've discussed this issue frequently with President Karzai and also the Amir of Qatar. So I want to publicly commend President Karzai for taking this courageous step and his determination to end the conflict and build a future of security and peace and prosperity for the Afghan people. And I know that President Hollande shares my view on this.

We're going to continue to support these efforts in partnership with the Afghan Government. I want to repeat: We don't anticipate this

process will be easy or quick, but we must pursue it in parallel with our military approach. And we, in the meantime, remain fully committed to our military efforts to defeat Al Qaida and to support the Afghan National Security Forces.

In addition to talking about Afghanistan, we spoke about the economic and commercial ties that have been subject to the entire G–8. President Hollande, I think, is appropriately committed to a growth strategy that ensures, we all are able to lower our unemployment rates, particularly when it comes to youth unemployment, and to build a fiscally prudent strategy for long-term economic growth. And the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is a strong component of a broader, comprehensive strategy that we all have to pursue with respect to growth.

In the Middle East and Syria, we very much share the view that it is important for us to build on the G–8 communique—to move towards a political transition inside of Syria, to build a strong opposition that can function in a post-Asad world—and that we will continue to work to try to find a political solution to this process and, most importantly, alleviate suffering and ensure that chemical weapons are not used by anyone inside of Syria. Both of our governments have strong evidence that, in fact, chemical weapons have been used in the past by the Asad regime. But we are very comfortable with the approach taken by the G–8 that allows the U.N. the full powers it needs to investigate and establish these facts on the ground.

I congratulated President Hollande and his entire team for the effective work that they've done in Mali. This is a situation in which France was able to stop the splintering of a nation-state by a terrorist organization and now is in a position to reaffirm democracy and legitimacy and an effective government inside of Mali. That involved considerable sacrifice on the part of the French people, but it's part of a broader commitment on both our parts to pursue a smart counterterrorism policy that works with partners in the region.

And finally, I wanted to say that I welcome France's decision to support the EU designation of Hizballah—Lebanese Hizballah—as a terrorist organization. I think that sends a powerful signal that Europe stands firmly against Hizballah's terrorist activities and is consistent with the view that the only way that we can bring about a peaceful and prosperous Middle East is to isolate extremism and to promote those persons and institutions that are committed to a pluralistic, open, and tolerant society that's based on rule of law.

And so we are very much committed to continuing to strengthen our cooperation with the French Government. When countries like the United States and France act in concert, we can get an awful lot done. And I very much appreciate not only the partnership, but also the friendship of President Hollande. He extended an invitation for me to visit France, and I told him that we are always happy to visit France.

And so we hope that we have the opportunity to schedule that perhaps some time next year.

[*At this point, President Hollande spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter, but no transcript was provided.*]

The President. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. at Lough Erne Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

Joint Statement—Group of Eight Lough Erne Declaration
June 18, 2013

Private enterprise drives growth, reduces poverty, and creates jobs and prosperity for people around the world. Governments have a special responsibility to make proper rules and promote good governance. Fair taxes, increased transparency and open trade are vital

drivers of this. We will make a real difference by doing the following:

1. Tax authorities across the world should automatically share information to fight the scourge of tax evasion.
2. Countries should change rules that let companies shift their profits across borders to avoid taxes, and multinationals should report to tax authorities what tax they pay where.
3. Companies should know who really owns them and tax collectors and law enforcers should be able to obtain this information easily.
4. Developing countries should have the information and capacity to collect the taxes owed them—and other countries have a duty to help them.
5. Extractive companies should report payments to all governments—and governments should publish income from such companies.
6. Minerals should be sourced legitimately, not plundered from conflict zones.
7. Land transactions should be transparent, respecting the property rights of local communities.
8. Governments should roll back protectionism and agree new trade deals that boost jobs and growth worldwide.
9. Governments should cut wasteful bureaucracy at borders and make it easier and quicker to move goods between developing countries.
10. Governments should publish information on laws, budgets, spending, national statistics, elections and government contracts in a way that is easy to read and reuse, so that citizens can hold them to account.

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

Joint Statement—Group of Eight Leaders Communique
June 18, 2013

2013 LOUGH ERNE

Preamble

1. As leaders of the G8, we are committed to open economies, open societies and open governments as the basis of lasting growth and stability. We have today agreed concrete steps to play our part in ensuring a safe and prosperous world.

2. We met at a time of continued economic uncertainty. Our urgent priority is to promote growth and jobs, particularly for the young and long-term unemployed. We will continue to nurture the global recovery by supporting demand, securing our public finances and reforming our economies to deliver growth.

3. Our economies together make up around half of the global economy, and we have a responsibility to support prosperity worldwide. We agreed actions in three specific areas:

- Trade—a key engine of global economic growth. We will break down barriers to trade at home and abroad by resisting protectionism and concluding a set of ambitious trade deals. In particular, we welcome the launch of negotiations for an EU-US trade agreement, the major progress towards agreeing the Trans Pacific Partnership and the launch of the EU-Japan trade agreement negotiations and we look forward to the completion of the EU-Canada trade agreement. We aim to finalise all these deals as soon as possible. We also welcome the trade and economic integration of Russia with some of the countries in the region, which will be pursued in line with World Trade Organisation (WTO) principles. We are committed to strengthening the multilateral trading system and securing

a WTO deal in December that cuts bureaucracy to make it easier and faster for goods to cross borders. And we will keep our promises to help developing countries slash barriers to trade that impede growth.

- Tax systems—essential to fairness and prosperity for all. We commit to establish the automatic exchange of information between tax authorities as the new global standard, and will work with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to develop rapidly a multilateral model which will make it easier for governments to find and punish tax evaders. On tax avoidance, we support the OECD's work to tackle base erosion and profit shifting. We will work to create a common template for multinationals to report to tax authorities where they make their profits and pay their taxes across the world. We will support developing countries to collect the taxes owed them, with access to the global tax information they need. We agree to publish national Action Plans to make information on who really owns and profits from companies and trusts available to tax collection and law enforcement agencies, for example through central registries of company beneficial ownership.

- Transparency—empowering people to hold governments and companies to account. We have agreed a transformative Open Data Charter to make budget data and other government information public in an easily accessible way. We will make progress towards common global reporting standards to make extractive industry payments more transparent. And we will work with resource-rich countries to help them better manage their extractive revenues so as to provide a route out of poverty and reliance on aid.

4. We will continue to work with the poorest countries to help lift people out of poverty by keeping our aid promises and being accountable to the public for them. We will accelerate efforts to tackle the under-nutrition that blights millions of lives. We will work closely with African governments and citizens to promote sustainable growth.

5. We share a commitment to work together to counter terrorism and tackle the drivers of instability wherever in the world they are found and particularly in northern Africa and the Middle East. We have identified five priority areas for action to respond to the growing threat posed by terrorists operating in the arc of instability from Mauritania to Somalia. Alongside the countries themselves, we will work together, focussing our collective political and practical support, to help governments find and dismantle terrorist networks and to build effective and accountable government.

6. We are committed to protecting our nationals and reducing terrorist groups' access to funding which allows them to thrive. We unequivocally reject the payment of ransoms to terrorists and we call on countries and companies around the world to follow our lead and stamp out this as well as other lucrative sources of income for terrorists. We will help each other to resolve hostage incidents by sharing best practice in advance and offering expertise as necessary when they take place.

7. We strongly support the proposal for a conference to reach a political solution to the appalling conflict in Syria through full implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. We will contribute generously to the latest United Nations (UN) appeal for humanitarian help. We condemn in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons and all human rights violations in Syria. We are committed to leading international support for Libya's security and democratic transition and to urgent work for a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Global Economy

8. Promoting growth and jobs is our top priority. We agreed to nurture the global recovery by supporting demand, securing our public finances and exploiting all sources of growth. The fight against unemployment, particularly

long-term and youth unemployment, remains critical in our domestic and collective agendas.

9. Global economic prospects remain weak, though downside risks have reduced thanks in part to significant policy actions taken in the US, euro area and Japan, and to the resilience of major developing and emerging market economies. Most financial markets have seen marked gains as a result. However, this optimism is yet to be translated fully into broader improvements in economic activity and employment in most advanced economies. In fact, prospects for growth in some regions have weakened since the Camp David summit. While countries have taken steps to avoid the worst of the tail risks that faced the world economy in 2012, vulnerabilities remain in 2013, highlighting the need for countries to press ahead with the necessary reforms to restore sustainable growth and jobs.

10. Downside risks in the euro area have abated over the past year, but it remains in recession. Additional strengthening of the architecture of the European Economic and Monetary Union, including through the development of the agreed elements of a banking union, is strongly needed to contribute to further reducing financial fragmentation, and continued strengthening of banks' balance sheets. Fiscal sustainability and restoring financial stability need to go hand in hand with well-designed growth strategies, including growth-oriented structural reforms. The US recovery is continuing and the deficit is declining rapidly in the context of a continuing need for further progress towards balanced medium-term fiscal sustainability and targeted investments to enhance growth. Japan's growth will be supported by its near-term fiscal stimulus, bold monetary policy and recently announced strategy for promoting private investment. However, it will need to address the challenge of defining a credible medium-term fiscal plan. Some of our central banks have continued to use highly accommodative monetary policy to support their domestic economies, including through unconventional means such as quantitative easing. Russia is experiencing low unemployment and a favourable fiscal position, but more moderate global growth and volatile commodity prices will be a challenge.

11. In light of this background we are committed to taking further action now to restore confidence, encourage investment and job creation, support the recovery and reduce global imbalances. We agreed today that:

- Decisive action is needed to nurture a sustainable recovery and restore the resilience of the global economy. Advanced economies need to balance supporting domestic demand with reforms to tackle structural weaknesses that weigh on growth, while implementing credible fiscal plans. We reaffirm our commitment to cooperate to achieve a lasting reduction in global imbalances, which surplus and deficit countries must address.
- Monetary policy should continue to support the recovery and be directed towards domestic price stability, according to the respective mandates of central banks.
- Restoring medium-term fiscal sustainability remains a priority. Fiscal policy should allow for near-term flexibility to accommodate economic conditions including through focusing on the structural deficit as appropriate. The pace of fiscal consolidation should be differentiated for our different national economic circumstances.
- Structural reforms are key to improving sustainable growth and long-term living standards, enhancing competitiveness, providing well-functioning credit channels for investment including by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and strengthening confidence. Urgent and specific measures are needed to create quality jobs, particularly for the young and the long-term unemployed. We are all committed to make the necessary reforms in our own economies to support stronger financial systems, healthy labour markets, jobs and growth, and bolster world trade.

Trade

12. Trade and investment are key engines of global economic growth, job creation and sustainable development. The nature of international trade is changing radically, with goods now increasingly produced within complex supply chains that use components from countries that span the globe. Today, nearly 60% of trade in goods is in components. Trade in services also makes a growing contribution to the global economy, and is increasingly bound up with trade in goods. This 21st century reality provides a powerful argument for driving forward free trade based on a fair, strong rules-based trading system, protecting and promoting investments, and deepening economic integration.

13. We are therefore committed to taking steps to unlock further the potential of trade and investment to boost growth, jobs and sustainable development. We will also keep our word to refrain from and roll back protectionist measures and support a further extension of the G20 standstill commitment. We call on others to do the same. We commit our support to efforts to liberalise trade in green goods and services, emphasising that progress in this area will boost green growth. In this regard we commend Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's (APEC) decision in September 2012 to reduce tariffs on environmental goods as an important contribution to this end.

14. As a demonstration of our commitment to open markets we will work to conclude deep, ambitious and genuinely liberalising bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements. These agreements will address a broad range of issues in addition to tariff reductions, including behind-the-border barriers, rules, and regulatory coherence and better alignment of standards, all of which are central to unleashing the full potential of trade. Such deals will be consistent with and supportive of the WTO framework, acting as building blocks for future multilateral agreements in the WTO, which ultimately remain the most effective means of reducing trade barriers globally.

15. We reiterate our support for the central role of the WTO in setting the rules that underpin global trade, in bringing down the barriers to trade that currently inhibit global growth, in resisting and rolling back protectionism and in ensuring proper rules enforcement for a level playing field in world trade. We support the continued provision of an effective protectionism monitoring mechanism and measures to further strengthen the peer review process in the WTO. We welcome the new Director-General and pledge our support for efforts to build a strong agenda that maintains the centrality of the WTO.

16. Cutting the costs of trade by reducing and streamlining bureaucracy at borders would benefit everyone and could boost the global economy by $1 trillion. It would open new export opportunities for developing countries, boosting jobs and growth. Better border procedures will also improve customs and tax collection in developing countries. We will therefore make determined efforts to reach agreement at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali in December on a package that has Trade Facilitation at its core. We note that achieving this goal requires contributions from all major WTO partners. A successful Bali Ministerial would pave the way for a reinvigorated WTO negotiating agenda.

17. Every Aid for Trade dollar spent on tackling trade bureaucracy can increase the recipient's trade by almost $700 each year. We stand ready to continue to provide, within our current Aid for Trade commitments, substantial technical assistance and capacity building to help implement a WTO Trade Facilitation deal, in particular to the benefit of the Least Developed Countries. We will also be more transparent in reporting the aid we provide, and work with developing countries, especially the poorest, to ensure that resources are better matched to needs.

Africa Trade and Infrastructure

18. Africa is the next emerging continent, with a growing share of the world's trade, investment and economic output. We have an historical opportunity to work with our African

partners to help promote inclusive and resilient growth in Africa, through greater transparency, improved infrastructure, better trade facilitation, the elimination of trade barriers and the management of natural resources. We welcome the contribution of the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICADV) to advancing these objectives.

19. The G8 strongly welcomes Africa's own regional integration agenda, which would reduce barriers to trade and continue to unlock the internal potential of Africa. We support the African Union's (AU) Action Plan on Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT). Cutting transit times will boost African trade within the continent and with global markets. The G8 will work with African countries and regional economic communities to meet the AU's target of doubling intra-Africa trade and reducing crossing times at key border posts by 50% by 2022.

20. More effective border crossings and increased trade need investment in infrastructure, including transport, energy and telecommunications. In particular, better project preparation and risk mitigation efforts are required to boost private investment. The G8 commits to provide increased support for project preparation facilities for African regional infrastructure programmes and recognises the importance of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility hosted by the African Development Bank and other similar mechanisms.

21. The G8 urges multilateral development institutions to establish and prioritise, as part of ongoing work on International Development Association–17, African Development Fund–13 and European Development Fund-11 replenishments, more effective mechanisms for collaboration on project preparation, funding and risk mitigation for Africa's regional infrastructure programmes, such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development (PIDA). The G8 recognises the work being done by the G20 on financing for infrastructure in Africa.

22. The G8 commits to explore and identify in advance of our next meeting the further steps it can take together or individually, in collaboration with the private sector, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other international organisations to facilitate institutional investment flows into bankable trade-related infrastructure projects in developing countries.

Tax

23. As we strive to maintain fiscal sustainability and to secure jobs and growth for our citizens, we commit to playing our part in developing global solutions to the problems of tax evasion and tax avoidance. We will act to restore confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of our international tax rules and practices, and to ensure that each country is able to collect taxes owing and that developing countries are also able to secure the benefits of progress made on this agenda.

24. We welcome the OECD work on addressing Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) by multinational enterprises and emphasise the importance of the OECD developing an ambitious and comprehensive action plan for the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the G20 in July. We look forward to the OECD recommendations and commit to take the necessary individual and collective action. We agree to work together to address base erosion and profit shifting, and to ensure that international and our own tax rules do not allow or encourage any multinational enterprises to reduce overall taxes paid by artificially shifting profits to low-tax jurisdictions. The ongoing OECD work will involve continued engagement with all stakeholders, including developing countries.

25. Comprehensive and relevant information on the financial position of multinational enterprises aids all tax administrations effectively to identify and assess tax risks. The information would be of greatest use to tax authorities, including those of developing countries, if it were presented in a standardised format focusing on high level information on the global allocation of profits and taxes paid. We call on the OECD to develop a common template for country-by-country reporting to tax authorities by major multinational enterprises, taking

account of concerns regarding non-cooperative jurisdictions. This will improve the flow of information between multinational enterprises and tax authorities in the countries in which the multinationals operate to enhance transparency and improve risk assessment.

26. A critical tool in the fight against tax evasion is the exchange of information between jurisdictions. We see recent developments in tax transparency as setting a new standard and commit to developing a single truly global model for multilateral and bilateral automatic tax information exchange building on existing systems. We support the OECD report on the practicalities of implementation of multilateral automatic exchange and will work together with the OECD and in the G20 to implement its recommendations urgently. We call on all jurisdictions to adopt and effectively implement this new single global standard at the earliest opportunity. It is important that all jurisdictions, including developing countries, benefit from this new standard in information exchange. We therefore call on the OECD to work to ensure that the relevant systems and processes are as accessible as possible to help enable all countries to implement this new standard.

Tax and Development

27. It is in everyone's interests for developing countries to be able to: strengthen their tax base to help create stable and sustainable states; improve their ability to fund their budgets through their own domestic revenues; and increase ownership of their own development processes. We will continue to provide practical support to developing countries' efforts to build capacity to collect the taxes owed to them and to engage in and benefit from changing global standards on exchange of information, including automatic exchange of information. We call on all jurisdictions to join the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes and the Multilateral Convention and we will continue to provide practical support for developing countries seeking to join the Global Forum. We each commit to continue to share our expertise, help build capacity, including by engaging in long-term partnership programmes to secure success.

28. We welcome the OECD's feasibility study for its Tax Inspectors Without Borders proposal to assist tax administrations investigate specific and complex tax cases. We will take practical steps to support this initiative, including by making tax experts available.

29. The ability of tax administrations to compare relevant price information across jurisdictions is essential for the effective operation of transfer pricing rules, and a lack of data on comparable transactions is a significant issue for effective tax collection, particularly in developing countries. We ask the OECD to find ways to address the concerns expressed by developing countries on the quality and availability of the information on comparable transactions that is needed to administer transfer pricing effectively.

Transparency of companies and legal arrangements

30. A lack of knowledge about who ultimately controls, owns and profits from companies and legal arrangements, including trusts, not only assists those who seek to evade tax, but also those who seek to launder the proceeds of crime, often across borders. Shell companies can be misused to facilitate illicit financial flows stemming from corruption, tax evasion and money laundering. Misuse of shell companies can be a severe impediment to sustainable economic growth and sound governance. We will make a concerted and collective effort to tackle this issue and improve the transparency of companies and legal arrangements. Improving transparency will also improve the investment climate; ease the security of doing business and tackle corruption and bribery. It will support law enforcement's efforts to pursue criminal networks, enforce sanctions, and identify and recover stolen assets.

31. We are determined to take action to tackle the misuse of companies and legal arrangements. We will lead by example in our implementation of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards. We today agreed to

publish national Action Plans based on common principles (annexed). Subject to our different constitutional circumstances, these Action Plans set out the concrete action, with respect to money laundering and tax evasion, each of us will take to tackle this issue to ensure that companies know who really owns and controls them by requiring companies to obtain and hold information on their beneficial ownership, and to ensure that this information is available in a timely fashion to law enforcement, tax collection agencies and other relevant authorities as appropriate, including financial intelligence units, for example through central registries; and by ensuring trustees know the beneficial ownership information regarding the trust and that law enforcement, tax collection agencies and other relevant authorities as appropriate, including financial intelligence units, can access this information. We will work with our FATF partners to ensure ambitious progress at a global level, including by prioritising the assessment of relevant FATF recommendations.

Anti-Money Laundering

32. Our financial systems are exposed to significant risks from money laundering and terrorist financing. We fully support the FATF Standards and commit to implementing them effectively. We support the FATF's identification and monitoring of high risk jurisdictions with strategic anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing (AML/CFT) deficiencies, and encourage all countries to take measures to ensure they meet the FATF standards. We are committed to ensuring proportionate and effective supervision and enforcement of our AML/CFT requirements to ensure corporate wrongdoers are held to account.

33. Taking measures to enhance financial transparency would also improve the opportunities for African business and for markets to expand. As African economies grow, African financial institutions will increasingly risk exposure to illicit financial activity, affecting the opportunities for African business and markets to expand. We will hold the first Public-Private Sector Dialogue with Eastern and Southern African nations on 6–8 September in Swakopmund, Namibia, involving governments and financial institutions from the G8 and the region. This will provide a platform for greater ongoing collaboration, dialogue and public-private sector partnership, and we will consider extending the Dialogue to other regions on an annual basis.

Extractives

34. Natural resources have the potential, if developed and managed responsibly, in line with internationally recognised environmental and social standards, to be a key driver of strong and sustainable growth, especially in developing countries with an abundance of natural resources. To illustrate, oil exports in 2010 from a single African country exceeded total net aid to sub-Saharan Africa. These resources offer a long term route out of poverty for many developing countries and an opportunity to reduce dependence on external assistance.

35. However, the lack of strong systems of transparency and accountability in the management of the extractive sector in some resource-rich countries has too often allowed revenues to be diverted from high-priority national needs. Raising global standards of transparency in the extractive sector and building the capacity of countries to manage their resources effectively will improve accountability, reduce the space for corruption and other illicit activities and ensure that citizens benefit fully from the extraction of natural resources.

36. The G8 will take action to raise global standards for extractives transparency and make progress towards common global reporting standards, both for countries with significant domestic extractive industries and the home countries of large multinational extractives corporations. Under such common standards companies would be required to report on extractives payments, governments would take steps to ensure disclosure compliance, and those governments that wish to move towards the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standard will voluntarily report their revenues. This would reduce reporting burdens on businesses, help to fight

corruption, and encourage more effective and efficient investment, including in developing countries.

37. Thirty-nine countries have signed up to the EITI, which increases transparency and accountability in the payments companies make and the revenues governments receive for their natural resources. We welcome the new EITI rules adopted in May, which aim to increase the coverage and accessibility of data produced by EITI countries and ensure that participating countries are held to a high standard. We encourage other countries to sign up to the EITI.

38. The US has adopted legislation requiring certain publicly traded extractives companies to report their payments to governments around the world. The EU Accounting and Transparency Directives will introduce equivalent standards for EU Member States. EU G8 members will quickly implement the EU Accounting and Transparency Directives. These will require mandatory reporting of payments to governments by all listed and large unlisted extractive companies in the EU to all governments, and are consistent with section 1504 of the US Dodd Frank legislation and the new EITI standard. The US, UK and France will seek candidacy status for the new EITI standard by 2014. Canada will launch consultations with stakeholders across Canada with a view to developing an equivalent mandatory reporting regime for extractive companies within the next two years. Italy will seek candidacy status for the new EITI standard as soon as possible. Germany is planning to test EITI implementation in a pilot region in view of a future candidacy as implementation country. Russia and Japan support the goal of EITI and will encourage national companies to become supporters.

39. We encourage other countries that host major multinational or state-owned enterprises that invest abroad to implement equivalent mandatory reporting rules with a view to creating an international reporting regime that avoids duplicate reporting burdens on business. These global standards should move towards project-level reporting.

40. As part of our commitment to extractives transparency, we continue to support responsible, conflict-free sourcing of minerals from conflict-affected regions, including gold, diamonds and other precious stones. We will promote positive economic development and responsible sourcing in the artisanal mining sector, particularly from conflict and high-risk areas. We reaffirm our continued support for the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Regional Certification Mechanism as part of global multilateral, multi-stakeholder efforts to combat the trade in conflict minerals through certification, responsible business conduct and respect for human rights. We also reaffirm our support for the Kimberley Process as the global, multi-stakeholder initiative to curb the trade in "conflict diamonds" and encourage the Kimberley Process to resolve discussions concerning the definition of "conflict diamond".

41. We welcome the leadership of the AU and the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining in promoting good governance and transparency in the extractive sector including through the African Mining Vision, the African Mineral Development Centre and the Mining Policy Framework. We also welcome the increasing interest of the NEPAD on these issues. The technical assistance provided to strengthen the capacities of the developing countries to negotiate natural resources contracts is paramount. We welcome the financial support provided to the African Development Bank's African Legal Support Facility and the Facility for Fair Exploitation of Extractive Resources in Africa, and encourage other countries to commit to these facilities. In support of such initiatives, we will partner with resource rich developing countries, the private sector and civil society to strengthen capacity and increase transparency in the extractive sectors.

42. We have this week launched initial partnerships with Burkina Faso (France), Colombia (EU), Ghana (UK), Mongolia (Germany), Burma/Myanmar (US), Guinea (US), Peru (Canada) and Tanzania (Canada). Italy is on

track to finalise a partnership with an African country. They will be tailored to the needs of each country and support national development plans with the objective of improving transparency and governance in the extractive sector by 2015.

Land

43. Weak land governance and property rights systems can lead to opaque land deals, which facilitate corruption and undercut responsible actors seeking access to land for productive investment. Weak governance in many developing countries allows unproductive land speculation and undermines agricultural productivity. Increasing security of land rights and transparency of land governance fosters participation of citizens, contributes to government accountability, reduces costs for businesses, and strengthens the climate for responsible investment. We welcome global activities to improve land tenure governance, including through access to information and participation of citizens in decision making. We acknowledge the importance of multilateral efforts to promote greater land transparency, in particular, the role of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in providing global policy guidance for good land governance and transparency. We welcome the launch of the consultations on the principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (rai), highlighting that good governance in the land sector is central to rural development, food security and sustainable public and private agricultural investment.

44. We will support greater transparency in land transactions including at early stages, and increased capacity to develop good land governance systems in developing countries. Last year, the G8 welcomed the UN Committee on World Food Security's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). To implement them, and to support regional processes such as the Land Policy Initiative of the AU, this year we are establishing partnerships with certain developing countries and relevant international organisations to accelerate and target support to countries' existing land governance programmes in conjunction with businesses, in particular farmers, and civil society.

45. We have this week launched initial partnerships with Burkina Faso (US), South Sudan (EU), Namibia (Germany), Nigeria (UK), Niger (EU), Senegal (France) and Tanzania (UK). They will be tailored to the needs of each country and support national development plans with the objective of improving land governance and in particular transparency in land transactions by 2015. In addition, Japan and Italy are providing increased support through FAO and World Bank to support implementation of the VGGT in developing countries.

Open Data

46. Open government data are an essential resource of the information age. Moving data into the public sphere can improve the lives of citizens, and increasing access to these data can drive innovation, economic growth and the creation of good jobs. Making government data publicly available by default and reusable free of charge in machine-readable, readily-accessible, open formats, and describing these data clearly so that the public can readily understand their contents and meanings, generates new fuel for innovation by private sector innovators, entrepreneurs, and non-governmental organisations. Open data also increase awareness about how countries' natural resources are used, how extractives revenues are spent, and how land is transacted and managed.

47. We have today agreed and published an Open Data Charter (annexed) with the following principles:

- Open Data by Default—foster expectations that government data be published openly while continuing to safeguard privacy;
- Quality and Quantity—release quality, timely and well described open data;
- Useable by All—release as much data in as many open formats as possible;

- Releasing Data for Improved Governance—share expertise and be transparent about data collection, standards and publishing processes;
- Releasing Data for Innovation—consult with users and empower future generations of innovators.

48. This Open Data Charter will increase the supply of open government data across a number of key categories including health, environment and transport; support democratic processes; and ensure that all data supplied are easy to use. We encourage others to adopt this Charter. G8 members will, by the end of this year, develop action plans, with a view to implementation of the Charter and technical annex by the end of 2015 at the latest. We will review progress at our next meeting in 2014.

49. In keeping with the Open Data Charter principles, transparent data on G8 development assistance are also essential for accountability. We have all agreed to implement the Busan Common Standard on Aid Transparency, including both the Creditor Reporting System of the OECD Development Assistance Committee and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), by 2015. To show greater G8 leadership we will ensure data on G8 development assistance is open, timely, comprehensive and comparable.

50. G8 members should over time apply the Busan common transparency standards to their respective Development Finance Institutions and international public climate finance flows consistent with the reporting of climate finance under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Accountability

51. We are committed to holding ourselves to account for the promises we have made in an open and transparent way as agreed at L'Aquila in 2009. We welcome the Lough Erne Accountability Report 2013—a comprehensive report covering the 56 development commitments that were the subject of the 2010 Comprehensive Accountability Report and the additional commitments Leaders made at Muskoka, Deauville, and Camp David Summits. We reaffirm our determination to continue working with partner countries and other stakeholders to end extreme poverty, building on our shared experiences and addressing new challenges under country-owned strategies. Transparency and mutual accountability remain cornerstones of our approach.

52. The Report shows good progress in areas such as supporting maternal and child health; access to clean water; improving food security; and helping to build peace and security, particularly in Africa. But it also identifies that more action is required to deliver on our promises in some areas. In addition to working on existing commitments, we also recognise the need to face up to and address new challenges in close partnership with others.

Food Security and Nutrition

53. G8 members reaffirm their commitment to respond with the scale and urgency needed to achieve sustainable global food and nutrition security, and note that we have met our financial pledges made at L'Aquila in 2009 and will work to complete disbursements. We reaffirm our commitment to the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition and welcome progress since its launch in 2012. We reaffirm our commitment to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as the guiding framework for agricultural transformation in Africa, recognising the New Alliance as a means to increase private sector investment in support of CAADP Country Investment Plans. We will build on the achievements of the US G8 Presidency by advancing action in four areas:

- Leadership—by reinforcing African ownership and establishing the Leadership Council as the primary oversight body for the New Alliance;
- Accountability—by agreeing a credible and effective way to track and report transparently on progress, aligned with the CAADP monitoring framework;

- Expansion—by expanding participation in the New Alliance by African countries, global and African private sector, and development partners;
- Deepening impact—by ensuring that investments have a measurable impact on reducing poverty and malnutrition, particularly for smallholders and women, and are made responsibly and support the sustainable use of natural resources.

54. The progress report to the New Alliance Leadership Council highlights the creation of partnership agreements in six African countries; progress made implementing policy reforms and catalysing private sector investment; and the launch of tools to mobilise capital, improve access to new technology, manage risk and improve nutrition. We welcome expansion of the New Alliance to include Nigeria, Benin and Malawi and the initial steps to develop a new Cooperation Framework with Senegal. We recognise the critical role played by smallholder farmers, especially women. We welcome the establishment of a robust system to track results integrated into the CAADP monitoring framework. G8 Members continue to support the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme to finance country-owned agricultural development activities, especially those that achieve positive nutrition outcomes, and to leverage greater flows of private capital to smallholder farmers and agribusinesses in low-income countries.

55. We welcome the recently announced Global Nutrition for Growth Compact which commits to under-nutrition reduction targets for 2020. We also welcome the financial and policy commitments to accelerate progress towards ending under-nutrition for women and young children. Progress on these commitments should be regularly reported and reviewed, including through the Scaling-Up Nutrition Movement, which we continue to support.

Climate Change

56. Climate change is one of the foremost challenges for our future economic growth and well-being. We remain strongly committed to addressing the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly by 2020 and to pursue our low carbon path afterwards, with a view to doing our part to limit effectively the increase in global temperature below 2ºC above pre-industrial levels, consistent with science.

57. We will pursue ambitious and transparent action, both domestically and internationally, in the UNFCCC, complemented by actions addressed through other relevant fora, including but not limited to:

- the Major Economies Forum (MEF), where we will work with our partners to secure progress on the MEF Action Agenda and to overcome differences on the road to the global deal in 2015;
- the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), where we call for the agreement at the Assembly in September 2013 on an ambitious package related to both market-based and non-market based measures to address rising aviation emissions;
- the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), where we continue to work together on further measures to address the issue of shipping emissions;
- the Climate and Clean Air Coalition which we all committed to join at our last Summit, where we will build on the eight global initiatives already begun and further develop the scientific evidence base and private sector involvement.

58. We recognise climate change as a contributing factor in increased economic and security risks globally. The G8 has agreed to consider means to better respond to this challenge and its associated risks, recalling that international climate policy and sustainable economic development are mutually reinforcing.

59. In the UNFCCC we will work to ensure that a new protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all parties is adopted by 2015, to come into effect and be

implemented from 2020. We also note with grave concern the gap between current country pledges and what is needed, and will work towards increasing mitigation ambition in the period to 2020. We reiterate our commitment to the developed countries' goal of mobilising jointly $100 billion of climate finance per year by 2020 from a wide variety of sources in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and are advancing our efforts to continue to improve the transparency of international climate finance flows. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to mobilise political will through 2014 towards a successful global agreement in 2015 during the Conference of the Parties that France stands ready to host. We look forward to the fifth Assessment Report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition

60. The aspirations of the people of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) for freedom, dignity and opportunity remain undiminished. Progress has been achieved. But the region continues to face serious challenges. We pledge our continued support for the political and economic reforms in the region and encourage Leaders of Arab Countries in Transition to continue to make progress through the difficult transition toward democracy, prosperity, open economies and more inclusive societies, including respect for the rights of women and girls and the right to practice religious faith in safety and security.

61. Through co-ordinated bilateral and multilateral support, we will help countries in transition work towards achieving the economic stability, structural reform, and good governance and anti-corruption reforms necessary to enable sustainable and inclusive growth and create jobs.

62. We will continue to support country-led reforms, including projects to support institutional reform, enhanced trade, investment and job creation, including through the MENA Transition Fund, alongside other support from Partners. We welcome the approval of around $100 million of projects in the Fund's first year of operation and encourage partners to deliver on pledges made to date and to increase contributions to ensure the initial capitalization of $250 million is met. We further welcome and encourage new donors to the Fund beyond the Partnership.

63. We will continue to support greater trade, investment and economic integration in the region, including through ambitious bilateral trade and investment agreements and improved access to capital for governments and businesses. We hope soon to welcome Yemen into the WTO and support Libya's path to accession. We welcome the investments in the region by the IFIs and international organisations. We welcome the imminent ratification by all members of the extension of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's geographical mandate to facilitate further investment in transition countries. We recognise the critical role played by young people, women and SMEs in economic stability and growth. We will continue to work with the IFIs to take forward the SME action plans in parallel with a new initiative to provide mentoring support to SMEs.

64. We reiterate our high level of commitment to return stolen assets to countries in transition, including through participation in the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery. We will continue to strengthen cooperation on bilateral casework and develop further the collaboration among our practitioners. Each G8 country will present a road-map by the second Arab Forum on Asset Recovery (AFAR II) in October 2013 that sets out the steps we are taking to meet our commitments under the 2012 Asset Recovery Action Plan. We will enhance coordination in our provision of capacity-building and technical assistance. We will work to agree and adopt principles of good practice in the transliteration of Arabic names in our legal documents by AFAR II. We will support the development of an active law-enforcement network on asset recovery in the Middle East/North Africa region.

65. In line with the G8 tradition of accountability, Foreign Ministers of the Partnership will consider a report on an assessment of progress against commitments at their meeting in September 2013.

Counter Terrorism

66. We reiterate our condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and wherever it occurs. We remain concerned about the increasingly fragmented and geographically diverse threat posed by terrorist groups including al-Qaeda and its affiliates. None of us are immune: since Camp David every G8 partner has been directly affected by acts of terrorism, either at home or overseas. We recognise the valuable leadership role of the UN, including through its Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, the work of the Roma Lyon Group and the importance of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). We are committed to working together to reduce the risk of terrorism for our own citizens, including from home-grown terrorism, and for our partners overseas. Our response must be robust, intelligent and based on a comprehensive approach, respecting human rights and the rule of law, which counters radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorist financing (including flows channelled through off-shore jurisdictions), and which tackles the conditions and grievances that terrorists seek to exploit.

67. While recognising the global threat from terrorism, recent developments in Africa, notably in an arc running from Mauritania in the west to Somalia in the east, show how terrorism combines with other factors to threaten stability and economic interests. That is why we support efforts to dismantle the terrorist safe haven in northern Mali. We welcome France's important contribution in this regard. Following the successful international high-level donors' conference to Brussels on 15 May, we support the swift deployment of a UN stabilisation force in Mali, and encourage the Government of Mali energetically to pursue a political process which can build long-term stability. We also support the Federal Government of Somalia as it re-establishes peace and security after years of conflict fuelled by terrorist groups and commend the commitment of AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces. We support the Government's efforts to set up a robust, impartial and effective justice system. We support the Somali Government's efforts to introduce economic reforms which will help facilitate the welcome process of Somalia's re-engagement with the IFIs.

68. We need a co-ordinated and coherent approach to tackle the spread of terrorism and address the drivers of instability in northern Africa and the Sahel. We will seek to reinforce the work being taken forward in this area, including by the UN, EU, AU, Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the GCTF. We have identified five priority areas for action in those countries in northern Africa where the problems of terrorism and its drivers are most profound. We will take forward this work in close co-operation with the countries themselves.

69. Building security and rule-of-law capacity. We will work individually and collectively, including through the UN, AU, and GCTF to help build capacity to identify, disrupt and prosecute terrorist activity, while respecting human rights. We will also support multinational efforts, including the EU Training Missions in Mali and Somalia, and welcome the establishment of the International Institute of Justice and Rule of Law in Tunisia.

70. Tackling criminal trafficking and strengthening border security. We will offer political and practical support to those regional and international organisations leading efforts to enhance the ability of countries to monitor and control their borders and to tackle facilitating factors such as corruption, transnational organised crime and illicit trafficking of drugs and people, which undermine governance and the rule of law and in some cases provide an important source of funding for terrorists. We recognise the important work of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in this regard. We encourage the UNODC (with GCTF and ECOWAS supporting) to convene a high-level meeting to bring together the countries of the region, donors and those with relevant exper-

tise to look at the particular challenges facing North and West Africa, including cooperation in tackling, by a variety of means, terrorist groups that move across borders. We will also take action to tackle the illegal trafficking of protected or endangered wildlife species.

71. Countering violent extremism. We will support work to counter violent extremism, in particular addressing extremist narratives that seek to justify terrorist activity in these countries, including supporting the GCTF and its work to develop the Hedayah Centre, the first international centre of excellence on countering violent extremism. We are also dedicated to enhancing cooperation to tackle the escalating risks of recruitment and radicalisation, including through providing support to vulnerable communities, and building capacity to counter violent extremism.

72. Reducing the vulnerability of multinational companies. Foreign direct investment helps deliver economic growth and is a means to tackle instability. We welcome the intention of the Roma Lyon Group to develop a set of principles to guide our work with multinational companies, supporting them to operate securely in high threat environments, whilst protecting their staff and equities from terrorism. Once agreed, we will aim to encourage adoption of these principles on a global basis.

73. Addressing the wider drivers of instability. Poverty and socio-economic disparities contribute to instability and are exploited by terrorists. We will support the efforts of international and regional organisations, including the IFIs to promote sustainable development and economic growth in northern Africa helping to create the conditions that give people a stake in stability, security and the rule of law. Through the EITI and mandatory disclosure requirements as appropriate, we will also encourage transparent and accountable management of mineral resources. We endorse the work done to improve agriculture and livelihoods through the leadership of the Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience-Sahel (AGIR-Sahel) process. And we will support the transition of Arab Spring countries across North Africa through the Deauville Partnership working for open economies and inclusive growth.

74. We are determined to use our collective resources to deliver progress in these areas. This collective effort will be augmented by bilateral cooperation that reflects our different historical, economic, cultural and political ties to the countries of northern Africa and the Sahel, and our traditional areas of capacity-building expertise. We have agreed to hold a further G8 meeting later this year, at the level of National Security Advisers or other senior officials, and involving regional and international partners, to review progress and further our objectives.

The threat posed by kidnapping for ransom by terrorists and the preventive steps the international community can take

75. The international community has made significant progress in combating the flow of funds to terrorist organisations. However, in the last three years, we estimate that Al Qaeda-affiliated and other Islamist extremist groups worldwide have collected tens of millions of dollars in ransoms. Payments to terrorists from Sahel to the Horn of Africa helped fuel instability in the region, and contributed to large scale attacks like In Amenas. The payment of ransoms to terrorist groups is one of the sources of income which supports their recruitment efforts, strengthens their operational capability to organise and carry out terrorist attacks, and incentivises future incidents of kidnapping for ransom, thereby increasing the risks to our nationals.

76. We are committed to protecting the lives of our nationals and reducing terrorist groups' access to the funding that allows them to survive and thrive in accordance with relevant international conventions. We unequivocally reject the payment of ransoms to terrorists in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1904 (2009) which requires that Member States prevent the payment of ransoms, directly or indirectly, to terrorists designated under the UN Al Qaeda sanctions regime through the freezing of funds and other assets.

77. We welcome efforts to prevent kidnapping and to secure the safe release of hostages without ransom payments, such as those recommended by the GCTF, specifically in the Algiers Memorandum on Good Practices on Preventing and Denying the Benefits of Kidnapping for Ransom by Terrorists. We encourage further expert discussion, including at the Roma Lyon group, to deepen our understanding of this problem. We also encourage private sector partners, including aid and media organisations, travel and insurance companies, and other businesses to adopt their own similar guidelines and good practices for preventing and responding to terrorist kidnaps.

78. We continue to support efforts to reduce terrorist groups' access to funding and financial services through the ongoing work of the FATF to improve anti–money laundering and terrorist financing frameworks worldwide. We call on all countries to effectively implement the revised FATF Standards.

79. But when the worst happens, we agree to provide mutual assistance to States responding to terrorist kidnaps including, as appropriate and feasible, through information sharing and specialist expertise or assistance, or the provision of resources related to hostage rescue. We will also support capacity-building initiatives to help states prevent, and prepare to respond to future terrorist kidnaps including through bringing terrorists to justice more effectively and ensuing that they do not avoid responsibility.

80. We call on discussions at the UN on new mechanisms to increase international awareness of the threat of kidnapping for ransom, and propose consideration of further UN Security Council resolutions to address and mitigate the threat.

81. We strongly support efforts by the international community to tackle other forms of kidnapping and to reduce the threat of piracy.

Foreign Policy

82. We are determined to work together to stop the bloodshed and loss of life in Syria and to support the Syrian people to establish peace and stability through political means. We are gravely concerned at the appalling human tragedy that the UN estimates has cost the lives of over 93,000 people and led to 4.2 million internally displaced persons and 1.6 million refugees. We acknowledge the vital humanitarian role played by neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees, above all Lebanon and Jordan, in dealing with the significant economic and security pressures they are facing as a result of the conflict and refugee influx.

83. Given the extraordinary humanitarian need as reflected in the latest UN appeal for $5.2 billion in 2013, we are resolved to make exceptional contributions commensurate with the scale of the problem. At this meeting G8 Leaders confirmed additional contributions of almost $1.5 billion to meet humanitarian needs in Syria and its neighbours. We recognise that further contributions will be needed given the scale of the challenge. We urge other countries and organisations to make similar commitments. We call for aid agencies to be given immediate access to provide humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need, in accordance with humanitarian principles and international law, particularly in the worst affected areas such as Qusayr.

84. We remain committed to achieving a political solution to the crisis based on a vision for a united, inclusive and democratic Syria. We strongly endorse the decision to hold as soon as possible the Geneva Conference on Syria to implement fully the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012, which sets out a number of key steps beginning with agreement on a transitional governing body with full executive powers, formed by mutual consent. As the Geneva Communiqué says, the public services must be preserved or restored. This includes the military forces and security services. However all governmental institutions and state offices must perform according to professional and human rights standards, operating under a top leadership that inspires public confidence, under the control of the transitional governing body.

85. Both sides at the Conference must engage seriously and constructively. They should be fully representative of the Syrian people

and committed to the implementation of the Geneva Communiqué and to the achievement of stability and reconciliation. We will engage actively with the parties in order to achieve successful outcomes.

86. We are deeply concerned by the growing threat from terrorism and extremism in Syria, and also by the increasingly sectarian nature of the conflict. Syria must belong to all Syrians, including its minorities and all religious groups. We call on the Syrian authorities and opposition at the Geneva Conference jointly to commit to destroying and expelling from Syria all organisations and individuals affiliated to Al Qaeda, and any other non-state actors linked to terrorism. We will support UN planning for Syria's transition, recovery, and reconstruction needs, in particular by maintaining continuity of state institutions during transition and helping to ensure that the security forces are effective, accountable and able to deal with the threat of terrorism and extremism.

87. We condemn any use of chemical weapons in Syria and call on all parties to the conflict to allow access to the UN investigating team mandated by the UN Secretary-General, and drawing on the expertise of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and World Health Organisation (WHO), in order to conduct an objective investigation into reports of use of chemical weapons. The UN team should make their report and deliver it to the UN Security Council for their assessment. We are determined that those who may be found responsible for the use of chemical weapons will be held accountable. We emphasise the need for the secure and safe storage of all chemical weapons in Syria, pending their destruction under international verification. We also condemn in the strongest possible terms all human rights violations and abuses in Syria, committed by anyone, including indiscriminate attacks on civilians. We call on all sides to respect international humanitarian and human rights laws, noting the particular responsibility of the Syrian authorities in this regard.

88. Following the elections in Libya last year, the first for over four decades, we welcome the progress made by the Libyan government under the stewardship of Prime Minister Zeidan. We encourage the government to continue this progress, delivering concrete results. To ensure an effective transition to a more stable, democratic and prosperous future, we urge continued and sustained engagement by the international community, coordinated by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). This engagement should support the Libyan Government's efforts to increase the effectiveness and capacity of its security and justice sector institutions, to complete a successful transition to democracy, and, following four decades of mismanagement, to develop the Libyan economy and to improve the provision of public services. We encourage all Libyans to engage with the political process of reconciliation and constitutional reform through peaceful and inclusive means, underpinned by respect for the rule of law.

89. We agreed that all relevant parties must work urgently for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We support a two-state solution with an independent, democratic, contiguous, and viable Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. We call for the necessary steps to build trust and urge the parties to work towards the resumption of direct negotiations without preconditions, taking note of the 23 September 2011 statement of the Middle East Quartet. We affirm our support for the Palestinian Authority and its state-building efforts and encourage the international community to extend the fullest assistance possible to revitalising the Palestinian economy.

90. We recognise the progress made by the Afghan National Security Forces in taking the lead for security across Afghanistan from mid-2013. We will continue to assist the Government of Afghanistan with meeting their commitments to strengthen their institutions of governance, to combat corruption and the threat of terrorism. We underline the continuing need for the Afghan Government, with support from the international community to tackle more effectively illicit drug production,

trade and trafficking. This should include further measures to reduce the cultivation of opium poppy and the production of, trafficking in and consumption of opiates. Presidential and Provincial elections in 2014 should be credible, inclusive and transparent, as agreed under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. All Afghans should be able to participate peacefully in the country's political future. We support an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process of reconciliation, based on the principles of renouncing violence, cutting ties with terrorist groups and respecting the Afghan Constitution, including its human rights provisions, notably on the rights of women and minorities. Our commitment to Afghanistan, within a stable region, will endure beyond this important year of transition.

91. Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is a top priority. Such proliferation is a major threat to international peace and security.

92. Iran's nuclear programme, which it continues to develop in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions and in defiance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors resolutions, remains a source of serious concern. We once again urge Iran to comply fully and without delay with these international obligations. We call on the international community to ensure full implementation of UN sanctions. We stress that it is essential and urgent for Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA on all aspects of its nuclear programme, including to resolve questions on its possible military dimensions, and to engage actively and constructively with the E3+3 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, the US and the EU High Representative) to find the diplomatic resolution to the nuclear issue which we seek. We reaffirm that in line with the UN Security Council's approved dual track approach, Iran has the ability to avoid further isolation and improve its situation only if it promptly addresses the concerns of the international community. We strongly urge Iran to fully respect its human rights obligations. We note the election of President-elect Rouhani and we invite Iran to use this opportunity to resolve its differences with the international community.

93. We remain deeply concerned about North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. North Korea must meet its international obligations by completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandoning its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. It must engage constructively in credible and authentic multilateral talks and refrain from provocative actions. It must abide by its obligations under relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement of the Six Party Talks. Whilst it refuses to meet these obligations, we call on the international community to ensure full implementation of UN sanctions against North Korea. We urge North Korea to address the concerns of the international community over its human rights violations, including the abductions issue and treatment of refugees returned to North Korea.

94. We welcomed the historic Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict adopted by G8 Foreign Ministers on 11 April and encouraged its early implementation. The Declaration contains political and practical elements, including acknowledgement by G8 members that rape and serious sexual violence in international armed conflict constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

Nuclear Safety

95. Two years after the accident at the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, achieving and maintaining the highest levels of nuclear safety worlwide remains a priority. We reaffirm the importance of international cooperation and our full support to the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety. We will continue, in our national capacity as well as collectively, to take our full share in its implementation. In this regard, we commend and support the work being done at the IAEA for improving the effectiveness of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and stress the need to further strenghen the implementation of other relevant conventions as well as national capabilities and international mechanisms for nuclear emergency preparedness and response.

Conclusion

96. We look forward to meeting under the Presidency of Russia in Sochi on 4–5 June 2014.

Annex 1: G8 Action Plan Principles to prevent the misuse of companies and legal arrangements

Subject to our different constitutional circumstances, and understanding that a one-size-fits all approach may not be the most effective, the G8 endorses the following core principles that are fundamental to the transparency of ownership and control of companies and legal arrangements. These core principles, consistent with the FATF standards, are essential to ensure the integrity of beneficial ownership and basic company information, the timely access to such information by law enforcement for investigative purposes, as well as, where appropriate, the legitimate commercial interests of the private sector.

The G8 also commits to publish national Action Plans based on these principles that set out the concrete action each of us will take to counter money laundering and tax evasion. To ensure G8 members are held to account for their commitments, the G8 agrees to a process of self reporting through a public update on the progress made against individual action plans and to inform the Financial Action Task Force.

1. *Companies should know who owns and controls them and their beneficial ownership and basic information should* be adequate, accurate, and current. As such, companies should be required to obtain and hold their beneficial ownership and basic information, and ensure documentation of this information is accurate.

2. *Beneficial ownership information on companies should be accessible* onshore to law enforcement, tax administrations and other relevant authorities including, as appropriate, financial intelligence units. *This could be achieved through central registries of company beneficial ownership and basic information at national or state level.* Countries should consider measures to facilitate access to company beneficial ownership information by financial institutions and other regulated businesses. Some basic company information should be publicly accessible.

3. Trustees of express trusts should know the beneficial ownership of the trust, including *information on beneficiaries and settlors. This information should be accessible by law enforcement, tax administrations and other relevant authorities including, as appropriate, financial intelligence units.*

4. *Authorities should understand the risks to which their anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism regime is exposed and implement effective and proportionate measures to target those risks.* Appropriate information on the results of the risk assessments should be shared with relevant authorities, regulated businesses and other jurisdictions.

5. *The misuse of financial instruments and of certain shareholding structures* which may obstruct transparency, such as bearer shares and nominee shareholders and directors, should be prevented.

6. *Financial institutions and designated non financial businesses and professions, including trust and company service providers, should be subject to effective anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing obligations* to identify and verify the beneficial ownership of their customers. *Countries should ensure effective supervision of these obligations.*

7. *Effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions should be available* for companies, financial institutions and other regulated businesses that do not comply with their respective obligations, including those regarding customer due diligence. These sanctions should be robustly enforced.

8. *National authorities should cooperate effectively domestically and across borders* to combat the abuse of companies and legal arrangements for illicit activity. Countries should ensure that their relevant authorities can rapidly, constructively, and effectively provide basic company and beneficial ownership information upon request from foreign counterparts.

Annex 2: G8 Open Data Charter

Preamble

1. The world is witnessing the growth of a global movement facilitated by technology and social media and fuelled by information—one that contains enormous potential to create more accountable, efficient, responsive, and effective governments and businesses, and to spur economic growth.

Open data sit at the heart of this global movement.

2. Access to data allows individuals and organisations to develop new insights and innovations that can improve the lives of others and help to improve the flow of information within and between countries. While governments and businesses collect a wide range of data, they do not always share these data in ways that are easily discoverable, useable, or understandable by the public.

This is a missed opportunity.

3. Today, people expect to be able to access information and services electronically when and how they want. Increasingly, this is true of government data as well. We have arrived at a tipping point, heralding a new era in which people can use open data to generate insights, ideas, and services to create a better world for all.

4. Open data can increase transparency about what government and business are doing. Open data also increase awareness about how countries' natural resources are used, how extractives revenues are spent, and how land is transacted and managed. All of which promotes accountability and good governance, enhances public debate, and helps to combat corruption. Transparent data on G8 development assistance are also essential for accountability.

5. Providing access to government data can empower individuals, the media, civil society, and business to fuel better outcomes in public services such as health, education, public safety, environmental protection, and governance. Open data can do this by:

- showing how and where public money is spent, providing strong incentives for that money to be used most effectively;
- enabling people to make better informed choices about the services they receive and the standards they should expect.

6. Freely-available government data can be used in innovative ways to create useful tools and products that help people navigate modern life more easily. Used in this way, open data are a catalyst for innovation in the private sector, supporting the creation of new markets, businesses, and jobs. Beyond government, these benefits can multiply as more businesses adopt open data practices modelled by government and share their own data with the public.

7. We, the G8, agree that open data are an untapped resource with huge potential to encourage the building of stronger, more interconnected societies that better meet the needs of our citizens and allow innovation and prosperity to flourish.

8. We therefore agree to follow a set of *principles* that will be the foundation for access to, and the release and re-use of, data made available by G8 governments. They are:

- Open Data by Default
- Quality and Quantity
- Useable by All
- Releasing Data for Improved Governance
- Releasing Data for Innovation

9. While working within our national political and legal frameworks, we will implement

these principles in accordance with the technical best practises and timeframes set out in our national action plans. G8 members will, by the end of this year, develop action plans, with a view to implementation of the Charter and technical annex by the end of 2015 at the latest. We will review progress at our next meeting in 2014.

10. *We also recognise the benefits of open data can and should be enjoyed by citizens of all nations.* In the spirit of openness we offer this Open Data Charter for consideration by other countries, multinational organisations and initiatives.

Principle 1: Open Data by Default

11. We recognise that free access to, and subsequent re-use of, open data are of significant value to society and the economy.

12. We agree to orient our governments towards open data by default.

13. We recognise that the term *government data* is meant in the widest sense possible. This could apply to data owned by national, federal, local, or international government bodies, or by the wider public sector.

14. We recognise that there is national and international legislation, in particular pertaining to intellectual property, personally-identifiable and sensitive information, which must be observed.

15. *We will:*

- *establish an expectation that all government data be published openly by default,* as outlined in this Charter, while recognising that there are legitimate reasons why some data cannot be released.

Principle 2: Quality and Quantity

16. We recognise that governments and the public sector hold vast amounts of information that may be of interest to citizens.

17. We also recognise that it may take time to prepare high-quality data, and the importance of consulting with each other and with national, and wider, open data users to identify which data to prioritise for release or improvement.

18. *We will:*

- *release high-quality open data that are timely, comprehensive, and accurate.* To the extent possible, data will be in their original, unmodified form and at the finest level of granularity available;
- *ensure that information in the data is written in plain, clear language,* so that it can be understood by all, though this Charter does not require translation into other languages;
- *make sure that data are fully described,* so that consumers have sufficient information to understand their strengths, weaknesses, analytical limitations, and security requirements, as well as how to process the data; and
- *release data as early as possible,* allow users to provide feedback, and then continue to make revisions to ensure the highest standards of open data quality are met.

Principle 3: Usable by All

19. We agree to release data in a way that helps all people to obtain and re-use it.

20. We recognise that open data should be available free of charge in order to encourage their most widespread use.

21. We agree that when open data are released, it should be done without bureaucratic or administrative barriers, such as registration requirements, which can deter people from accessing the data.

22. *We will:*

- *release data in open formats wherever possible,* ensuring that the data are available to the widest range of users for the widest range of purposes; and
- *release as much data as possible,* and where it is not possible to offer free access at present, promote the benefits and encourage the allowance of free access to data. In many cases this will include pro-

viding data in multiple formats, so that they can be processed by computers and understood by people.

Principle 4: Releasing Data for Improved Governance

23. We recognise that the release of open data strengthens our democratic institutions and encourages better policy-making to meets the needs of our citizens. This is true not only in our own countries but across the world.

24. We also recognise that interest in open data is growing in other multilateral organisations and initiatives.

25. *We will:*

- *share technical expertise and experience* with each other and with other countries across the world so that everyone can reap the benefits of open data; and
- *be transparent about our own data collection, standards, and publishing processes,* by documenting all of these related processes online.

Principle 5: Releasing Data for Innovation

26. Recognising the importance of diversity in stimulating creativity and innovation, we agree that the more people and organisations that use our data, the greater the social and economic benefits that will be generated. This is true for both commercial and non-commercial uses.

27. *We will:*

- *work to increase open data literacy and encourage people,* such as developers of applications and civil society organisations that work in the field of open data promotion, to unlock the value of open data;
- *empower a future generation of data innovators* by providing data in machine-readable formats.

G8 Open Data Charter: Technical Annex

Introduction

1. We, the G8, have consulted with technical experts to identify some best practices (part one) and collective actions (part two) that we will use to meet the principles set out in the G8 Open Data Charter.

2. While working within our national political and legal frameworks, we agree to implement these practices as quickly as possible and aim to complete our activities by 2015 at the latest. This will be done in accordance with the timeframes in our national action plans.

3. The Annex constitutes a 'living' set of guidelines that may be subject to amendments after consideration o emerging technology solutions or practical experience gained during the course of implementation of the G8 Open Data Charter.

Part One—Best Practices

Principle 1: Open Data by Default

4. We recognise the importance of open data and we will establish an expectation that all government data be published openly by default.

5. *We will:*

- *define our open data position in a public statement of intent,* such as an announcement, strategy or policy, so that our plans for progressing the open data agenda in our jurisdictions are clear;
- *publish a national action plan* to provide more specific details on our plans to release data according to the principles in the G8 Open Data Charter; and
- *publish data on a national portal* so that all government data that has been released can be found easily in one place. A portal may be a central website from which data can be downloaded, or a website which lists all open government data stored at a different location. Each portal will include a registry file that lists all the

data and metadata used on the portal, as well as providing APIs for developers. Where it is yet not possible to publish all data on a portal, the location of data will be communicated clearly and not moved without notice.

Principle 2: Quality and Quantity

6. We commit to releasing data that are both high in quality as well as high in quantity. When releasing data, we aim to do so in a way that helps people to use and understand them. This will help to increase the interoperability of data from different policy areas, businesses or countries.

7. *We will:*

- *use robust and consistent metadata* (i.e. the fields or elements that describe the actual data);
- *publish and maintain an up-to-date mapping* of the core descriptive metadata fields across G8 members to enable easier use and comprehension by people from around the world. This will allow countries, in the G8 and beyond, who do not currently have a data portal to consider adopting the metadata fields included in this mapping;
- *ensure data are fully described,* as appropriate, to help users to fully understand the data. This may include:
  - Documentation that provides explanations about the data fields used;
  - Data dictionaries to link different data; and
  - A user's guide that describes the purpose of the collection, the target audience, the characteristics of the sample, and the method of data collection.
- *listen to feedback from data users* to improve the breadth, quality and accessibility of data we offer. This could be in the form of a public consultation on the national data strategy or policy, discussions with civil society, creation of a feedback mechanism on the data portal, or through other appropriate mechanisms.

Principle 3: Usable by All

8. We agree to release data in a way that helps all people find and re-use them.

9. *We will:*

- *make data available in convenient open formats* to ensure files can be easily retrieved, downloaded, indexed, and searched by all commonly used Web search applications. Open formats, for example non-proprietary CSV files, are ones where the specification for the format is available to anyone for free, thereby allowing the data contained in a file to be opened by different software programmes.

Principle 4: Releasing Data for Improved Governance

10. We recognise that data are a powerful tool to help drive government effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness to citizen needs while fuelling further demand for open data.

11. *We will:*

- *develop links with civil society organisations and individuals* to allow the public to provide feedback on the most important data they would like released;
- *be open about our own data standards,* so that we take into account:
  - Data that are released by other national and international organisations
  - The standards emerging from other international transparency initiatives; and
- *document our own experiences of working with open data* by, for example, publishing technical information about our open data policies, practices, and portals so that the benefits of open data can be enjoyed in other countries.

Principle 5: Releasing Data for Innovation

12. We agree that our citizens can use our data to fuel innovation in our own countries and around the world. We recognise that free access to, and reuse of, open government data are an essential part of this.

13. *We will:*

- *support the release of data using open licences* or other relevant instruments—while respecting intellectual property rights—so that no restrictions or charges are placed on the re-use of the information for non-commercial or commercial purposes, save for exceptional circumstances;
- *ensure data are machine readable in bulk* by providing data that are well structured to allow automated processing and access with the minimum number of file downloads;
- *release data using application programming interfaces (APIs),* where appropriate, to ensure easy access to the most regularly updated and accessed data; and
- *encourage innovative uses of our data* through the organisation of challenges, prizes or mentoring for data users in our individual jurisdictions.

Part Two—Collective Actions

Action 1: G8 National Action Plans

- We will publish individual action plans detailing how we will implement the Open Data Charter according to our national frameworks (October 2013)
- We will report progress on an annual basis (via the G8 Accountability Working Group) (2014 and 2015)

Action 2: Release of high value data

- We recognise the following as areas of high value, both for improving our democracies and encouraging innovative re-use of data.

Data Category (alphabetical order)	***Example datasets***
Companies	Company/business register
Crime and Justice	Crime statistics, safety
Earth observation	Meteorological/weather, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting
Education	List of schools; performance of schools, digital skills
Energy and Environment	Pollution levels, energy consumption
Finance and contracts	Transaction spend, contracts let, call for tender, future tenders, local budget, national budget (planned and spent)
Geospatial	Topography, postcodes, national maps, local maps
Global Development	Aid, food security, extractives, land
Government Accountability and Democracy	Government contact points, election results, legislation and statutes, salaries (pay scales), hospitality/gifts
Health	Prescription data, performance data
Science and Research	Genome data, research and educational activity, experiment results

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

Joint Statement by President Obama, President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia, and President François Hollande of France on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict
June 18, 2013

We, the Presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries—France, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America—remain committed to helping the parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict reach a lasting and peaceful settlement. We express our deep regret that, rather than trying to find a solution based upon mutual interests, the parties have continued to seek one-sided advantage in the negotiation process.

We continue to firmly believe that the elements outlined in the statements of our countries over the last four years must be the foundation of any fair and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. These elements should be seen as an integrated whole, as any attempt to select some elements over others would make it impossible to achieve a balanced solution.

We reiterate that only a negotiated settlement can lead to peace, stability, and reconciliation, opening opportunities for regional development and cooperation. The use of military force that has already created the current situation of confrontation and instability will not resolve the conflict. A renewal of hostilities would be disastrous for the population of the region, resulting in loss of life, more destruction, additional refugees, and enormous financial costs. We strongly urge the leaders of all the sides to recommit to the Helsinki principles, particularly those relating to the non-use of force or the threat of force, territorial integrity, and equal rights and self-determination of peoples. We also appeal to them to refrain from any actions or rhetoric that could raise tension in the region and lead to escalation of the conflict. The leaders should prepare their people for peace, not war.

Our countries stand ready to assist the sides, but the responsibility for putting an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains with them. We strongly believe that further delay in reaching a balanced agreement on the framework for a comprehensive peace is unacceptable, and urge the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia to focus with renewed energy on the issues that remain unresolved.

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

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Berlin, Germany
June 19, 2013

Chancellor Merkel. Well, hello, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to bid a very warm welcome to the President of the United States, Barack Obama. A very warm welcome, indeed, to Berlin. It's his first visit to Berlin as President of the United States, certainly not his first visit to Germany.

And we have had on numerous occasions the opportunity to talk. We have established ties of friendship based on trust. And I would like to thank you for this. Our cooperation is based on ties of friendship that have lasted for many, many decades between the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States. And this is such a very good relationship because it is based on shared values. If—when the President addresses the crowd in front of the Brandenburg Gate, he will be a President who can do this in front of a gate that is open. Other Presidents had to remind us all of the wall needed to be torn down, and the wall is down. And this is what we owe to our American partners and friends.

But we also see that the world is changing and, indeed, changing at a very rapid pace, so

new challenges come to the fore. And we want to tackle them with resolve, and we want to tackle them together.

What looms most prominently on our agenda here in Germany, but also in Europe and, I trust, in the United States, and could be a very valued project to these two great economies of the world, the free trade agreement. I'm very glad that we were able to conclude the negotiations leading up to the mandate. We will throw our effort behind this fully and squarely because we think that economies on both sides of the Atlantic will very much benefit from that. It's going to be a win-win situation, and it also is an eloquent testimony to this globalized world, where we can work better together both politically and economically.

So this is why I think this is in a very, very important free trade agreement. And I say this on behalf of the Federal Government as a whole.

We talked about questions of the Internet in the context of PRISM. We talked at great length about the new possibilities and about, also, the new threats that the Internet looms—opens up to all of us. The Internet is new territory, uncharted territory to all of us. And it also enables our enemies. It enables enemies of a free, liberal order to use it, to abuse it, to bring a threat to all of us, to threaten our way of life. And this is why we value cooperation with the United States on questions of security.

I also outlined, however, that although we do see the need for gathering information, and there needs to be due diligence also as regards the proportionality. Free, liberal democracies live off people having a feeling of security. And this is why an equitable balance needs to be struck; there needs to be proportionality. And that is something that we agreed on: to have a free exchange of views on—between our staff, but also the staff of the Home Secretary in the States and also the Minister of Interior here in Germany. And this is going to be an ongoing dialogue.

We talked about a number of foreign policy issues. We are both of us engaged in Afghanistan. A new process has been initiated there of a transition of responsibility. This is a process that we are going to tackle together, just as we tackled the greater military challenges of the past together, building up the security forces in Afghanistan together. We will stand together with the United States and solve outstanding problems that are very difficult, indeed, still.

We also addressed Iran. We addressed the Middle East situation as regards the peace process in the Middle East. I think that the initiative of Secretary Kerry offers a very good opportunity to revive—revitalize peace talks. The union—the region needs peace. The partners ought to take up the offer that is on the table, because it is urgently necessary to bring about negotiations. And we will continue also to work on Iran, on the nuclear program of Iran. That is also something that we're agreed on.

We had very good talks. We had, as usual, very open and candid talks. So, yet again, a very warm welcome to you, Mr. President.

President Obama. Well, thank you very much. *Guten Tag.* It is wonderful to be back in Berlin. I've always appreciated the warmth with which I've been greeted by the German people, and it's no different today, although I'm particularly impressed with the warmth of the weather here in Berlin.

And I'm also very grateful for Chancellor Merkel's invitation, 50 years after the visit of President Kennedy.

The Chancellor and I are just back from the G–8 summit, just one of the latest meetings that we've had together. During my time in the White House, I've had the privilege of working with Angela on a whole host of issues. Last time she was at the White House, I had the privilege of presenting her with the Medal of Freedom, our highest civilian honor that a President can bestow. And that speaks to the closeness of our relationship, the strength of our alliance.

I know that here in Germany, sometimes, there's been talk that the transatlantic alliance has been—is fading in importance, that the United States has turned its attention more towards Asia and the Pacific. And in both conversations with Chancellor Merkel and earlier with your President, I reminded them that from our perspective, the relationship with

Europe remains the cornerstone of our freedom and our security, that Europe is our partner in almost everything that we do, and that although the nature of the challenges we face have changed, the strength of our relationships, the enduring bonds based on common values and common ideals very much remains.

We began today talking about economic issues, following up on the discussions that we had at the G–8 summit. Overall, Germany is our largest trading partner in the EU, so we've got a profound stake in each other's success. We agreed that there's more work to do. Not only do we have to grow, but we also have to reform our economies structurally.

And when you look within the—Europe, obviously, different countries are at different stages in that reform and restructuring process. We're going through our own need to reform, for example, our health care system, which is much more expensive than most of the developed world and largely accounts for our deficits and our debt. The good news is, though, that we have gone through the worst recession in years, and we are poised to come back stronger if we take advantage of these opportunities.

One of the opportunities that we spoke about obviously was the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T–TIP. The U.S.-EU relationship is already the largest in the world, economically. Thirteen million Americans and Europeans have jobs that are directly supported by mutual trade and investment. And the Chancellor and I share the conviction that if we are successful in these negotiations, we can grow economies on both sides of the Atlantic, create jobs, improve efficiency, improve productivity and our competitiveness around the world. And by doing so, we're also raising standards for free trade around the world that will not just benefit us, but benefit everyone.

When it comes to our security, the United States and Germany are more than just NATO allies. More American personnel are stationed in Germany than any other country outside of the U.S. We are extraordinarily grateful for the hospitality of the German people. One of the last times I was in Germany, I had a chance to visit our facility where everyone who's injured in the battlefield comes through, and to see the dedication, but also the hospitality that Germans are providing for our young men and women when they've been grievously injured, I think, is a strong symbol of how much this means to us.

Our men and women have been serving side by side in Afghanistan. Germany is the third largest troop-contributing nation there. We're both grateful for the sacrifices that our service men and women and their families have made in this common effort. And because of those efforts, Afghanistan now has the opportunity to secure itself and determine its own destiny.

We welcome President Karzai's announcement yesterday that Afghan forces will soon take the lead for security across the country, which is an important milestone, one that we established in our NATO summit. Even as we wind down the war responsibly and NATO's combat mission in Afghanistan comes to an end, we're going to have to continue to invest in the shared capabilities and interoperability painstakingly built by the tremendous sacrifices of our troops. And I appreciate Germany's interest in making sure that even after our troops are no longer involved in combat operations that we can continue to see progress in Afghanistan.

And many of you noted that yesterday there was an announcement about the Taliban opening an office for purpose of negotiations in Qatar. I said yesterday this is going to be a difficult process. The parties there have been fighting for a very long time, even before 9/11, and we don't expect that it will be easy. But we do think ultimately we're going to need to see Afghans talking to Afghans about how they can move forward and end the cycle of violence there so that they can start actually building their country.

We also discussed the other challenges in the region, including Syria. We are united to see a negotiated political settlement to that conflict. We want to see a Syria that's unified, democratic, and at peace. Right now we need to see an end to the bloodshed, and we have to make sure that chemical weapons are not used

on the ground. I thought we saw some progress at the G–8 in reaffirming the need for a transitional governing process and a U.N. investigation of the potential use of chemical weapons there.

I thanked the Chancellor in—for Germany's unwavering support of the search for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and I briefed her on my Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to find common ground there.

And finally, I want to thank Chancellor Merkel's not only generous invitation, but also the humbling privilege that I'll have to address the people of Berlin from Pariser Platz on the eastern side of the Brandenburg Gate, the other side of the wall that once stood there, the wall that President Reagan insisted be torn down. A quarter century since then has been one of extraordinary progress. We can witness this in the incredible vibrancy and prosperity of Berlin. But one of the things I'll address today is the fact that, given the extraordinary blessings that we enjoy as Americans and as Germans, we have an obligation to make sure that walls around the world are torn down. And we can only accomplish that together.

So I'm grateful for our alliance, I'm grateful for our friendship, and I'm looking forward, an opportunity to answer some questions.

Am I starting off? Or——

White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney. From the American press, Julie Pace of the Associated Press.

President Obama. Yes.

Afghanistan/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program

Q. I wanted to follow up on your comments about the Taliban talks. When you announced those talks yesterday, you praised Afghan President Hamid Karzai as being courageous for being willing to take that step.

President Obama. Right.

Q. Yet today Karzai says that he is suspending talks with the U.S. in response to the Taliban negotiations. How is it possible for you and President Karzai to be on such different pages about this key decision? And is Karzai saying different things to you privately than he is publicly today?

And, Chancellor Merkel, you mentioned that PRISM came up in your discussions today with President Obama. Are you more reassured now about the scope of those programs following the discussions? And did President Obama give you any reassurances that the programs don't violate German privacy rights? Thank you.

President Obama. We had extensive conversations with President Karzai both before and after the Taliban opened the office in Doha. As I think has been reported, there were some concerns about the manner in which the Taliban opened it, some of the language that they used.

We had anticipated that at the outset, there were going to be some areas of friction, to put it mildly, in getting this thing off the ground. That's not surprising. As I said, they've been fighting for a very long time. There's enormous mistrust. Not only have the Taliban and the Afghan Government been fighting for a long time, they're fighting as we speak. I mean, we're in the middle of a war. And Afghans are still being killed, and by the way, members of the international forces there are still being killed. And that's not abating as we speak.

But what we also believe is that alongside the process in which we are training, equipping a Afghan Government that can be responsible for its own security—even as we go through some frankly difficult negotiations around what it would mean for the international community to have an ongoing training and advising presence after 2014—we still believe that you've got to have a parallel track to at least look at the prospect of some sort of political reconciliation.

Whether that bears fruit, whether it actually happens, or whether, post-2014, there's going to continue to be fighting, as there was before ISAF forces got into Afghanistan, that's a question that only the Afghans can answer. But I think that President Karzai himself recognizes the need for political reconciliation. The challenge is, how do you get those things started while you're also at war? And my hope is, and

expectation is, is that despite those challenges, the process will proceed.

Chancellor Merkel, if you don't mind, even though the question was directed at you, I think it would be appropriate for me to go ahead and talk about the NSA issue, which obviously caused controversy back home, but also here in Europe. And then, obviously, Chancellor Merkel will have her own views on this.

What I explained to Chancellor Merkel is, is that I came into office committed to protecting the American people, but also committed to our values and our ideals. And one of our highest ideals is civil liberties and privacy. And I was a critic of the previous administration for those occasions in which I felt they had violated our values, and I came in with a healthy skepticism about how our various programs were structured. But what I have been able to do is examine and scrub how our intelligence services are operating, and I'm confident that at this point, we have struck the appropriate balance.

Now, let me be very specific in terms of—and this is what I described to Chancellor Merkel—what these programs are that have caused so much controversy.

Essentially, one program allows us to take a phone number that has been discovered separately from the—through some lead that is typical of what our intelligence services do, but we get a phone number. And what we try to discover is, has anybody else been called from that phone? And we have bulk data that allows us to just check on phone numbers and nothing else, no content; nobody is listening in on a conversation at that point. It's just determining whether or not if, for example, we found a phone number in Usama bin Laden's compound after the raid, had he called anybody in New York or Berlin or anyplace else.

If in fact we discover that another call has been made, at that point, in order to listen to any phone call, we would have to then go to a judge and seek information through a process that is court supervised. And this entire thing has been set up under the supervision of a Federal court judge.

When it comes to the Internet and e-mail, as Chancellor Merkel said, we're now in an Internet age, and we have to make sure that our administrative rules and our protections catch up with this new cyber world. What I can say to everybody in Germany and everybody around the world is this applies very narrowly to leads that we have obtained on issues related to terrorism or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

So there are a few narrow categories. We get very specific leads. And based on those leads, again, with court supervision and oversight, we are able then to access information.

This is not a situation in which we are rifling through the ordinary e-mails of German citizens or American citizens or French citizens or anybody else. This is not a situation where we simply go into the Internet and start searching any way that we want. This is a circumscribed, narrow system directed at us being able to protect our people. And all of it is done under the oversight of the courts.

And as a consequence, we've saved lives. We know of at least 50 threats that have been averted because of this information not just in the United States, but in some cases, threats here in Germany. So lives have been saved. And the encroachment on privacy has been strictly limited by a court-approved process to relate to these particular categories.

Having said all that, what I've said in the United States is what I shared with Chancellor Merkel, and that is that we do have to strike a balance and we do have to be cautious about how our governments are operating when it comes to intelligence. And so this is a debate that I welcome.

What we're going to be doing when I get back home is trying to find ways to declassify further some of these programs without completely compromising their effectiveness, sharing that information with the public, and also, our intelligence teams are directed to work very closely with our German intelligence counterparts so that they have clarity and assurance that they're not being abused.

But I think one of the things that separates us from some other governments is, is that we

welcome these debates. That's what a democracy is about. And I'm confident that we can strike this right balance, keep our people safe, but also preserve our civil liberties even in this Internet age.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, for the German people, I can only say the following: It's important, it's necessary for us to debate these issues. People have concerns, precisely concerns that there may be some kind of blanket, across-the-board gathering of information. We talked about this. The questions that we have not yet perhaps satisfactorily addressed, we will do—address later on.

But there needs to be a balance. There needs to be proportionality obviously between upholding security and safety of our people and our country, and privacy lines. There are quite a lot of instances where we were getting very important information from the United States, for example, the so-called Sauerland group. And at the same time, obviously, people want to use those new, modern means of communication and technology and do so freely. And as we learn to live and deal responsibly with other new means of technology, we have to learn and deal responsible—responsibly with this one.

And I think today was an important first step in the right direction, and I think it has brought us forward.

Guantanamo Bay Detention Center/U.S. Drone Program

Q. Madam Chancellor, Mr. President. First, a question addressed to you, Mr. President. There are—were a number of hopes in the world that were in a way shattered as regards your legislative term, for example, the closing down of Guantanamo or scrapping the death penalty throughout the whole of the United States, in all of the States. And now, as regards Asia and—are you singling out Germany because there's a big risk here? Or——

And, Madam Chancellor, the Nobel Prize winner, Obama is waging a drone war also via Germany. And is he allowed to do that, according to German law?

The President. Let me see if I understood your question properly. First question was related to policies back home, related to Guantanamo or the death penalty. And then you wanted to talk about drones, or did you just want to focus on the drone question? I just want to make sure that I'm responsive to your question.

Chancellor Merkel. I guess I ought to answer on the drones. And Guantanamo, that was a question, I believe, addressed to you.

President Obama. Okay. Well, it continues to be my policy that I want to close Guantanamo. It has been more difficult than I had hoped, in part because there's been significant resistance from Congress on this, and on some issues, I need congressional authorization.

But about a month ago I gave a speech in which I said that I would redouble my efforts to do so. Because 9/11 happened, and we now have been involved in one form or another in a war for over a decade. One war, I think, in Afghanistan, was necessary. One war I disagreed with strongly. But in either case, there are dangers if we get on a perpetual war footing.

The threat of terrorism remains real, and we have to be vigilant, and we have to take steps to protect ourselves, consistent with our values and consistent with international law. But we also have to guard against being so driven by fear that we are not changing the fabric of our society in ways that we don't intend and do not want for the future. I think closing Guantanamo is an example of us getting out of that perpetual war mentality.

Some of thepeople at Guantanamo are dangerous. Some of them did bad things. But we cannot have a permanent outpost in which they're being held even as we're ending a war in Afghanistan that triggered some of these—the capture of some of these detainees in the first place.

So I'm confident that we can continue to make progress on this front, although, you're right, it has not been as fast as I would have liked. One of the things you discover as a politician is, is that people don't always do exactly what you want. It's shocking. [*Laughter*] And then you have to keep on working at it.

One thing with respect to drone policy: In that speech that I gave, I also addressed that issue of—that, the lethal targeting of identified terrorists. This also is a source of controversy. We have constrained it tightly. And as we defeat Al Qaida, we have to, I think, very carefully examine how these technologies are used. I can say, though, that we do not use Germany as a launching point for unmanned drones to go after counter—as part of our counterterrorism activities. And so I know that there have been some reports here in Germany that that might be the case. That is not.

Chancellor Merkel. Let me complement by saying that the United States of America have bases here, they have soldiers here. They fulfill a very important function, particularly in the fight against terrorism. If I think of Ramstein, for example—and also supplies to soldiers, but also caring for wounded soldiers.

We as allies, as members of NATO, stand shoulder to shoulder here. And we provide bases for our activities, and our work is based also on shared values. As I said, we exchange on—have exchanges on values. But I think it's good. I think it's the right thing to do for the United States of America to be present here with military bases in Germany. It's a normal thing within an alliance, and this is as it should be and as it will be and continue to be.

Syria/Russia

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, on Syria, for the purposes of transparency, can you be specific about what military arms the United States will be providing to Syrian rebels and about which groups will be receiving them? And on the same subject, President Putin appeared resolute and isolated on Syria at the G–8. How can a political process succeed in bringing peace if Russia continues to support Asad, both militarily and politically?

[*At this point, the reporter asked a question in German, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Madam Chancellor, if I may in German, the Federal Government has always argued along the lines that weapons—exports and deliveries of supplies would always as—lead to an escalation because they could land in the hands of terrorists. Don't you think that the situation is going to be exacerbated if the America—America supplies it? Perhaps you would also comment on Mr. Putin. Thank you.

President Obama. Well, first of all, Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters], I'm very impressed with your German. [*Laughter*] And I don't know if you had to practice, but you sounded great. I—Chancellor Merkel said you were just okay. [*Laughter*]

I cannot and will not comment on specifics around our programs related to the Syrian opposition. What I can say is that we have had a steady, consistent policy, which is, we want a Syria that is peaceful, nonsectarian, democratic, legitimate, tolerant. And that is our overriding goal. We want to end the bloodshed. We want to make sure that chemical weapons are not used and that chemical weapons do not fall into the hands of people who would be willing to use them. And so we've had a consistent view in our desired outcome in Syria.

It's also been our view that the best way to get there is through a political transition. And we said that a year ago; we said that 2 years ago. President Asad made a different decision and has brought chaos and bloodshed to his country and has been killing his own people. And it is our view that it is not possible for him to regain a legitimacy after over 100,000 people have been killed and millions have been displaced inside the country.

So the question now is just, as a practical matter—and this is what I said to President Putin—as a practical matter, if in fact Syria is to remain a unified country and the bloodshed is going to end, how do we do that? The only way to do that is through some sort of political transition process.

And the good news out of the G–8 meeting was, is that you saw all the countries, including Russia, reaffirming the communique coming out of the first Geneva talks that said, we need to create a transitional governing body with full powers.

The second good thing that came out of the G–8 discussions was that all of us, including Russia, said we have to investigate use of chemical weapons inside of Syria, and all the parties, including the Government of Bashar al-Asad, have to cooperate with that investigation.

We're confident that, in fact, the Government has used chemical weapons. The Russians are skeptical. We said, fine, let's have the United Nations get in there, but do a serious investigation of it, because we don't want anybody using chemical weapons.

Now, the issue for us is, how have—how can we continue to support a political opposition and a military opposition that becomes more capable, becomes more unified, that isolates extremists who have incorporated themselves into the opposition forces inside of Syria so that if in fact, and when, we get a political transition, there's somebody there who can take over and function in governing and lead to a better future for all Syrians?

That's a difficult process. It's not one that's happening overnight. But all the assistance that we are providing both to the political and military opposition is designed for that purpose.

Some of the stories that have been out there publicly have, I think, gotten a little overcranked in terms of the idea that somehow the United States is preparing to go all in and participate in another war. What we want to do is end a war. But the only way it's going to end is if in fact we have the kind of transition that I described.

And although you're right that at this point, President Putin believes that what would replace Asad would be worse than Asad himself, what I think will become more and more apparent over the coming weeks and months is that without a different government, you can't bring peace and, in fact, you're going to see sectarian divisions get worse and worse and start spilling over into the other parts of the region, and that would be good for nobody.

Chancellor Merkel. On the issue of arms supplies, Germany has very clear, strict rules on this, legal rules, according to which we are not allowed to supply arms into areas where there is civil strife. And that is not specifically designed for the Syrian question, it is a general rule.

But that does not mean that we do not wish—and can play a constructive role as regards the political processes: for example, as regards humanitarian assistance; as regards also the debate on which is the right way to go about this. How can we strengthen the opposition, those forces that work in the best interest of the people in Syria on the ground? And the situation is somewhat vague as regards the members of the opposition and quite different.

And it is our task also, as we see it, that those who wish for a good future for Syria, who are not linked with terrorists, get a chance to achieve full legitimacy, because Germany too is of the opinion that Asad has certainly lost that legitimacy.

The Russian President, as I understand him, says not so clearly what I said just now, that the Syrian President, namely, has lost his legitimacy. But we have found common language in the sense that we wish to work for a transition government. And the question also has to be asked, what is going to come after that? And that is a question we need to address, and we did so. And in the language of the communique of the G–8, it says, we, all of us, reject terrorist forces in Syria because they would again exacerbate the suffering and—of the people there.

Now we have to see to it that, step by step, all of these different strands are brought together because, unfortunately, as yet, there is no common U.N. position, because Russia so far was not on the side of the others. But we must leave no stone unturned in trying, as we did during the G–8, to find a common basis on which we can also speak with Russia.

And there are certain areas where we obviously differ, but our political responsibility is to, time and again, seek to bring this matter forward in the right direction. And since the situation—if we look to Jordan, if we look to other countries in the vicinity—becomes more and more unstable, what with the flow of refugees and all, I think it's worth every effort to

try, all of us to try to do something, based on the language of the communique of yesterday, to do something in the interest of the people in Syria.

Global Economy

Q. Mr. President, in the past, there were some different points of view about the best way out of the global financial crisis. And Chancellor Merkel stands for a policy of cutting back budgets to reach that of financial stability throughout the euro zone to win back trust of the markets. Did you talk about this issue? And what's your position on that?

[*The reporter asked a question in German, which was translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Same question addressed to you: Has there been a discussion on the euro zone, and do you wish to abide by the policy that you—in view of the problems that the countries in the south have currently?

Chancellor Merkel. Maybe I will just start with something, because your question insinuates something that we don't want. We want prosperity. We want competitiveness. We want economic strength in order to bring about reduction of unemployment.

We talked about this at some length. And I also said Germany in the long run will only be able to live well if Europe as a whole is doing well. So it would be a very wrong tack for our policy to take if we were pursuing a kind of policy where we weaken those countries into which we, after all, wish to export our goods. I think the world is changing, however, and Europe is not competitiveness enough in all of—all areas. And budget consolidation is one piece of the mosaic. Structural reforms have to come into this.

The Italian Prime Minister addressed this issue at some length during the G–8. What does this mean for young people? What does it mean for jobs for young people?

But still, the task is, if 90 percent of growth globally is generated outside of Europe, then we need to produce goods that are so competitive—as competitive for other markets to actually buy them. And this is something that we need to undergo. We need to draw down redtape, bureaucracy. We need to be more open for research and development. We need to have structural reforms. We need to have, for example, affordable energy. If I look at the energy price development in the United States, all of this needs to be done. And part and parcel of that also is—particularly in a continent that is growing ever older—that we are able to reduce our budget deficits so that we don't live at the expense of future generation.

That is what this is all about. This is what I am fervently asking for and working for. And Europe can only help that is strong. And so a future without Europe is something that I cannot envisage for Germany. It's two sides of one and the same coin. On the one hand, Germany needs to want—needs and wants to be competitive, and we also want others to be competitive and improve their competiveness. And we all are—belong together. This is why we showed solidarity time again, and this is, too, something that we addressed.

President Obama. Well, as Angela said, all of us want the same thing. We want to have an economy that is growing, where people, if they're willing to work hard, are able to succeed and can find jobs that pay a living wage and can retire with some dignity and can send their children to good schools and have health care that is affordable. And we have to do all those things in a way that's fiscally prudent so that we're not mortgaging our future or burdening our children and our grandchildren.

And I think all developing countries—or all more developed countries have been going through some of the same challenges. And we just went through the worst recession in many years.

The good news is, is that we've seen some progress. In the United States, we fixed our banks, which was the source initially, the trigger for some of these major problems. We have a—so we have a much stronger banking system now, with much tighter supervision. The housing market's begun to recover. We've

now grown for close to 4 years, 3½ years, and we've created 7 million new jobs.

But we still have some reforms that we have to do. We've got to improve the skills of our workforce. We've got to improve our infrastructure. We have to continue to invest in research and development. In all countries around the world, you're seeing growing inequality, and so we have to find ways to make sure that ladders of opportunity exist for those at the bottom and that profits and increased productivity all does not just benefit those at the top.

And so what's true in the United States is also true in Europe. Europe has different sets of problems. Part of the challenge of the euro zone is, is that you have countries at different stages and levels of productivity and are further or less far along on this path of restructuring and reform.

So we've been discussing this—this has been a 4-year conversation that we've been having, and I don't think there's a perfect recipe. All of us have to make sure that our budgets are not out of control. All of us have to undergo structural reforms to adapt to a new and highly competitive economy. What's true is, though, all of us also have to focus on growth, and we have to make sure that, in pursuit of our longer term policies—whether it's fiscal consolidation or reforms of our overly rigid labor markets or pension reforms—that we don't lose sight of our main goal, which is to make lives of people better.

And if, for example, we start seeing youth unemployment go too high, then at some point, we've got to modulate our approach to ensure that we don't just lose a generation who may never recover in terms of their careers. And that's the struggle that I think all of us are going through. That's the discussion we had in the G–8. That's a discussion that Angela and I had here today.

I'm confident that Germany will succeed in this process. I'm confident that Chancellor Merkel cares about maintaining the euro zone and the European project. And she, I think, is confident that the United States wants to do everything we can to get Europe through this difficult patch so that it can be a force for growth and prosperity well into the future. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

Chancellor Merkel. Danke schön.

President Obama. Danke schön.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:46 p.m. at the German Chancellery. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. Chancellor Merkel referred to U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; Minister of Interior Hans-Peter Friedrich of Germany; and Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy. Chancellor Merkel and some reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany
June 19, 2013

Hello, Berlin! Thank you, Chancellor Merkel, for your leadership, your friendship, and the example of your life: from a child of the East to the leader of a free and united Germany.

As I've said, Angela and I don't exactly look like previous German and American leaders. But the fact that we can stand here today, along the faultline where a city was divided, speaks to an eternal truth: No wall can stand against the yearning of justice, the yearnings for freedom, the yearnings for peace that burns in the human heart.

Mayor Wowereit, distinguished guests, and especially the people of Berlin and Germany: Thank you for this extraordinarily warm welcome. In fact, it's so warm and I feel so good that I'm actually going to take off my jacket, and anybody else who wants to, feel free to. The—we can be a little more informal among friends.

As your Chancellor mentioned, 5 years ago I had the privilege to address this city as Senator. Today I'm proud to return as President of the United States. And I bring with me the enduring friendship of the American people as well as my wife Michelle and Malia and Sasha. You may notice that they're not here. The last thing they want to do is to listen to another speech from me. [*Laughter*] So they're out experiencing the beauty and the history of Berlin. And this history speaks to us today.

Here, for thousands of years, the people of this land have journeyed from tribe to principality to nation-state, through Reformation and Enlightenment, renowned as a "land of poets and thinkers," among them Immanuel Kant, who taught us that freedom is the "unoriginated birthright of man, and it belongs to him by force of his humanity."

Here, for two centuries, this gate stood tall as the world around it convulsed: through the rise and fall of empires, through revolutions and republics, art and music and science that reflected the height of human endeavor, but also war and carnage that exposed the depths of man's cruelty to man.

It was here that Berliners carved out an island of democracy against the greatest of odds. As has already been mentioned, they were supported by an airlift of hope, and we are so honored to be joined by Colonel Halvorsen, 92 years old, the original "Candy Bomber." We could not be prouder of him. I hope I look that good, by the way, when I'm 92. [*Laughter*]

During that time, a Marshall Plan seeded a miracle, and a North Atlantic alliance protected our people. And those in the neighborhoods and nations to the east drew strength from the knowledge that freedom was possible here in Berlin, that the waves of crackdowns and suppressions might therefore someday be overcome.

Today, 60 years after they rose up against oppression, we remember the East German heroes of June 17. When the wall finally came down, it was their dreams that were fulfilled. Their strength and their passion, their enduring example, remind us that for all the power of militaries, for all the authority of governments, it is citizens who choose whether to be defined by a wall or whether to tear it down.

And we're now surrounded by the symbols of a Germany reborn: a rebuilt Reichstag and its glistening glass dome, an American Embassy back at its historic home on Pariser Platz. And this square itself, once a desolate no man's land, is now open to all. So while I am not the first American President to come to this gate, I am proud to stand on its eastern side to pay tribute to the past.

For throughout all this history, the fate of this city came down to a simple question: Will we live free or in chains? Under governments that uphold our universal rights or regimes that suppress them? In open societies that respect the sanctity of the individual and our free will or in closed societies that suffocate the soul?

As free peoples, we stated our convictions long ago. As Americans, we believe that "all men are created equal" with the right to life and liberty and of the pursuit of happiness. And as Germans, you declared in your Basic Law that "the dignity of man is inviolable." Around the world, nations have pledged themselves to a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the inherent dignity and rights of all members of our human family.

And this is what was at stake here in Berlin all those years. And because courageous crowds climbed atop that wall, because corrupt dictatorships gave way to new democracies, because millions across this continent now breathe the fresh air of freedom, we can say—here in Berlin, here in Europe—our values won, openness won, tolerance won, and freedom won. Here in Berlin.

And yet, more than two decades after that triumph, we must acknowledge that there can, at times, be a complacency among our Western democracies. Today, people often come together in places like this to remember history, not to make it. After all, we face no concrete walls, no barbed wire. There are no tanks poised across a border. There are no visits to fallout shelters. And so sometimes, there can be a sense that the great challenges have somehow passed. And that brings with it a temptation to turn inward: to think of our own pur-

suits and not the sweep of history; to believe that we've settled history's accounts, that we can simply enjoy the fruits won by our forebears.

But I come here today, Berlin, to say complacency is not the character of great nations. Today's threats are not as stark as they were half a century ago, but the struggle for freedom and security and human dignity, that struggle goes on. And I've come here to this city of hope because the tests of our time demand the same fighting spirit that defined Berlin a half-century ago.

Chancellor Merkel mentioned that we mark the anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's stirring defense of freedom, embodied in the people of this great city. His pledge of solidarity—*"Ich bin ein Berliner"*—echoes through the ages. But that's not all that he said that day. Less remembered is the challenge that he issued to the crowd before him: "Let me ask you," he said to those Berliners, "let me ask you to lift your eyes beyond the dangers of today and beyond the freedom of merely this city." Look, he said, "to the day of peace with justice, beyond yourselves and ourselves to all mankind."

Now, President Kennedy was taken from us less than 6 months after he spoke those words. And like so many who died in those decades of division, he did not live to see Berlin united and free. Instead, he lives forever as a young man in our memory. But his words are timeless because they call upon us to care more about things than just our own self-comfort, about our own city, about our own country. They demand that we embrace the common endeavor of all humanity.

And if we lift our eyes, as President Kennedy called us to do, then we'll recognize that our work is not yet done. For we are not only citizens of America or Germany, we are also citizens of the world. And our fates and fortunes are linked like never before.

We may no longer live in fear of global annihilation, but so long as nuclear weapons exist, we are not truly safe. We may strike blows against terrorist networks, but if we ignore the instability and intolerance that fuels extremism, our own freedom will eventually be endangered. We may enjoy a standard of living that is in the envy of the world, but so long as hundreds of millions endure the agony of an empty stomach or the anguish of unemployment, we're not truly prosperous.

I say all this here, in the heart of Europe, because our shared past shows that none of these challenges can be met unless we see ourselves as part of something bigger than our own experience. Our alliance is the foundation of global security. Our trade and our commerce is the engine of our global economy. Our values call upon us to care about the lives of people we will never meet. When Europe and America lead with our hopes instead of our fears, we do things that no other nations can do, no other nations will do. So we have to lift up our eyes today and consider the day of peace with justice that our generation wants for this world.

I'd suggest that peace with justice begins with the example we set here at home, for we know from our own histories that intolerance breeds injustice. Whether it's based on race or religion, gender or sexual orientation, we are stronger when all our people—no matter who they are or what they look like—are granted opportunity and when our wives and our daughters have the same opportunities as our husbands and our sons.

When we respect the faiths practiced in our churches and synagogues, our mosques and our temples, we're more secure. When we welcome the immigrant with his talents or her dreams, we are renewed. When we stand up for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and treat their love and their rights equally under the law, we defend our own liberty as well. We are more free when all people can pursue their own happiness. And as long as walls exist in our hearts to separate us from those who don't look like us or think like us or worship as we do, then we're going to have to work harder, together, to bring those walls of division down.

Peace with justice means free enterprise that unleashes the talents and creativity that reside in each of us. Other models direct economic growth from the top down or rely solely

on the resources extracted from the earth. But we believe that real prosperity comes from our most precious resource: our people. And that's why we choose to invest in education and science and research.

And now, as we emerge from recession, we must not avert our eyes from the insult of widening inequality or the pain of youth who are unemployed. We have to build new ladders of opportunity in our own societies that—even as we pursue new trade and investment that fuels growth across the Atlantic.

America will stand with Europe as you strengthen your union. And we want to work with you to make sure that every person can enjoy the dignity that comes from work; whether they live in Chicago or Cleveland or Belfast or Berlin, in Athens or Madrid, everybody deserves opportunity. We have to have economies that are working for all people, not just those at the very top.

Peace with justice means extending a hand to those who reach for freedom, wherever they live. Different peoples and cultures will follow their own path, but we must reject the lie that those who live in distant places don't yearn for freedom and self-determination just like we do, that they don't somehow yearn for dignity and rule of law just like we do. We cannot dictate the pace of change in places like the Arab world, but we must reject the excuse that we can do nothing to support it.

We cannot shrink from our role of advancing the values we believe in, whether it's supporting Afghans as they take responsibility for their future or working for an Israeli-Palestinian peace or engaging, as we've done in Burma, to help create space for brave people to emerge from decades of dictatorship. In this century, these are the citizens who long to join the free world. They are who you were. They deserve our support, for they too, in their own way, are citizens of Berlin. And we have to help them every day.

Peace with justice means pursuing the security of a world without nuclear weapons, no matter how distant that dream may be. And so, as President, I've strengthened our efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and reduced the number and role of America's nuclear weapons. Because of the New START Treaty, we're on track to cut American and Russian deployed nuclear warheads to their lowest levels since the 1950s.

But we have more work to do. So today I'm announcing additional steps forward. After a comprehensive review, I've determined that we can ensure the security of America and our allies and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent while reducing our deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one-third. And I intend to seek negotiated cuts with Russia to move beyond cold war nuclear postures.

At the same time, we'll work with our NATO allies to seek bold reductions in U.S. and Russian tactical weapons in Europe. And we can forge a new international framework for peaceful nuclear power, reject the nuclear weaponization that North Korea and Iran may be seeking.

America will host a summit in 2016 to continue our efforts to secure nuclear materials around the world, and we will work to build support in the United States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and call on all nations to begin negotiations on a treaty that ends the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. These are steps we can take to create a world of peace with justice.

Peace with justice means refusing to condemn our children to a harsher, less hospitable planet. The effort to slow climate change requires bold action. And on this, Germany and Europe have led. In the United States, we have recently doubled our renewable energy from clean sources like wind and solar power. We're doubling fuel efficiency on our cars. Our dangerous carbon emissions have come down. But we know we have to do more, and we will do more.

With a global middle class consuming more energy every day, this must now be an effort of all nations, not just some. For the grim alternative affects all nations: more severe storms, more famine and floods, new waves of refugees, coastlines that vanish, oceans that rise. This is the future we must avert. This is the global threat of our time. And for the sake of

future generations, our generation must move toward a global compact to confront a changing climate before it is too late. That is our job. That is our task. We have to get to work.

Peace with justice means meeting our moral obligations. And we have a moral obligation and a profound interest in helping lift the impoverished corners of the world: by promoting growth so we spare a child born today a lifetime of extreme poverty; by investing in agriculture so we aren't just sending food, but also teaching farmers to grow food; by strengthening public health so we're not just sending medicine, but training doctors and nurses who will help end the outrage of children dying from preventable diseases; making sure that we do everything we can to realize the promise, an achievable promise, of the first AIDS-free generation. That is something that is possible if we feel a sufficient sense of urgency.

Our efforts have to be about more than just charity. They're about new models of empowering people: to build institutions; to abandon the rot of corruption; to create ties of trade, not just aid, both with the West and among the nations that are seeking to rise and increase their capacity. Because when they succeed, we will be more successful as well. Our fates are linked, and we cannot ignore those who are yearning not only for freedom, but also prosperity.

And finally, let's remember that peace with justice depends on our ability to sustain both the security of our societies and the openness that defines them. Threats to freedom don't merely come from the outside, they can emerge from within: from our own fears, from the disengagement of our citizens.

For over a decade, America has been at war. Yet much has now changed over the 5 years since I last spoke here in Berlin. The Iraq war is now over. The Afghan war is coming to an end. Usama bin Laden is no more. Our efforts against Al Qaida are evolving.

And given these changes, last month, I spoke about America's efforts against terrorism. And I drew inspiration from one of our Founding Fathers, James Madison, who wrote, "No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare." James Madison is right, which is why even as we remain vigilant about the threat of terrorism, we must move beyond the mindset of perpetual war. And in America, that means redoubling our efforts to close the prison at Guantanamo. It means tightly controlling our use of new technologies like drones. It means balancing the pursuit of security with the protection of privacy.

And I'm confident that that balance can be struck. I'm confident of that, and I'm confident that working with Germany, we can keep each other safe while at the same time maintaining those essential values for which we fought for.

Our current programs are bound by the rule of law, and they're focused on threats to our security, not the communications of ordinary persons. They help confront real dangers, and they keep people safe here in the United States and here in Europe. But we must accept the challenge that all of us in democratic governments face: to listen to the voices who disagree with us, to have an open debate about how we use our powers and how we must constrain them, and to always remember that government exists to serve the power of the individual and not the other way around. That's what makes us who we are, and that's what makes us different from those on the other side of the wall.

That is how we'll stay true to our better history while reaching for the day of peace and justice that is to come. These are the beliefs that guide us, the values that inspire us, the principles that bind us together as free peoples who still believe the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

And we should ask—should anyone ask if our generation has the courage to meet these tests, if anybody asks if President Kennedy's words ring true today, let them come to Berlin, for here they will find the people who emerged from the ruins of war to reap the blessings of peace, from the pain of division to the joy of reunification. And here, they will recall how people trapped behind a wall braved bullets and jumped barbed wire and dashed across minefields and dug through tunnels and leapt

from buildings and swam across the Spree to claim their most basic right of freedom.

The wall belongs to history. But we have history to make as well. And the heroes that came before us now call to us to live up to those highest ideals: to care for the young people who can't find a job in our own countries and the girls who aren't allowed to go to school overseas; to be vigilant in safeguarding our own freedoms, but also to extend a hand to those who are reaching for freedom abroad.

This is the lesson of the ages. This is the spirit of Berlin. And the greatest tribute that we can pay to those who came before us is by carrying on their work to pursue peace and justice not only in our countries, but for all mankind.

Vielen Dank. God bless you. God bless the peoples of Germany. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:29 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Gail S. Halvorsen, USAF (Ret.).

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Michael B. Froman as United States Trade Representative
June 19, 2013

I am pleased that the Senate took bipartisan action today to confirm Michael Froman as the United States Trade Representative. Mike has been my closest adviser on a broad range of international economic issues and will continue to play a key role on my economic team. He's trusted and well respected by our partners around the world, and for the last several years, he's been a driving force behind our international economic agenda.

In his new position, Mike will stay focused on our primary economic goals: promoting growth, creating jobs, and strengthening the middle class. And he will continue to help open new markets for American businesses, level the playing field for American workers, farmers, and ranchers, and fully enforce our trade rights.

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Berlin, Germany
June 19, 2013

Chancellor Merkel. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you all, also on behalf of Professor Sauer, to this dinner here at Charlottenburg Palace. And obviously, I would like to bid a very special and very warm welcome to our guest of honor, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, and his wife Michelle—a very warm welcome to you.

And let me say that I am personally very grateful to be able to welcome you here tonight because this affords me again to thank you for the wonderful reception, for the wonderful evening we had. And I'm able to say this also on behalf of the whole—of the Federal Republic of Germany, because I am aware obviously that this was an honor that was granted to me on behalf of my country when, 2 years ago, you gave us this wonderful and gracious reception in the Rose Garden of the White House. And we still have very fond memories. This was indeed a very moving moment, and we greatly appreciated the warmth of your hospitality and also the friendship that you showed through this evening. Thank you, yet again.

Barack Obama, I think what was possible today also, again, was to show you how many people here in Germany feel a great sense of admiration towards you, because, in many ways, you personally embody the image of the United States as a country of unlimited possibility. And I think that that was something that also came out very strongly in your speech today that you gave at the Brandenburg Gate, and I think it is a feeling that many people not

only on the square in front of Brandenburg Gate were able to share and appreciate, but also the people who were watching the ceremony on television screens all around the country.

Mr. President, your visit shows yet again how close this friendship is and that it is a friendship that is not only close, but that is also unshakeable in its foundation, but that certainly is not something that can be taken as a matter of course. It's not a natural kind of development if you think of the past of the two terrible wars and the wars for which Germany was responsible.

If you think of the break with civilization that the Shoah had constituted, if you think of the long way that we've come together—for example, the fact that then your country stretched out a hand of friendship, the Candy Bombers; that Kennedy made this commitment to our country in saying, "I am a Berliner." All of that has not come as a matter of course. All the way to Ronald Reagan's exclamation, tear down—an appeal—"Tear down this wall."

We've come a long way. Again, it was not a matter of course, it was not natural, but it is a long way that has brought us to this place where we finally can celebrate, can meet together and celebrate our freedom together.

All the way leading up to German unity, to the unification of our country, you have demonstrated that you trust us, that the United States of America places great trust in our country. During the period of the cold war, you have demonstrated time and again that you support us, that you place trust in us, and that is something for which we are very grateful.

Some people said that when unification came about, that this constituted, in effect, the end of history. But I think current events bear me out when I say there still remains quite a lot to do for all of us—matters that we need to address together, challenges that we need to face—and that's something that you addressed also today in your speech, Mr. President. And we talked about, for example, as you did, about the regulation of financial markets, about the protection of climate, about the threat of nuclear arms and nuclear proliferation.

But the fact that there are many areas in our world today that still remain unstable, that is something that we need to address together—we, the Germans, and you, the Americans.

Cheers. The first translation. [*Laughter*]

This world of the 21st century is growing ever closer together, but it is true that in this 21st century too, as I said, I see great challenges ahead. And what's also true is, in order to master those challenges, there can possibly and arguably be no better partner for Germany, for Europe, than the United States of America, and the reverse, obviously, is also true.

So allow me to raise my glass and drink to your very good health, Mr. President, to the very good health of your wife Michelle, and to pay tribute at the same time to the friendship between the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States, and to the people of America and the people of Germany, who constitute the true core of our friendship.

President Obama. Guten abend. Thank you to you, Angela, for your very kind words, to you and Professor Sauer for your extraordinary hospitality and all of you for the incredibly warm welcome, both literally and figuratively. [*Laughter*]

Your English is much better than our German. I was just mentioning to the Chancellor that this is an area where the United States clearly has lagged behind: making sure that all of our young people learn a second and third language. So we're going to give my interpreters a break this evening.

Fifty years ago, as this city prepared to welcome President Kennedy, Berliners were ecstatic. Mayor Willy Brandt tried to calm everybody down; he told them, don't be too emotional. It didn't work. So, after one speech, one newspaper wrote that it was one of the most emotional responses President Kennedy had ever received; it's said that more than 1,000 people fainted. We did not have 1,000 people faint today. The few who did, did so because of the weather and not because of my speech. [*Laughter*]

But like Presidents before me, and as during my previous visits, I could not be more grateful for the incredible reception that we have

received. And I recognize that this signifies the incredible friendship between our two countries. I'm especially pleased that I've been able to bring Michelle and Malia and Sasha along. And let me just say, on behalf of Michelle and myself, we're incredibly grateful that Sasha and Malia have had the privilege to see not only the beauty, but also the history of this city. And they took a number of tours, and when we were in the hotel room, Malia was reciting back to me everything that she had learned about the formation of the wall and the history of reunification. And nothing is more gratifying than when you see your children understanding not only the facts of history, but also the values that drive history.

In these stunning surroundings tonight, we're reminded of the breadth of that history and the friendship between our two peoples. About the same time this palace was being built, a band of families from along the Rhine—Mennonites—set out across the Atlantic, arrived in what is now Philadelphia, and found a new home that remains to this day: Germantown. And immigrants from Germany and German Americans have continued to shape America ever since.

For our independence, we thank von Steuben. For our prosperity, families like Chrysler and Guggenheim, Heinz and Hershey. For inspiration, Einstein, Steinway, Steinbeck, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig. Young Americans, like our daughters, will always be grateful to Levi Strauss for their blue jeans. [*Laughter*] And Americans will always be grateful especially for some very important German immigrants: Anheuser-Busch. [*Laughter*]

Now, on a very personal level, I'm thankful to Angela. Schiller once said, "Keep true to the dreams of your youth." Angela, you've spoken often of the dreams of your youth, the freedom that you longed for. Today, as we were out on the balcony before our lunch, she pointed to the train tracks along which the wall used to run, and her memories of riding to her university and then hearing the tracks on the other side and imagining one day that she would be free. And you've not only kept to those dreams, but you've also helped those dreams become real for millions of your countrymen.

I'm extraordinarily grateful for our partnership and our friendship. As I've said before, you're an inspiration to me and to people around the world.

Two years ago, Chancellor Merkel became only the second German leader to address our Congress; the other was Adenauer. And as you closed your speech, you mentioned the Freedom Bell that hangs in the former town hall here, which was a gift in 1950 from the American people to the people of Germany, and it was modeled after our Liberty Bell. Here in Berlin, that bell tolled after President Kennedy's speech. It rang after German unification. It rang after 9/11, which obviously meant so much to us as a symbol of the freedom and friendship that binds us together.

What you may not know is that before the bell was given to our German friends, it traveled all around the United States. Millions of Americans joined the effort, lending their support and signing their names to a declaration of freedom.

And so I want to close tonight by proposing a toast. I left my wine there, so I'll go with water. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, President Obama was handed a glass of wine.*]

Oh, here we go. And I'm going to do so by borrowing the words that those millions of Americans once expressed to their German friends as part of this gift, the Liberty Bell. Here's what they said: "We believe in the sacredness and dignity of the individual. We believe that all men derive the right of freedom equally from God. And we are proud to join with millions of men and women throughout the world who hold the cause of freedom sacred."

Zum wohl.

[*President Obama offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:30 p.m. at Schloss Charlottenburg. In his remarks, he referred to Joachim Sauer, husband

of Chancellor Merkel. Chancellor Merkel spoke in German, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter. Her remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Statement on World Refugee Day
June 20, 2013

On World Refugee Day, the United States stands with the more than 45 million people around the world who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict and political violence.

This year, I want especially to thank countries and communities working to meet the needs of those who have fled the ongoing violence in Syria. In word and deed, countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt have taken on extraordinary burdens as they host people displaced by horrific violence. We are grateful for their generosity and pleased to support their efforts in addressing this humanitarian crisis.

Today we reaffirm our commitment to working with the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and our partners and allies to protect and assist all those displaced as they work to rebuild their lives in peace and dignity.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Disposition of Russian Highly Enriched Uranium
June 20, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the emergency declared in Executive Order 13617 of June 25, 2012, with respect to the disposition of Russian highly enriched uranium is to continue in effect beyond June 25, 2013.

The risk of nuclear proliferation created by the accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13617 with respect to the disposition of Russian highly enriched uranium.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 20, 2013.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Resignation of Robert S. Mueller III as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Nomination of James B. Comey, Jr., To Be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
June 21, 2013

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat.

For more than a century, we have counted on the dedicated men and women of the FBI

to keep us safe. In that time, the FBI has been led by six Directors. And the second longest serving Director of the FBI, for the last 12 years, has been an exemplary public servant, Bob Mueller.

And by law, FBI Directors only serve for 10 years. But back in 2011, when Bob's term was up, I asked Congress to give him 2 more years. It wasn't a request I made lightly, and I know Congress didn't grant it lightly. But at a time when transitions were underway at the CIA and the Pentagon, and given the threats facing our Nation, we felt it was critical to have Bob's steady hand and strong leadership at the Bureau.

Twelve years is a long time to do anything, and I guarantee you that Bob's wife Ann agrees. So, in addition to asking Congress, I think we needed approval from Ann as well for those extra 2 years. Today, as Bob prepares to complete his service, this is a wonderful opportunity to—for all of us as a nation to say thank you to Bob and Ann, but also, it gives me a chance to announce my choice to be the next Director of the FBI, Jim Comey.

Every day, our FBI special agents, analysts, and professional staff devote—and often risk—their lives keeping us secure, from the streets of our cities to the battlefield of Afghanistan. They embody the core principles of fidelity, bravery, and integrity.

Bob Mueller has embodied those values through decades of public service and lived them every day as FBI Director during an extraordinary period in our Nation's history. Bob, some of you will recall, was sworn in just days before 9/11, and Bob not only played a key role in our response to those attacks, he began one of the biggest transformations of the FBI in history to make sure that nothing like that ever happens again.

Like the marine that he's always been, Bob never took his eyes off his mission. Under his watch, the FBI joined forces with our intelligence, military, and homeland security professionals to break up Al Qaida cells, disrupt their activities, and thwart their plots. I'll say it as clearly as I can: Countless Americans are alive today and our country is more secure because of the FBI's outstanding work under the leadership of Bob Mueller.

All the while, Bob and the FBI have been tireless against a whole range of challenges, from preventing violent crime and reducing gang activity, including along our border, to cracking down on white-collar criminals.

Today, there are many in the FBI who've never known the Bureau without Bob at the helm. And like us, they've admired his tenacity, but also his calm under pressure, his devotion to our security, and his fidelity to the values that make us who we are. It's a trademark—a tribute to Bob's trademark humility that most Americans probably wouldn't recognize him on the street, but all of us are better because of his service.

And, Bob, I can't tell you how personally grateful I am to you and to Ann for your service. I know that everyone here joins me in saying that you will be remembered as one of the finest Directors in the history of the FBI and one of the most admired public servants of our time. And I have to say, just personally, not only has it been a pleasure to work with Bob, but I know very few people in public life who have shown more integrity, more consistently, under more pressure than Bob Mueller.

Director Mueller. Thank you.

The President. Now, I think Bob will agree with me when I say that we have the perfect person to carry on this work in Jim Comey, a man who stands up very tall for justice and the rule of law. I was saying while we were taking pictures with his gorgeous family here, that they are all what Michelle calls "normal height." [*Laughter*]

The grandson of a patrolman who worked his way up to lead the Yonkers Police Department, Jim has law enforcement in his blood. As a young prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan, he helped bring down the Gambino crime family. As a Federal prosecutor in Virginia, he led an aggressive effort to combat gun violence that reduced homicide rates and saved lives. He has been relentless, whether it's standing up for consumers against corporate fraud or bringing terrorists to justice.

And as Deputy Attorney General, he helped lead the Justice Department with skill and wisdom, meeting the threats we know about and staying perpetually prepared for the ones that can emerge suddenly. So Jim is exceptionally qualified to handle the full range of challenges faced by today's FBI, from traditional threats like violent and organized crime to protecting civil rights and children from exploitation, to meeting transnational challenges like terrorism and cyber threats.

Now, just as important as Jim's extraordinary experience is his character. He's talked about how, as a young boy, he and his brother nearly lost their lives. They were at home, and an intruder broke in and held them at gunpoint. So Jim understands, deeply, in his core, the anguish of victims of crime—what they go through—and he's made it his life's work to spare others that pain.

To know Jim Comey is also to know his fierce independence and his deep integrity. Like Bob, he's that rarity in Washington sometimes. He doesn't care about politics; he only cares about getting the job done. At key moments, when it's mattered most, he joined Bob in standing up for what he believed was right. He was prepared to give up a job he loved rather than be part of something he felt was fundamentally wrong. As Jim has said, "We know that the rule of law sets this Nation apart and is its foundation."

Jim understands that in time of crisis, we aren't judged solely by how many plots we disrupt or how many criminals we bring to justice, we're also judged by our commitment to the Constitution that we've sworn to defend and to the values and civil liberties that we've pledged to protect. And as we've seen in recent days, this work of striking a balance between our security, but also making sure we are maintaining fidelity to those values that we cherish, is a constant mission. That's who we are.

And it is in large part because of my confidence not only in his experience and his skill, but his integrity, that I'm confident that Jim will be a leader who understands how to keep America safe and stay true to our founding ideals, no matter what the future may bring.

So to Bob and Ann, I want to thank you again for your incredible service. I want to thank Jim, his wife Patrice, and their five children who are here today, Maurene, Kathleen—Katherine, Brien, Claire, and Abby, for supporting Jim as he takes on this important role. I know he couldn't do this without you. And he is extraordinarily proud of all of you, and I can see why.

This is a 10-year assignment. I make this nomination confident that long after I've left office, our Nation's security will be in good hands with public servants like Jim Comey. And so I assure—I urge, as usual, for the Senate to act promptly with hearings and to confirm our next FBI Director right away.

I'd like now to give both of them a chance to say a few words, starting with Bob.

Director Mueller. Thank you, Mr. President. Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for those kind words. And I also want to express my gratitude to both President Bush and President Obama for giving me the honor and the privilege of serving as the FBI Director during these last few years.

I particularly want to take the opportunity, though, to thank the men and women of the FBI. It's through their hard work, their dedication, their adaptability that the FBI is better able to predict and to prevent terrorism and crime both here and abroad. Of course, I want to thank my wife Ann, my family, for their support and their patience over the last 12 years.

And finally, I want to commend the President for the choice of Jim Comey as the next Director of the FBI. I have had the opportunity to work with Jim for a number of years in the Department of Justice, and I have found him to be a man of honesty, dedication, and integrity. His experience, his judgment, and his strong sense of duty will benefit not only the Bureau, but the country as a whole.

Again, Mr. President, thank you for this opportunity to serve.

Director-designate Comey. Thank you, Mr. President, for this honor and this opportunity. I'm not sure I have the words to describe how excited I am to return to the Department of Justice and especially to get to work again with

the people of the FBI. They are men and women who have devoted their lives to serving and protecting others, and I simply can't wait to be their colleague again.

Nearly everything I am and have done in my adult life is due to the great good fortune of marrying up. [*Laughter*] Thanks to the love and support, and occasional constructive criticism—[*laughter*]—of my beloved troops, of my amazing wife Patrice and Abby, Claire, Brien, Kate, and Maurene, I am a much better person than I would have been without you. I love you guys. I have a debt I cannot repay you, but thank you for that.

I must be out of my mind to be following Bob Mueller. [*Laughter*] I don't know whether I can fill those shoes. But I know that however I do, I will be standing truly on the shoulders of a giant, someone who has made a remarkable difference in the life of this country. I can promise you, Mr. President and Mr. Director, that I will do my very best to honor and protect that legacy.

And I thank you again, Mr. President, for this chance to serve. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

The President. Can we give Bob Mueller and Ann one more big round of applause?

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former FBI Directors Louis J. Freeh, William H. Sessions, and William H. Webster; and Peter Comey, brother of Director-designate Comey. Director Mueller referred to former President George W. Bush.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the War Powers Resolution Report for Jordan

June 21, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Certain U.S. forces recently deployed to Jordan solely to participate in a training exercise. This exercise ended on June 20, 2013. At the request of the Government of Jordan, a combat-equipped detachment of approximately 700 of these forces remained in Jordan after the conclusion of the exercise to join other U.S. forces already in Jordan.

This detachment that participated in the exercise and remained in Jordan includes Patriot missile systems, fighter aircraft, and related support, command, control, and communications personnel and systems. The detachment will remain in Jordan, in full coordination with the Government of Jordan, until the security situation becomes such that it is no longer needed.

The deployment of this detachment has been directed in furtherance of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, including the important national interests in supporting the security of Jordan and promoting regional stability, pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148). I appreciate the support of the Congress in these actions.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea
June 21, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, expanded in scope in Executive Order 13551 of August 30, 2010, and addressed further in Executive Order 13570 of April 18, 2011, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2013.

The existence and risk of proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula, and the actions and policies of the Government of North Korea that destabilize the Korean Peninsula and imperil U.S. Armed Forces, allies, and trading partners in the region continue to constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to these threats and maintain in force the measures taken to deal with that national emergency.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
June 22, 2013

Hi, everybody. Right now the United States Senate is debating a bipartisan, commonsense bill that'd be an important step toward fixing our broken immigration system.

It's a bill that would continue to strengthen security at our borders and hold employers more accountable if they knowingly hire undocumented workers so they won't have an unfair advantage over businesses that follow the law.

It's a bill that would modernize the legal immigration system so that, as we train American workers for the jobs of tomorrow, we're also attracting the highly skilled entrepreneurs and engineers who grow our economy for everyone.

It's a bill that would provide a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million individuals who are in this country illegally, a pathway that includes passing a background check, learning English, paying taxes and a penalty, and then going to the back of the line behind everyone trying to come here legally.

And a few days ago, a report from the Congressional Budget Office definitively showed that this bipartisan, commonsense bill will help the middle class grow our economy and shrink our deficits by making sure that every worker in America plays by the same set of rules and pays taxes like everyone else. According to this independent report, reforming our immigration system would reduce our deficits by almost a trillion dollars over the next two decades. And it will boost our economy by more than 5 percent, in part because of businesses created, investments made, and technologies invented by immigrants.

This comes on the heel of another report from the independent office that monitors Social Security's finances, which says that this immigration bill would actually strengthen the long-term health and solvency of Social Security for future generations. Because with this bill, millions of additional people will start paying more in taxes for things like Social Security and education. That'll make the economy fairer for middle class families.

So that's what comprehensive immigration reform looks like: stronger enforcement, a smarter legal immigration system, a pathway to earned citizenship, a more vibrant, growing economy that's fairer on the middle class, and a more stable fiscal future for our kids.

Now, the bill isn't perfect. It's a compromise. Nobody is going to get everything they want: not Democrats, not Republicans, not me. But it's consistent with the principles that I and others have laid out for commonsense reform. That's why Republicans and Democrats, CEOs and labor leaders, are saying that now is the time to pass this bill. If you agree with us, reach out to your Senators and Representatives. Tell them that the time for excuses is over; it's time to fix our broken immigration system once and for all.

We can do this, because we are a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants—a place enriched by the contributions of people from all over the world—and stronger for it. That's been the story of America from the start, so let's keep it going.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:25 p.m. on June 21 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on June 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 21, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 22.

Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on Immigration Reform and an Exchange With Reporters
June 24, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody. I want to welcome these extraordinary business leaders who are here today in support of comprehensive immigration reform. As all of you know, we are at a critical point in the debate that's taking place in the Senate.

All these business leaders recognize the degree to which immigration is a contributor to growth, a contributor to expansion, a creator of jobs, but they also recognize that the immigration system that we currently have is broken.

We have a system in which we bring outstanding young people from all across the world to educate them here, and unfortunately, too often, we send them right back so that they can start companies or help to grow companies somewhere else instead of here.

We have a situation in which millions of individuals are in the shadow economy, oftentimes exploited at lower wages, and that hurts those companies that are following the rules because they end up being at a disadvantage to some of these less scrupulous companies.

And so all of us, I think, recognize that now is the time to get comprehensive immigration reform done: one that involves having very strong border security; that makes sure that we're holding employers accountable to follow the rules; one that provides earned citizenship for those 11 million so that they have to pay back taxes, pay a fine, learn English, follow the rules, get to the back of the line, but ultimately can be part of the above-board economy, as opposed to the below-board economy; and a system that fixes and cleans up our legal immigration system so that we can continue to be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

The good news is, is that we've got a strong bipartisan bill that meets many of those principles. As I've said before, it's not a bill that represents everything that I would like to see; it represents a compromise. And I think all the business leaders here recognize that there are

elements of it that they might want to tweak one way or another. But it does adhere to the core principles that we need for a comprehensive immigration reform, and now is the time to do it.

Just this past week, the Congressional Budget Office noted that this would end up bringing more money into the Federal Government. It would reduce our deficits; people would be paying taxes. It would end up strengthening our economy, growing our economy. And so you've got a broad consensus all throughout the country, not just business leaders who are represented here today—many of whom are immigrants themselves, many of whom started businesses and are now creating opportunity all across the country—but we're also seeing labor leaders, we're seeing clergy, we're seeing people from all different walks of life saying now is the time to get this done.

So I very much appreciate all the business leaders who are here for making this push. And I know they're going to be talking to various Senators and Members of Congress over the next several days. I would urge the Senate to bring this to the floor, and I hope that we can get the strongest possible vote out of the Senate so that we can then move to the House and get this done before the summer break.

And if we get this done—when we get this done—I think every business leader here feels confident that they'll be in a stronger position to continue to innovate, to continue to invest, to continue to create jobs, and ensure that this continues to be the land of opportunity for generations to come.

So thank you very much to all of you for being here. And thank you guys in the press.

[*At this point, several reporters spoke at once.*]

Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden

Q. Mr. President, have you spoken to Mr. Putin, and are you confident that they'll expel—he'll be expelled?

The President. What we know is, is that we're following all of the appropriate legal channels, and working with various other countries to make sure that rule of law is observed. And beyond that, I'll refer to the Justice Department, that has been actively involved in the case. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. A reporter referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Remarks at Georgetown University
June 25, 2013

Thank you, Georgetown. Everybody, please be seated. And my first announcement today is that you should all take off your jackets. [*Laughter*] I'm going to do the same. We've got—[*applause*]. It's not that sexy, now. [*Laughter*]

It is good to be back on campus, and it is a great privilege to speak from the steps of this historic hall that welcomed Presidents going back to George Washington.

I want to thank your president, President DeGioia, who's here today. I want to thank him for hosting us. I want to thank the many members of my Cabinet and my administration. I want to thank Leader Pelosi and the Members of Congress who are here. We are very grateful for their support.

And I want to say thank you to the Hoyas in the house for having me back. It was important for me to speak directly to your generation, because the decisions that we make now and in the years ahead will have a profound impact on the world that all of you inherit.

On Christmas Eve, 1968, the astronauts of *Apollo 8* did a live broadcast from lunar orbit. So Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, William Anders—the first humans to orbit the Moon—described what they saw, and they read Scripture

from the Book of Genesis to the rest of us back here. And later that night, they took a photo that would change the way we see and think about our world.

It was an image of Earth: beautiful, breathtaking, a glowing marble of blue oceans and green forests and brown mountains brushed with white clouds, rising over the surface of the Moon.

And while the sight of our planet from space might seem routine today, imagine what it looked like to those of us seeing our home, our planet, for the first time. Imagine what it looked like to children like me. Even the astronauts were amazed. "It makes you realize," Lovell would say, "just what you have back there on Earth."

And around the same time we began exploring space, scientists were studying changes taking place in the Earth's atmosphere. Now, scientists had known since the 1800s that greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide trap heat and that burning fossil fuels release those gases into the air. That wasn't news. But in the late 1950s, the National Weather Service began measuring the levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, with the worry that rising levels might someday disrupt the fragile balance that makes our planet so hospitable. And what they've found, year after year, is that the levels of carbon pollution in our atmosphere have increased dramatically.

That science, accumulated and reviewed over decades, tells us that our planet is changing in ways that will have profound impacts on all of humankind.

The 12 warmest years in recorded history have all come in the last 15 years. Last year, temperatures in some areas of the ocean reached record highs, and ice in the Arctic shrank to its smallest size on record, faster than most models had predicted it would. These are facts.

Now, we know that no single weather event is caused solely by climate change. Droughts and fires and floods, they go back to ancient times. But we also know that in a world that's warmer than it used to be, all weather events are affected by a warming planet. The fact that sea levels in New York—in New York Harbor—are now a foot higher than a century ago, that didn't cause Hurricane Sandy, but it certainly contributed to the destruction that left large parts of our mightiest city dark and under water.

The potential impacts go beyond rising sea levels. Here at home, 2012 was the warmest year in our history. Midwest farms were parched by the worst drought since the Dust Bowl, and then drenched by the wettest spring on record. Western wildfires scorched an area larger than the State of Maryland. Just last week, a heat wave in Alaska shot temperatures into the nineties.

And we know that the costs of these events can be measured in lost lives and lost livelihoods, lost homes, lost businesses, hundreds of billions of dollars in emergency services and disaster relief. In fact, those who are already feeling the effects of climate change don't have time to deny it; they're busy dealing with it. Firefighters are braving longer wildfire seasons, and States and Federal governments have to figure out how to budget for that. Now, I had to sit on a meeting with the Department of Interior and Agriculture and some of the rest of my team just to figure out how we're going to pay for more and more expensive fire seasons.

Farmers see crops wilted one year, washed away the next, and higher food prices get passed on to you, the American consumer. Mountain communities worry about what smaller snowpacks will mean for tourism, and then families at the bottom of the mountains wonder what it will mean for their drinking water. Americans across the country are already paying the price of inaction in insurance premiums, State and local taxes, and the costs of rebuilding and disaster relief.

So the question is not whether we need to act. The overwhelming judgment of science—of chemistry and physics and millions of measurements—has put all that to rest. Ninety-seven percent of scientists—including, by the way, some who originally disputed the data—have now put that to rest. They've acknowl-

edged the planet is warming and human activity is contributing to it.

So the question now is whether we will have the courage to act before it's too late. And how we answer will have a profound impact on the world that we leave behind not just to you, but to your children and to your grandchildren. As a President, as a father, and as an American, I'm here to say we need to act.

I refuse to condemn your generation and future generations to a planet that's beyond fixing. And that's why today I'm announcing a new national climate action plan, and I'm here to enlist your generation's help in keeping the United States of America a leader—a global leader—in the fight against climate change.

Now, this plan builds on progress that we've already made. Last year, I took office—the year that I took office, my administration pledged to reduce America's greenhouse gas emissions by about 17 percent from their 2005 levels by the end of this decade. And we rolled up our sleeves, and we got to work. We doubled the electricity we generate from wind and the sun. We doubled the mileage our cars will get on a gallon of gas by the middle of the next decade.

Here at Georgetown, I unveiled my strategy for a secure energy future. And thanks to the ingenuity of our businesses, we're starting to produce much more of our own energy. We're building the first nuclear power plants in more than three decades in Georgia and South Carolina. For the first time in 18 years, America is poised to produce more of our own oil than we buy from other nations. And today, we produce more natural gas than anybody else. So we're producing energy. And these advances have grown our economy, they've created new jobs, they can't be shipped overseas, and by the way, they've also helped to drive our carbon pollution to its lowest levels in nearly 20 years. Since 2006, no country on Earth has reduced its total carbon pollution by as much as the United States of America.

So it's a good start. But the reason we're all here in the heat today is because we know we've got more to do. In my State of the Union Address, I urged Congress to come up with a bipartisan, market-based solution to climate change, like the one that Republican and Democratic Senators worked on together a few years ago. And I still want to see that happen. I'm willing to work with anyone to make that happen.

But this is a challenge that does not pause for partisan gridlock. It demands our attention now. And this is my plan to meet it: a plan to cut carbon pollution, a plan to protect our country from the impacts of climate change, and a plan to lead the world in a coordinated assault on a changing climate.

This plan begins with cutting carbon pollution by changing the way we use energy: using less dirty energy, using more clean energy, wasting less energy throughout our economy.

Now, 43 years ago, Congress passed a law called the Clean Air Act of 1970. It was a good law. The reasoning behind it was simple: New technology can protect our health by protecting the air we breathe from harmful pollution. And that law passed the Senate unanimously. Think about that: It passed the Senate unanimously. It passed the House of Representatives 375 to 1. I don't know who the one guy was—I haven't looked that up. [*Laughter*] I mean, you can barely get that many votes to name a post office these days. [*Laughter*]

It was signed into law by a Republican President. It was later strengthened by another Republican President. This used to be a bipartisan issue.

Six years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that greenhouse gases are pollutants covered by that same Clean Air Act. And they required the Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, to determine whether they're a threat to our health and welfare. And in 2009, the EPA determined that they are a threat to both our health and our welfare in many different ways—from dirtier air to more common heat waves—and therefore subject to regulation.

Now, today, about 40 percent of America's carbon pollution comes from our power plants. But here's the thing: Right now there are no Federal limits to the amount of carbon pollution that those plants can pump into our air. None. Zero. We limit the amount of toxic

chemicals like mercury and sulfur and arsenic in our air or our water, but power plants can still dump unlimited amounts of carbon pollution into the air for free. That's not right, that's not safe, and it needs to stop.

So today, for the sake of our children and the health and safety of all Americans, I'm directing the Environmental Protection Agency to put an end to the limitless dumping of carbon pollution from our power plants and complete new pollution standards for both new and existing power plants.

I'm also directing the EPA to develop these standards in an open and transparent way, to provide flexibility to different States with different needs, and build on the leadership that many States and cities and companies have already shown. In fact, many power companies have already begun modernizing their plants and creating new jobs in the process. Others have shifted to burning cleaner natural gas instead of dirtier fuel sources.

Nearly a dozen States have already implemented or are implementing their own market-based programs to reduce carbon pollution. More than 25 have set energy efficiency targets. More than 35 have set renewable energy targets. Over 1,000 mayors have signed agreements to cut carbon pollution. So the idea of setting higher pollution standards for our power plants is not new. It's just time for Washington to catch up with the rest of the country. And that's what we intend to do.

Now, what you'll hear from the special interests and their allies in Congress is that this will kill jobs and crush the economy and basically end American free enterprise as we know it. And the reason I know you'll hear those things is because that's what they said every time America sets clear rules and better standards for our air and our water and our children's health. And every time, they've been wrong.

For example, in 1970, when we decided through the Clean Air Act to do something about the smog that was choking our cities—and by the way, most young people here aren't old enough to remember what it was like, but when I was going to school in 1979, 1980 in Los Angeles, there were days where folks couldn't go outside. And the sunsets were spectacular because of all the pollution in the air.

But at the time when we passed the Clean Air Act to try to get rid of some of this smog, some of the same doomsayers were saying new pollution standards will decimate the auto industry. Guess what? It didn't happen. Our air got cleaner.

In 1990, when we decided to do something about acid rain, they said our electricity bills would go up, the lights would go off, businesses around the country would suffer, I quote, "a quiet death." None of it happened, except we cut acid rain dramatically.

See, the problem with all these tired excuses for inaction is that it suggests a fundamental lack of faith in American business and American ingenuity. These critics seem to think that when we ask our businesses to innovate and reduce pollution and lead, they can't or they won't do it. They'll just kind of give up and quit. But in America, we know that's not true. Look at our history.

When we restricted cancer-causing chemicals in plastics and leaded fuel in our cars, it didn't end the plastics industry or the oil industry. American chemists came up with better substitutes. When we phased out CFCs—the gases that were depleting the ozone layer—it didn't kill off refrigerators or air conditioners or deodorant. [*Laughter*] American workers and businesses figured out how to do it better without harming the environment as much. The fuel standards that we put in place just a few years ago didn't cripple automakers. The American auto industry retooled, and today, our automakers are selling the best cars in the world at a faster rate than they have in 5 years, with more hybrid, more plug-in, more fuel-efficient cars for everybody to choose from.

So the point is, if you look at our history, don't bet against American industry. Don't bet against American workers. Don't tell folks that we have to choose between the health of our children or the health of our economy.

The old rules may say we can't protect our environment and promote economic growth at the same time, but in America, we've always

used new technologies—we've used science, we've used research and development and discovery—to make the old rules obsolete.

Today, we use more clean energy—more renewables and natural gas—which is supporting hundreds of thousands of good jobs. We waste less energy, which saves you money at the pump and in your pocketbooks. And guess what? Our economy is 60-percent bigger than it was 20 years ago, while our carbon emissions are roughly back to where they were 20 years ago.

So, obviously, we can figure this out. It's not an either-or, it's a both-and. We've got to look after our children, we have to look after our future, and we have to grow the economy and create jobs. We can do all of that as long as we don't fear the future, instead, we seize it.

And by the way, don't take my word for it. Recently, more than 500 businesses, including giants like GM and Nike, issued a climate declaration, calling action on climate change "one of the great opportunities of the 21st century." Walmart is working to cut its carbon pollution by 20 percent and transition completely to renewable energy. [*Applause*] Yes. Walmart deserves a cheer for that. But think about it: Would the biggest company, the biggest retailer in America, would they really do that if it weren't good for business? If it weren't good for their shareholders?

A low-carbon, clean energy economy can be an engine of growth for decades to come. And I want America to build that engine. I want America to build that future right here in the United States of America. That's our task.

Now, one thing I want to make sure everybody understands: This does not mean that we're going to suddenly stop producing fossil fuels. Our economy wouldn't run very well if it did. And transitioning to a clean energy economy takes time. But when the doomsayers trot out the old warnings that these ambitions will somehow hurt our energy supply, just remind them that America produced more oil than we have in 15 years. What is true is that we can't just drill our way out of the energy and climate challenge that we face. That's not possible.

I've put forward in the past an all-of-the-above energy strategy, but our energy strategy must be about more than just producing more oil. And by the way, it's certainly got to be about more than just building one pipeline.

Now, I know there's been, for example, a lot of controversy surrounding the proposal to build a pipeline, the Keystone pipeline, that would carry oil from Canadian tar sands down to refineries in the Gulf. And the State Department is going through the final stages of evaluating the proposal. That's how it's always been done. But I do want to be clear: Allowing the Keystone pipeline to be built requires a finding that doing so would be in our Nation's interest. And our national interest will be served only if this project does not significantly exacerbate the problem of carbon pollution. The net effects of the pipeline's impact on our climate will be absolutely critical to determining whether this project is allowed to go forward. It's relevant.

Now, even as we're producing more domestic oil, we're also producing more cleaner-burning natural gas than any other country on Earth. And again, sometimes, there are disputes about natural gas, but let me say this: We should strengthen our position as the top natural gas producer because, in the medium term at least, it not only can provide safe, cheap power, but it can also help reduce our carbon emissions.

Federally supported technology has helped our businesses drill more effectively and extract more gas. And now we'll keep working with the industry to make drilling safer and cleaner, to make sure that we're not seeing methane emissions, and to put people to work modernizing our natural gas infrastructure so that we can power more homes and businesses with cleaner energy.

The bottom line is, natural gas is creating jobs. It's lowering many families' heat and power bills. And it's the transition fuel that can power our economy with less carbon pollution even as our businesses work to develop and then deploy more of the technology required for the even cleaner energy economy of the future.

And that brings me to the second way that we're going to reduce carbon pollution: by using more clean energy. Over the past 4 years, we've doubled the electricity that we generate from zero-carbon wind and solar power. And that means jobs: jobs manufacturing the wind turbines that now generate enough electricity to power nearly 15 million homes; jobs installing the solar panels that now generate more than four times the power at less cost than just a few years ago.

I know some Republicans in Washington dismiss these jobs, but those who do need to call home, because 75 percent of all wind energy in this country is generated in Republican districts. [*Laughter*] And that may explain why last year, Republican Governors in Kansas and Oklahoma and Iowa—Iowa, by the way, a State that harnessed—harnesses almost 25 percent of its electricity from the wind—helped us in the fight to extend tax credits for wind energy manufacturers and producers. Tens of thousands of good jobs were on the line, and those jobs were worth the fight.

And countries like China and Germany are going all in in the race for clean energy. I believe Americans build things better than anybody else. I want America to win that race, but we can't win it if we're not in it.

So the plan I'm announcing today will help us double again our energy from wind and sun. Today I'm directing the Interior Department to green-light enough private, renewable energy capacity on public lands to power more than 6 million homes by 2020.

The Department of Defense—the biggest energy consumer in America—will install 3 gigawatts of renewable power on its bases, generating about the same amount of electricity each year as you'd get from burning 3 million tons of coal.

And because billions of your tax dollars continue to—still—subsidize some of the most profitable corporations in the history of the world, my budget once again calls for Congress to end the tax breaks for big oil companies and invest in the clean energy companies that will fuel our future.

Now, the third way to reduce carbon pollution is to waste less energy: in our cars, our homes, our businesses. The fuel standards we set over the past few years mean that by the middle of the next decade, the cars and trucks we buy will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. That means you'll have to fill up half as often; we'll all reduce carbon pollution. And we built on that success by setting the first-ever standards for heavy-duty trucks and buses and vans. And in the coming months, we'll partner with truck makers to do it again for the next generation of vehicles.

Now, meanwhile, the energy we use in our homes and our businesses and our factories, our schools, our hospitals, that's responsible for about one-third of our greenhouse gases. The good news is, simple upgrades don't just cut that pollution, they put people to work manufacturing and installing smarter lights and windows and sensors and appliances. And the savings show up in our electricity bills every month forever. And that's why we've set new energy standards for appliances like refrigerators and dishwashers. And today, our businesses are building better ones that will also cut carbon pollution and cut consumers' electricity bills by hundreds of billions of dollars.

That means, by the way, that our Federal Government also has to lead by example. I'm proud that Federal agencies have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by more than 15 percent since I took office. But we can do even better than that. So today I'm setting a new goal: Your Federal Government will consume 20 percent of its electricity from renewable sources within the next 7 years. We are going to set that goal.

We'll also encourage private capital to get off the sidelines and get into these energy-saving investments. And by the end of the next decade, these combined efficiency standards for appliances and Federal buildings will reduce carbon pollution by at least 3 billion tons. That's an amount equal to what our entire energy sector emits in nearly half a year.

So I know these standards don't sound all that sexy, but think of it this way: That's the equivalent of planting 7.6 billion trees and let-

ting them grow for 10 years, all while doing the dishes. It is a great deal, and we need to be doing it.

So using less dirty energy, transitioning to cleaner sources of energy, wasting less energy through our economy is where we need to go. And this plan will get us there faster. But I want to be honest: This will not get us there overnight. The hard truth is, carbon pollution has built up in our atmosphere for decades now. And even if we Americans do our part, the planet will slowly keep warming for some time to come. The seas will slowly keep rising, and storms will get more severe, based on the science. It's like tapping the brakes of a car before you come to a complete stop and then can shift into reverse. It's going to take time for carbon emissions to stabilize.

So, in the meantime, we're going to need to get prepared. And that's why this plan will also protect critical sectors of our economy and prepare the United States for the impacts of climate change that we cannot avoid. States and cities across the country are already taking it upon themselves to get ready. Miami Beach is hardening its water supply against seeping saltwater. We're partnering with the State of Florida to restore Florida's natural clean water delivery system: the Everglades.

The overwhelmingly Republican legislature in Texas voted to spend money on a new water development bank as long—as a long-running drought cost jobs and forced a town to truck in water from the outside.

New York City is fortifying its 520 miles of coastline as an insurance policy against more frequent and costly storms. And what we've learned from Hurricane Sandy and other disasters is that we've got to build smarter, more resilient infrastructure that can protect our homes and businesses and withstand more powerful storms. That means stronger seawalls, natural barriers, hardened power grids, hardened water systems, hardened fuel supplies.

So the budget I sent Congress includes funding to support communities that build these projects, and this plan directs Federal agencies to make sure that any new project funded with taxpayer dollars is built to withstand increased flood risk.

And we'll partner with communities seeking help to prepare for droughts and floods, reduce the risk of wildfires, protect the dunes and wetlands that pull double duty as green space and as natural storm barriers. And we'll also open our climate data and NASA climate imagery to the public to make sure that cities and States assess risk under different climate scenarios so that we don't waste money building structures that don't withstand the next storm.

So that's what my administration will do to support the work already underway across America, not only to cut carbon pollution, but also to protect ourselves from climate change. But as I think everybody here understands, no nation can solve this challenge alone, not even one as powerful as ours. And that's why the final part of our plan calls on America to lead: lead international efforts to combat a changing climate.

And make no mistake, the world still looks to America to lead. When I spoke to young people in Turkey a few years ago, the first question I got wasn't about the challenges that part of the world faces, it was about the climate challenge that we all face and America's role in addressing it. And it was a fair question because as the world's largest economy and second largest carbon emitter, as a country with unsurpassed ability to drive innovation and scientific breakthroughs, as the country that people around the world continue to look to in times of crisis, we've got a vital role to play. We can't stand on the sidelines. We've got a unique responsibility. And the steps that I've outlined today prove that we're willing to meet that responsibility.

But while America's carbon pollution fell last year, global carbon pollution rose to a record high. That's a problem. Developing countries are using more and more energy, and tens of millions of people entering a global middle class naturally want to buy cars and air conditioners of their own, just like us. Can't blame them for that. And when you have conversations with poorer countries, they'll say: Well,

you went through these stages of development. Why can't we?

But what we also have to recognize is these same countries are also more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than we are. They don't just have as much to lose, they probably have more to lose.

Developing nations with some of the fastest rising levels of carbon pollution are going to have to take action to meet this challenge alongside us. They're watching what we do, but we've got to make sure that they're stepping up to the plate as well. We'll—we compete for business with them, but we also share a planet. And we have to all shoulder the responsibility for keeping the planet habitable, or we're going to suffer the consequences, together.

So to help more countries transitioning to cleaner sources of energy and to help them do it faster, we're going to partner with our private sector to apply private sector technological know-how in countries that transition to natural gas. We've mobilized billions of dollars in private capital for clean energy projects around the world.

Today I'm calling for an end of public financing for new coal plants overseas, unless they deploy carbon capture technologies or there's no other viable way for the poorest countries to generate electricity. And I urge other countries to join this effort.

And I'm directing my administration to launch negotiations toward global free trade in environmental goods and services, including clean energy technology, to help more countries skip past the dirty phase of development and join a global low-carbon economy. They don't have to repeat all the same mistakes that we make.

We've also intensified our climate cooperation with major emerging economies like India and Brazil and China, the world's largest emitter. So, for example, earlier this month, President Xi of China and I reached an important agreement to jointly phase down our production and consumption of dangerous hydrofluorocarbons, and we intend to take more steps together in the months to come. It will make a difference. It's a significant step in the reduction of carbon emissions.

And finally, my administration will redouble our efforts to engage our international partners in reaching a new global agreement to reduce carbon pollution through concrete action.

Four years ago, in Copenhagen, every major country agreed, for the first time, to limit carbon pollution by 2020. Two years ago, we decided to forge a new agreement beyond 2020 that would apply to all countries, not just developed countries.

What we need is an agreement that's ambitious, because that's what the scale of the challenge demands. We need an inclusive agreement because every country has to play its part. And we need an agreement that's flexible, because different nations have different needs. And if we can come together and get this right, we can define a sustainable future for your generation.

So that's my plan. The actions I've announced today should send a strong signal to the world that America intends to take bold action to reduce carbon pollution. We will continue to lead by the power of our example, because that's what the United States of America has always done.

I am convinced this is the fight America can and will lead in the 21st century. And I'm convinced this is a fight that America must lead. But it will require all of us to do our part. We'll need scientists to design new fuels, and we'll need farmers to grow new fuels. We'll need engineers to devise new technologies, and we'll need businesses to make and sell those technologies. We'll need workers to operate assembly lines that hum with high-tech, zero-carbon components, but we'll also need builders to hammer into place the foundations for a new clean energy era.

We're going to need to give special care to people and communities that are unsettled by this transition, not just here in the United States, but around the world. And those of us in positions of responsibility, we'll need to be less concerned with the judgment of special interests and well-connected donors and more concerned with the judgment of posterity. Be-

cause you and your children and your children's children will have to live with the consequences of our decisions.

As I said before, climate change has become a partisan issue, but it hasn't always been. It wasn't that long ago that Republicans led the way on new and innovative policies to tackle these issues. Richard Nixon opened the EPA. George H.W. Bush declared—first U.S. President to declare—"human activities are changing the atmosphere in unexpected and unprecedented ways." Someone who never shies away from a challenge, John McCain introduced a market-based cap-and-trade bill to slow carbon pollution.

The woman that I've chosen to head up the EPA, Gina McCarthy, she's worked—[*applause*]—she's terrific. Gina has worked for the EPA in my administration, but she's also worked for five Republican Governors. She's got a long track record of working with industry and business leaders to forge commonsense solutions. Unfortunately, she's being held up in the Senate. She's been held up for months, forced to jump through hoops no Cabinet nominee should ever have to, not because she lacks qualifications, but because there are too many in the Republican Party right now who think that the Environmental Protection Agency has no business protecting our environment from carbon pollution. The Senate should confirm her without any further obstruction or delay.

But more broadly, we've got to move beyond partisan politics on this issue. I want to be clear: I am willing to work with anybody—Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Libertarians, Greens, anybody—to combat this threat on behalf of our kids. I am open to all sorts of new ideas, maybe better ideas, to make sure that we deal with climate change in a way that promotes jobs and growth.

Nobody has a monopoly on what is a very hard problem, but I don't have much patience for anyone who denies that this challenge is real. We don't have time for a meeting of the Flat Earth Society. Sticking your head in the sand might make you feel safer, but it's not going to protect you from the coming storm. And ultimately, we will be judged as a people and as a society and as a country on where we go from here.

Our Founders believed that those of us in positions of power are elected not just to serve as custodians of the present, but as caretakers of the future. And they charged us to make decisions with an eye on a longer horizon than the arc of our own political careers. That's what the American people expect. That's what they deserve.

And someday, our children and our children's children will look at us in the eye, and they'll ask us, did we do all that we could when we had the chance to deal with this problem and leave them a cleaner, safer, more stable world? And I want to be able to say, yes, we did. Don't you want that?

Americans are not a people who look backwards, we're a people who look forward. We're not a people who fear what the future holds, we shape it. What we need in this fight are citizens who will stand up and speak up and compel us to do what this moment demands.

Understand, this is not just a job for politicians. So I'm going to need all of you to educate your classmates, your colleagues, your parents, your friends. Tell them what's at stake. Speak up at town halls, church groups, PTA meetings. Push back on misinformation. Speak up for the facts. Broaden the circle of those who are willing to stand up for our future.

Convince those in power to reduce our carbon pollution. Push your own communities to adopt smarter practices. Invest. Divest. Remind folks there's no contradiction between a sound environment and strong economic growth. And remind everyone who represents you at every level of government that sheltering future generations against the ravages of climate change is a prerequisite for your vote. Make yourself heard on this issue.

I understand the politics will be tough. The challenge we must accept will not reward us with a clear moment of victory. There's no gathering army to defeat. There's no peace treaty to sign. When President Kennedy said we'd go to the moon within the decade, we knew we'd build a spaceship and we'd meet

the goal. Our progress here will be measured differently: in crises averted, in a planet preserved. But can we imagine a more worthy goal? For while we may not live to see the full realization of our ambition, we will have the satisfaction of knowing that the world we leave to our children will be better off for what we did.

"It makes you realize," that astronaut said all those years ago, "just what you have back there on Earth." And that image in the photograph, that bright blue ball rising over the Moon's surface containing everything we hold dear—the laughter of children, a quiet sunset, all the hopes and dreams of posterity—that's what's at stake. That's what we're fighting for. And if we remember that, I'm absolutely sure we'll succeed.

Now, thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. outside the Old North building. In his remarks, he referred to former President George H.W. Bush; Gov. Samuel D. Brownback of Kansas; Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma; Gov. Terry E. Branstad of Iowa; former Govs. William F. Weld, A. Paul Cellucci, Jane M. Swift, and W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; and former Gov. M. Jodi Rell of Connecticut.

Statement on the Accession of Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani as Amir of Qatar
June 25, 2013

I extend my best wishes to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani as he assumes his new role as the Amir of Qatar. Qatar is an important partner of the United States, and we look forward to further strengthening our cooperation in the years ahead. I also extend my appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani for his friendship and leadership. The United States looks forward to working with Sheikh Tamim to deepen the ties between our two countries and to continue our close partnership on issues of mutual interest.

Statement on the United States Supreme Court Ruling on the Voting Rights Act
June 25, 2013

I am deeply disappointed with the Supreme Court's decision today. For nearly 50 years, the Voting Rights Act—enacted and repeatedly renewed by wide bipartisan majorities in Congress—has helped secure the right to vote for millions of Americans. Today's decision invalidating one of its core provisions upsets decades of well-established practices that help make sure voting is fair, especially in places where voting discrimination has been historically prevalent.

As a nation, we've made a great deal of progress towards guaranteeing every American the right to vote. But as the Supreme Court recognized, voting discrimination still exists. And while today's decision is a setback, it doesn't represent the end of our efforts to end voting discrimination. I am calling on Congress to pass legislation to ensure every American has equal access to the polls. My administration will continue to do everything in its power to ensure a fair and equal voting process.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Penny S. Pritzker as Secretary of Commerce
June 25, 2013

I am pleased the Senate took bipartisan action to confirm Penny Pritzker as our next Commerce Secretary. Penny is a proven leader, a successful entrepreneur, and one of the most accomplished and highly respected women in business today. She knows what it takes to build companies from the ground up, and she shares my belief in doing everything we can to help businesses and workers succeed and make America a magnet for good jobs. Penny will be a key member of my economic team as we continue to work to grow our economy and strengthen the middle class.

Statement on the Election of Edward J. Markey to the United States Senate
June 25, 2013

Tonight I spoke to Ed Markey to congratulate him on his election to the United States Senate.

During more than 36 years as a Congressman, Ed has distinguished himself as a leader on many of the key challenges of our time, from fighting carbon pollution to protecting our children from gun violence, to creating good middle class jobs. He's earned a reputation as an effective, creative legislator, willing to partner with colleagues across the aisle to make progress on the issues that matter most. The people of Massachusetts can be proud that they have another strong leader fighting for them in the Senate, and people across the country will benefit from Ed's talent and integrity.

I also want to thank Mo Cowan for his hard work and dedication over the last 5 months. And I want to thank John Kerry for his nearly three decades of extraordinary service to the people of Massachusetts in the Senate and for agreeing to continue to serve the American people as Secretary of State. I'm confident Ed will help carry on that legacy, and I look forward to working with him to strengthen our economy, protect the middle class, and expand opportunity.

NOTE: The statement referred to Sen. William M. "Mo" Cowan, who was appointed by Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts to assume office on an interim basis following the resignation of former Sen. John F. Kerry.

Statement on the United States Supreme Court Ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act
June 26, 2013

I applaud the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act. This was discrimination enshrined in law. It treated loving, committed gay and lesbian couples as a separate and lesser class of people. The Supreme Court has righted that wrong, and our country is better off for it. We are a people who declared that we are all created equal, and the love we commit to one another must be equal as well.

This ruling is a victory for couples who have long fought for equal treatment under the law; for children whose parents' marriages will now be recognized, rightly, as legitimate; for families that, at long last, will get the respect and protection they deserve; and for friends and supporters who have wanted nothing more than to see their loved ones treated fairly and have worked hard to persuade their Nation to change for the better.

So we welcome today's decision, and I've directed the Attorney General to work with other members of my Cabinet to review all relevant Federal statutes to ensure this decision, including its implications for Federal benefits and obligations, is implemented swiftly and smoothly.

On an issue as sensitive as this, knowing that Americans hold a wide range of views based on deeply held beliefs, maintaining our Nation's commitment to religious freedom is also vital. How religious institutions define and consecrate marriage has always been up to those institutions. Nothing about this decision, which applies only to civil marriages, changes that.

The laws of our land are catching up to the fundamental truth that millions of Americans hold in our hearts: When all Americans are treated as equal, no matter who they are or whom they love, we are all more free.

Statement on the Renomination of General Martin E. Dempsey To Be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Admiral James A. "Sandy" Winnefeld, Jr., To Be Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

June 26, 2013

Today I am proud to announce my intention to renominate General Marty Dempsey as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Admiral Sandy Winnefeld as the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These two superb officers have led our military and their families with great distinction, deep conviction, and absolute integrity over the past 2 years, and I am confident in saying that our Nation is safer and more secure today because of their visionary, dedicated, and tireless leadership.

General Dempsey often talks about trust as the foundational quality of the profession of arms: trust between leaders, those they lead, the institutions they represent, and the Nation they serve. These two distinguished military leaders have earned my trust and that of the American people. I am inspired by their dedicated service to our great Nation and the example they set for our women and men in uniform. I urge the Senate to reconfirm these outstanding officers as swiftly as possible.

The President's News Conference With President Macky Sall of Senegal in Dakar, Senegal

June 27, 2013

[*President Sall spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Sall. Mr. President, Mr. Barack Obama, good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm extremely happy to welcome President Barack Obama for his first trip to Africa since his reelection in November last year.

So, Mr. President, I'd like to once again welcome you to Senegal and wish you a pleasant stay in Senegal. Your stay among us, Mr. President, is a source of pride for the Senegalese population and its Government.

Now, with this visit we are jointly pursuing an age-old tradition, a privileged tradition full of trust between Senegal and the United States of America. I'm extremely happy that you've chosen Senegal to be the first point of entry on this continent after having received me very warmly on the 20th of March in the Oval Office.

President Obama and myself, we have held talks on issues of common interest on the African Continent as well as at the international level. Of course, we discussed bilateral issues and my capacity as the current chairperson of the orientation committee of NEPAD.

I informed the President about our African infrastructure projects as well as a discussion on a bilateral level about the excellent cooperation between our two countries. And I thanked the U.S. for the help in developing Senegal. And we also have a common vision of the main values: freedom, democracy, peaceful coexistence of cultures and religions, and good governance.

On this last issue, Senegal would like to commend the American initiative of Open Government Partnership, which we fully endorse. We are working together to protect and promote all these common shared values for the strengthening of our bilateral cooperation and the continuation of our joint efforts for stability in Africa and the protection of peace and security at the international level.

I would like to commend President Obama's leadership and his will to start a new—give a new impetus to a relationship between Africa and the U.S. U.S.A. are a great country, spearheading progress in all fields for greater prosperity between the African Continent and the U.S. And the African Continent is progressing, is marching ahead with the tremendous potential in terms of natural and human resources.

On both sides, we have a historical opportunity here to open new prospects for relations on the business of complementarity by offering greater opportunities to our youth and by stimulating trade and investments for shared prosperity. Senegal is extremely happy with this new impetus, Mr. President, and I'm ready to pursue our efforts with you in this direction.

I thank you, and I would like to give the floor to you so that you can address the press. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much, President Sall, for your generous words and the very warm welcome that we've received from your delegation. On behalf of myself and Michelle, our two daughters Malia and Sasha, and our entire delegation: It is wonderful to be here in Senegal.

[*President Sall spoke in English.*]

President Sall. Thank you.

President Obama. To all the Senegalese who lined the streets to welcome us: We are deeply touched. We are so grateful for your *teranga*, your hospitality.

I'm making this visit to Africa because, as I've said before, I see this as a moment of great progress and great promise for the continent. It's true that Africa faces great challenges, and meeting these challenges together is a focus of my trip. But all too often the world overlooks the amazing progress that Africa is making, including progress in strengthening democracy. Many African nations have made tremendous strides in improving democratic governance and empowering citizens. Here in West Africa, we see progress in Sierra Leone and Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Niger, in Ghana and here in Senegal.

And that's why I welcomed President Sall to the White House this spring. And that's why I'm beginning my trip here in Dakar. Senegal is one of the most stable democracies in Africa and one of the strongest partners that we have in the region. It's moving in the right direction with reforms to deepen democratic institutions. And as more Africans across this continent stand up and demand governments that are accountable and serve the people, I believe Senegal can be a great example.

I'm told there's a word here, *disso*, which reflects the desire of Senegalese to resolve disagreements through dialogue and not conflict. Senegal has never suffered a military coup. There are free and fair elections, repeated transfers of power, peacefully, a vibrant civil society, a strong press, and dozens of political parties. And I have to say, back in Washington, we have our hands full with just two parties.

President Sall. Yes. Two hundred, sir. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. I don't know how you manage it. [*Laughter*] But after last year's election here, we were inspired by the citizens of Senegal demanding that their votes be respected and that President Sall be sworn in as the democratically elected leader of this nation.

Of course, we all know that democracy is not just what happens on election day, it's also what happens in between elections. So,

President Sall, I want to commend you for the ambitious reforms that you're pursuing to strengthen democratic governance: more openness, more transparency, more accountability. I know it's hard, but it's absolutely necessary both politically and economically. History shows that governments that are more open and more responsive to citizens are more effective in delivering basic services. They're also more successful in attracting the trade and investment that creates jobs and lifts people out of poverty.

President Sall, during our discussions, updated me on his reform efforts, including efforts to stamp out corruption. As progress is made, I look forward to seeing Senegal join the Open Government Partnership. And because just as the United States stood with the people of Senegal as you defended your democracy last year, we want to remain your partner for years to come, to show that democracy delivers progress and jobs and justice that people deserve.

With regard to jobs, the President and I discussed the need to increase our trade and make it easier to invest and do business together. On our side, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, also known as AGOA, expires in 2 years, and I'm looking for ways to renew it, but also improve it so that we're generating more jobs and more trade. We also need to do more across this region. So I'm directing my new U.S. Trade Representative, Mike Froman, to finalize a new trade and investment agreement with ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States.

Ultimately, though, growth and progress has to reach more people. We believe in broad-based development and growth, not just for the few, but for the many. And our mission's always been to try to deliver that kind of broad-based growth through our development program. So, as one example, I'm very proud to be here as we mark the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps in Senegal. Today I'm reaffirming that the United States will remain one of Senegal's strongest partners in development, from new roads and bridges, so merchants can get their goods to the market, to new textbooks and schools, including the Internet, so that more students can learn.

Since most people in Senegal, as is true across Africa, work in agriculture, our food security initiative will keep helping farmers harness new seeds and technologies, increase yields and boost incomes. And as President Sall pursues land reforms, we're looking forward to Senegal joining the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which I'll be discussing further tomorrow. We will continue efforts that are shared against HIV and AIDS, which we've—because of those efforts, we've been able to keep infection rates here relatively low. We'll continue distributing the nets that are saving the lives of countless Senegalese from malaria.

And more broadly, I want to thank Senegal for being such a strong partner in regional security. Senegalese peacekeepers have served bravely from Cote d'Ivoire to the Congo. Senegalese are currently helping the people of Mali reclaim their country, and I assured President Sall that American support for that mission will continue. And with Senegal, we support—within Senegal, we support President Sall's determined efforts to achieve a lasting peace in the Casamance region.

Finally, I'm very pleased that we're deepening the ties between our peoples, especially young people. I was proud to welcome two Senegalese—both women—to the forum for young African leaders that we hosted in the White House. And in the coming days I'll be announcing an expansion of our efforts to empower more young Africans who want to contribute to their respective countries. I hope that will include young people here in Senegal because we believe in Senegal and we believe in its people. We believe we can make progress together. And we believe in investing in the youth of tomorrow.

So again, President Sall, thank you for your partnership, and thank you for the extraordinary welcome that my family and I have received. Our nation are partners—*nyo far*. And my only——

President Sall. Thank you very much. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. ——my only regret on this visit is that I won't be here long enough to take in a match of Senegal's world-famous wrestling. I have to see that. Maybe next time.

President Sall. Next time.

President Obama. So for now, I'll simply say thank you. *Jerejef.*

President Sall. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And your Wolof is wonderful. [*Laughter*]

Now I think we can give the floor to the press. Tijane Barry.

Q. Tijane Barry, journalist at the Radio Television of Senegal. Firstly, on behalf of the national and international media, we would like to welcome Mr. President Obama. My question is for President Macky Sall. Mr. President, how do you describe this visit? And what are the new prospects that this visit opens for Senegal and Africa?

Thank you.

[*President Sall spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Sall. Well, this visit is extremely important for Senegal and for Africa because it is indeed the visit by the President of the U.S.A. And it's not every day that we have the privilege of having the President of the United States of America on our soil.

This visit is also important, because the—this trip by President Obama will further build trust for the corporate and business environment. And we are convinced that Africa's progress and development and growth through partnership—in the private investment trade and partnership. The importance of his presence, the trust that he has in Senegal and in the future of the continent should enable us to establish a bridge between the U.S.A. and Africa, particularly for the development of private investment.

We do have shared values, such as democracy, freedom, human rights, good governance. Africa has made very important progress on these last aspects over the years. Of course, in the past, Africa did suffer a lot. But for about 10 years or so, during the last decade, this has been a decade towards democratization, and this is a prerequisite for the development of Africa. We have tremendous natural resources. We have a lot of human resources. We need infrastructure to accompany the development of all these resources, but all this in the context of good governance; otherwise, these resources will be in vain.

Now, the presence of President Obama, as he has said, is also meant to give a new contract for AGOA, revisit the conditions which should enable countries like Senegal to do more to better export towards the United States of America. But this has to also do with the relationship between ECOWAS and the U.S. for fast-tracked trade relations.

The U.S. is already intervening through different mechanisms: The Millennium Challenge Corporation is one of the latest, which is doing a lot of things in Senegal with a program of $542 million, which should allow us to rehabilitate our Highway Number 6 in Casamance, which will lead to giving better access to the region. We have the Ngallenka road for the development of 10,000 hectares to step up agricultural production.

So, generally speaking, the Peace Corps, USAID, in short, all are the supporting instruments, which are supporting cooperation, should enable us to further boost the already excellent relations at the political and economic levels. And I'm sure that this visit will give an additional boost to our relationship.

Thank you.

U.S. Supreme Court Ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act/Civil Rights/Former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You called the DOMA ruling a victory for couples everywhere who are seeking equal treatment under the law. But this leaves unanswered questions for couples in States that don't recognize same-sex marriage. And now it's largely up to you. Will you direct the Government to make sure that Federal benefits are extended—like Social Security—to all couples, no matter where they live? And will you comment generally on the historic nature of yesterday's rulings? Also, did

you press President Sall to make sure that homosexuality is decriminalized in Senegal?

And, President Sall, may I ask you, sir—thank you, first of all, for your hospitality. You just said that you embrace democracy and freedom. As this country's new President, sir, will you work to decriminalize homosexuality in this country?

And may I also ask both of you, because——

President Obama. How many questions you got there, Jessica [Jessica Yellin, CNN]?

Q. One more. [*Laughter*] Just one more, sir. Because the world is watching and because President Mandela is in such a fragile condition right now, may I ask both of you just to comment on his legacy and what he means to both of you?

President Obama. Well, first of all, I think the Supreme Court ruling yesterday was not simply a victory for the LGBT community, I think it was a victory for American democracy. I believe at the root of who we are as a people—as Americans—is the basic precept that we are all equal under the law. We believe in basic fairness. And what I think yesterday's ruling signifies is one more step towards ensuring that those basic principles apply to everybody.

When I spoke to Ms. Windsor—83 years old—and I thought about the 40 years of her relationship and her partner, who is now passed, for her to live to see this day, where that relationship was the vehicle whereby more people received their rights and are recognized as a testament to the love and commitment that they have made to each other, that was special. And that's just a microcosm of what it meant for families and their children all across America. So it was a proud day, I think, for America.

Now, as you point out, there are a whole lot of implications that flow from it, because the Supreme Court did not make a blanket ruling that applies nationally, but rather, lifted up the ability of States to recognize the dignity and respect of same-sex marriage; and that the Federal Government couldn't negate the decision by those States. We now have to comb through every Federal statute. And although we hadn't prejudged what the ruling had been, I had asked my White House Counsel to help work with lawyers across every agency in the Federal Government to start getting a sense of what statutes would it—be implicated and what it will mean for us to administratively apply the rule that Federal benefits apply to all married couples.

What's true though is, is that you still have a whole bunch of States that do not recognize it. The Supreme Court continues to leave it up to the States to make these decisions. And we are going to have to go back and do a legal analysis of what that means. It's my personal belief—but I'm speaking now as a President as opposed to as a lawyer—that if you've been married in Massachusetts and you move someplace else, you're still married; and that under Federal law you should be able to obtain the benefits of any lawfully married couple. But again, I'm speaking as a President, not a lawyer.

So we're going to be evaluating all these issues and making sure that we work through them in a systematic and prompt way, because now that the Supreme Court has spoken, it's important that people who deserve these benefits know that they're getting them quickly. And I know that, for example, Chuck Hagel already mentioned some work that the Department of Defense is doing on that front. And I think we're going to be seeing that in all the various agencies.

Now, this topic did not come up in the conversation that I had with President Sall in bilateral meeting, but let me just make a general statement: The issue of gays and lesbians, and how they're treated, has come up and has been controversial in many parts of Africa. So I wanted the African people just to hear what I believe, and that is that every country, every group of people, every religion have different customs, different traditions. And when it comes to people's personal views and their religious faith, et cetera, I think we have to respect the diversity of views that are there.

But when it comes to how the state treats people, how the law treats people, I believe that everybody has to be treated equally. I don't believe in discrimination of any sort. That's my personal view. And I speak as some-

body who obviously comes from a country in which there were times where people were not treated equally under the law, and we had to fight long and hard through a civil rights struggle to make sure that happens.

So my basic view is that regardless of race, regardless of religion, regardless of gender, regardless of sexual orientation, when it comes to how the law treats you, how the state treats you—the benefits, the rights and the responsibilities under the law—people should be treated equally. And that's a principle that I think applies universally, and the good news is, it's an easy principle to remember. Every world religion has this basic notion that is embodied in the Golden Rule: You treat people the way you want to be treated. And I think that applies here as well.

Finally, with respect to Mr. Mandela—and by the way, Mr. President, I apologize. Sometimes my press—I notice yours just asked one question; we try to fit in three or four or five questions in there. So—[*laughter*].

My first act of political activism was when I was at Occidental College as a 19-year-old. I got involved in the antiapartheid movement back in 1979, '80, because I was inspired by what was taking place in South Africa. I think at that time, I didn't necessarily imagine that Nelson Mandela might be released, but I had read his writings and his speeches, and I understood that this was somebody who believed in that basic principle I just talked about—treating people equally—and was willing to sacrifice his life for that belief.

When I was in law school, in 1990, '91, to see Nelson Mandela step forward after 27 years of captivity and not only help usher in democracy and majority rule and one person, one vote in South Africa, but as importantly, for him to say, I embrace my former captors and my former oppressors and believe in one nation and believe in judging people on the basis of their character and not their color, it gave me a sense of what is possible in the world when righteous people—when people of good will—work together on behalf of a larger cause.

So, obviously, our thoughts and prayers right now are with the people of South Africa and, more specifically, the Mandela family. I will be traveling there over the next several days, after I leave Senegal. I've had the privilege of meeting Madiba and speaking to him. And he's a personal hero, but I don't think I'm unique in that regard. I think he's a hero for the world. And if and when he passes from this place, one thing I think we'll all know is that his legacy is one that will linger on throughout the ages.

President Sall. Thank you very much. I will leave the floor to you and then react maybe. Alessane.

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. Alessane Samba Diop, director of RFM. I have a question regarding the subregional context. President Barack Obama has come here at a time when the situation is quite volatile. I'd like to know if he has discussed the subregional context with you.

And the other question is the following: The U.S. is not intervening militarily, but they do have a special envoy for Casamance. I'd like to know if the peace process in Casamance has been discussed by the two Presidents. Thank you.

President Sall. Mr. President. Following your own statement, I'd like to come back to two issues before I address the question raised by Mr. Alessane Samba Diop Firstly, regarding Mandela, I think we are all extremely sad and pained to see Madima—Madiba in this situation of health for the past 3 weeks. My hope was to see him be a centenarian. And—but I think Mandela has—is an example for the whole world. And for us, as political leaders, we need to take inspiration from his humility and his capacity of sacrifice and self-denial, but also from his greatness and forgiveness that he has given us as reference.

As President Obama said, he is more than an idol for all of us. When we all pray—we all prayed for him to recover his freedom. But even now, and after he passes, we should always draw inspiration from his thoughts, because South Africa is a rainbow nation even now. And we hope that leaders all over the world will learn from his example.

Now, on the issue of homosexuality, Mr. President, you did make a long development on this issue. But you said something very important, general principles which all nations could share, and that is the respect for the human being and nondiscrimination. But these issues are all societal issues, basically, and we cannot have a standard model which is applicable to all nations, all countries. You said it, we all have different cultures. We have different religions. We have different traditions. And even in countries where this has been decriminalized and homosexual marriage is allowed, people don't share the same views.

Senegal, as far as it is concerned, is a very tolerant country which does not discriminate in terms of inalienable rights of the human being. We don't tell anybody that he will not be recruited because he is gay or he will not access a job because his sexual orientation is different. But we are still not ready to decriminalize homosexuality. I've already said it in the past, in our cabinet meeting, it is Senegal's option, at least for the time being, while we have respect for the rights of homosexuals—but for the time being, we are still not ready to change the law.

But of course, this does not mean that we are all homophobic. But the society has to absorb these issues. It has to take time to digest them without bringing pressure to bear upon them, on such issues. It is just like the capital punishment. I mean, do you know, in our country, we have abolished it for many years. In other countries, it is still the order of the day, because the situation in the country requires it. And we do respect the choice of each country. But please be assured that Senegal is a country of freedom, and homosexuals are not being prosecuted—persecuted. But we must also show respect for the values and choices of the other Senegalese people.

And we are discussing issues such as adoption of children. And this is a serious topic for debate within the Government. The Parliament will be taking over shortly. So these are issues that will be addressed by the society based on the progress of the mentalities and on what people believe is acceptable or unacceptable. That's what I wanted to say on that issue.

Now, to come back very quickly to the subregional context for the crisis ongoing in Mali. Of course, we discussed it at length. And I thanked President Obama for the support offered by the U.S. You know that today it is the U.S. who are giving almost all the food and fuel used by MINUSMA, that is, the United Nations mission for Mali. And they're also intervening to assist us with the logistics after the French response—which we of course approved—with the Serval Operation.

We also worked to develop a model of cooperation. Senegal does cooperate with the U.S. from the military standpoint. And given the constant global threat of terrorism, as well as other scourges such as drugs in the subregion, human beings trafficking, circulation of weapons and piracy, we have decided to pursue our cooperation in all these fields. And our governments and our administrations will continue these consultations in order to arrive at greater efficiency for African forces, because I think it's time for Africa to stand up and address its own issues. And for this, we do need the American support in terms of capacity, in terms of equipment, in terms of training.

But we will be ready to cope for this and Senegal will continue to supply troops for peacekeeping in the world. We are present in more than five countries with more than 2,000 peacekeeping soldiers. And we can build up these forces if required.

And to conclude, of course, Casamance, we did discuss it. I also thanked him for the interest shown by the U.S. in solving this conflict. He has encouraged me in the efforts to obtain peace. And I've also asked for the contribution of the U.S. in development projects, because one of the responses to this crisis is to give an economic perspective. We need reconciliation, of course, to start with. We need reintegration. We need development—sustainable development—in Casamance. On all these issues, we did have a discussion. And I thank the President for the interest he has in Senegal and in Casamance. Thank you.

President Obama. Major [Major Garrett, CBS News].

U.S. Supreme Court Ruling on the Voting Rights Act/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/President Obama's Travel to Africa

Q. Morning, Mr. President. Morning, President Sall. Thank you for your hospitality. It's a pleasure to be in your country. President Obama, two subjects: First of all, picking up on your comments about equal rights under the law, could you give us your gut, your visceral reaction to the Supreme Court's decision in the voting rights case? Explain legislative remedy you will pursue and the pace of that?

Secondly, Edward Snowden, there have been a lot of developments. First of all, there's word that he might be given safe passage to Ecuador. Mr. President, will you use U.S. military assets to in any way intercept Mr. Snowden should he at the—some point in the future leave Russia to try to find safe passage in another country? Have you spoken to President Xi of China, President Putin about this personally, and if not, why not? And how frustrated or angry are you, sir, that China's defiance and Russia's indifference have vastly complicated the pursuit of Mr. Snowden and turned it into what some people regard as kind of an international game of cat-and-mouse that's almost farcical? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, let me take the issue of voting rights first. The Voting Rights Act, sections 2, 4, 5, were the cornerstones of providing political power to African Americans that then led to a whole range of other steps to make America more just and more equal. It was the cornerstone and the culmination of years of struggle: blood, sweat, tears, in some cases, deaths.

I might not be here as President had it not been for those who courageously helped to pass the Voting Rights Act. I think that the Supreme Court made a mistake in its ruling, but that decision is now here. I think the Supreme Court didn't recognize the degree to which voter suppression is still a problem around the country and that it makes sense for us to put in place mechanisms to check practices and procedures that may make it harder for people to vote in those areas where there's been a history in the past of discrimination.

And part of the reason, Major, is because, even though lawsuits can still be filed now if there's discrimination, if you don't have the structure of section 4 and section 5 in place ahead of time, the election may be over by the time lawsuits are filed or a court rules. And oftentimes, it may be too late.

Having said that, the Supreme Court has ruled, and Congress can't overturn this particular aspect of their ruling. The good news is that there are other potential remedies, and the most important one is to simply make sure that everybody around the country can vote and that everywhere around the country we're not seeing 7-hour lines; around the country, we're not seeing mechanisms put in place to make it harder for people to vote, but rather, we should have mechanisms that make it easier to vote. And that is within Congress's power. Congress doesn't have to target or identify a particular jurisdiction. What it can do now is to say, regardless of where you are—regardless of where you live—there are going to be certain rules that apply to elections.

And we—as you know, right after the election when we had already seen some of these problems, I assigned a close adviser of mine, Bob Bauer, to work with a close adviser of Mitt Romney's. They're going to be issuing a report in terms of how we can start making it easier for folks to vote. I recognize that whenever you get into voting rights issues, inevitably some partisan thoughts cross people's minds about who is it going to advantage or disadvantage.

But in the wake of this Supreme Court ruling, surely we can all agree that people should be able to vote, they shouldn't be restricted from voting because—or have to jump through a whole bunch of hoops in order to vote; and that there should be some uniformity in terms of how that right is upheld. It's the cornerstone of our democracy. It's what makes our democracy work. And I'm looking forward to working with both Democrats and Republicans in a nonpartisan basis to make sure that if you're a citizen of the United States of America, you can vote without a whole bunch of barriers,

regardless of your race or your political leaning. So that's on the voting rights issue.

With respect to Mr. Snowden, we have issued, through our Justice Department, very clear requests to both, initially, Hong Kong, and then Russia, that we seek the extradition of Mr. Snowden. And we are going through the regular legal channels that are involved when we try to extradite somebody. I have not called President Xi personally or President Putin personally. And the reason is because, number one, I shouldn't have to. This is something that routinely is dealt with between law enforcement officials in various countries. And this is not exceptional from a legal perspective.

Number two, we've got a whole lot of business that we do with China and Russia. And I'm not going to have one case of a suspect who we're trying to extradite suddenly being elevated to the point where I've got to start doing wheeling and dealing and trading on a whole host of other issues simply to get a guy extradited so that he can face the justice system here in the United States.

Now, I get why it's a fascinating story from a press perspective. And I'm sure there will be a made-for-TV movie somewhere down the line. But in terms of U.S. interests, the damage was done with respect to the initial leaks. And what I'm really focused on is making sure, number one, that we are doing everything we can to prevent the kind of thing that happened at the NSA from happening again, because we don't know right now what Mr. Snowden's motives were except for those things that he said publicly. And I don't want to prejudge the case, but it does show some pretty significant vulnerabilities over at the NSA that we've got to solve. That's number one.

Number two, I'm focused on making sure that we have a healthy, effective debate in the United States about how we balance our security and our privacy concerns, because these programs, which I believe make America safe—help make America safe, and that I believe draw the appropriate balance, right now are generating a lot of questions in the press and in the American public. And I want to make sure that everybody—Congress, opinion leaders, and our government officials—feel confident that the laws are being obeyed, that there's strong oversight and that the American people don't have a Big Brother who is snooping into their business. I'm confident of that, but I want to make sure everybody is confident of that. And so I think we have to have a strong public debate to make that happen.

So I am interested in making sure that the rules of extradition are obeyed. Now, we don't have an extradition treaty with Russia, which makes it more complicated. You don't have to have an extradition treaty, though, to resolve some of these issues. There have been some useful conversations that have taken place between the United States Government and the Russian Government. And my continued expectation is that Russia, or other countries that have talked about potentially providing Mr. Snowden asylum, recognize that they are part of an international community, and that they should be abiding by international law. And we'll continue to press them as hard as we can to make sure that they do so——

Q. Mr. President——

President Obama. But let me—one last thing, because you asked a final question: No, I'm not going to be scrambling jets to get a 29-year-old hacker.

Q. Do you believe that all the damage that he can do has been done by Mr. Snowden? Is that what you're saying, Mr. President?

President Obama. What I'm——

Q. We——

President Obama. What I'm saying is, is that he has those documents. He has released some of them. Not all of them have been released. The damage that's been done essentially goes to the fact of some of these programs. And we don't yet know what other documents he may try to dribble in—out there.

On the other hand, what I'm also confident about is, is that the way we run these programs abides by the laws that were passed by Congress, the oversight of the FISA courts. And we are trying to declassify as much as possible so that the American people and our international partners feel confidence about how we operate in this regard.

I continue to be concerned about the other documents that he may have. That's part of the reason why we'd like to have Mr. Snowden in custody. But what I think we're going to continue to do is to make sure that we are following the various channels that are well established and the rules that are well established to try to get this thing done.

In the meantime, we've got other business to do. For example, we're here in Africa, and I don't want people to forget why we're here.

[*President Sall spoke in English.*]

President Sall. Right.

President Obama. The fact of the matter is, is that Africa oftentimes is not focused on by our press and our leadership back home unless there's a crisis. And part of the reason why we want to focus here, starting in Senegal, is to make sure people understand there is enormous potential here. Six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world are happening right here in Africa. You talk about President Xi. China is paying a lot of attention to Africa; Brazil, Turkey, India are heavily invested in trying to expand trade and commerce with Africa. We have economic and security interests that are critical. We're seeing countries like Senegal that are—have sustained democracy and have sustained peace for many years, who want to partner with us, who are making sacrifices in places like Mali to maintain regional stability.

And so I just want to make sure that we don't lose focus here. The reason I came to Africa is because Africa is rising. And it is in the United States interests—not simply in Africa's interests—that the United States don't miss the opportunity to deepen and broaden the partnerships and potential here. This is going to be a continent that is on the move. It is young. It is vibrant and full of energy. And there's a reason why a lot of other countries around the world are spending a lot of time here.

We historically have been an enormous provider of development aid to Africa, food, medicine. But what I want us to do is to have a shift in paradigm, where we start focusing on trade, development, partnerships where we see ourselves as benefiting and not simply giving to—in the relationship with Africa. And I think that's what people like President Sall are looking forward to. All right.

Thank you very much. That was a very long answer.

Moderator. Yes, the press conference is——

The President. But these are big questions you guys are asking.

President Sall. Thank you.

Moderator. Thank you very much for being here. We wish you a good stay. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11 a.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, the President referred to Maimouna Ndour Ep Faye and Aissatou Padane, participants in the White House Young African Leaders Forum held in August 2010; Edith Windsor, defendant, *United States* v. *Windsor*; former White House Counsel Robert F. Bauer and Benjamin L. Ginsberg, partner, Patton Boggs LLP, in their capacity as Cochairs of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration; and 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney. President Sall referred to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Some reporters spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks During a Meeting With African Judicial Leaders in Dakar
June 27, 2013

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chief Justice, for your service here in Senegal, for your powerful words about the work that brings us here together: the recognition that strong democracies depend on strong institutions. And that includes an independent judiciary system and respect for the rule of law.

I have to say that it's a great honor to be with such a distinguished group of Justices from across Africa. Some of you may know, I am a lawyer myself. My grandmother very much wanted me to be a judge instead of going into politics, so even though I disappointed her by going into politics, at least now she knows that a group of judges are willing to meet with me even if I'm not one myself. So she would be happy about that.

First and foremost, this is an opportunity for me to salute the fine work that all of you are doing. These men and women, and the institutions that they represent are known for their integrity, their determination to deliver justice fairly, sometimes in the face of threats and sometimes in the face of intimidation. But they understand that what makes for a strong democracy includes a strong judiciary: one that's independent from politics; one that operates transparently so that citizens can have confidence that the process is free from undue influences; accountability, because even judges are not above the law.

And of course, on a much more basic level, judicial systems need funding to do their jobs. So I wanted to have this meeting here as part of my first full day in Africa on this trip because I believe that the rule of law is a foundation for governance and also a foundation for human rights and economic growth. It's a pillar of our democracy.

Societies are stronger and more stable when there are checks and balances on government power, when citizens know that their rights will be protected from arbitrary or capricious actions, when they have peaceful recourse when they've been on the receiving end of injustice.

Rule of law is what upholds universal human rights. Sometimes, when nobody else will, a judge can stand up on behalf of someone. And in the United States, one of the basic principles that we strongly believe in is, is that the judiciary is most important when it comes to minority rights because the political process oftentimes will recognize the desires of the majority. The question is, when people are on the unpopular side of an issue or a member of a minority group, where can they seek recourse? And oftentimes, it's in the courts.

So at our—at their best, our courts are venues where justice and equality can be realized for women and children and the poor, for marginalized groups, for victims of discrimination, victims of violence. But as I mentioned earlier, I think it's also a critical ingredient for economic development and prosperity in Africa.

I mentioned to President Sall of Senegal, who I was visiting with before I came here, that trade and investment around the world increasingly flows to places where there are rules and regulations that are fair and predictable, where assets and intellectual property are protected. And the courts play a vital role in that process.

So I wanted to have this meeting to hear from you about how we can be helpful and encouraging in building even stronger judiciaries and systems of law around the continent. The United States is proud to work with partners across Africa to strengthen independent judiciaries and help prepare future jurists. So I want to hear your thoughts, your challenges, and I want to hear from you how you think the United States can be most helpful in continuing the work that you were already doing.

So again, thank you for your hospitality, Mr. Chief Justice. Thanks to all of you who have, in some cases, traveled from a very long way to be here, and with that, let me give the press a moment to depart so we can have a good conversation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. at La Cour Supreme. In his remarks, he referred to Chief Justice Papa Oumar Sakho of Senegal.

Remarks Following a Tour of the Maison des Esclaves on Goree Island, Senegal
June 27, 2013

Hey! Well, the—I want to thank the President of Senegal, but also the mayor of Goree and the museum curator here. Obviously, it's a very powerful moment whenever I can travel with my family, but especially for Michelle and Malia and my mother-in-law to be able to come here and to fully appreciate the magnitude of the slave trade, to get a sense, in a very intimate way, of the incredible inhumanity and hardship that people faced before they made the Middle Passage and that crossing.

And I think more than anything, what it reminds us of is that we have to remain vigilant when it comes to the defense of people's human rights, because I'm a firm believer that humanity is fundamentally good, but it's only good when good people stand up for what's right. And this is a testament to, when we're not vigilant in defense of what's right, what can happen.

And so it's always powerful for me to visit countries outside of the United States generally, but obviously, for an African American—and an African American President—to be able to visit this site, I think, gives me even greater motivation in terms of the defense of human rights around the world. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Macky Sall of Senegal; Mayor Augustin Senghor of Goree, Senegal; and Eloi Coly, museum curator, Maison des Esclaves de Goree. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Remarks at a Meeting With Civil Society Leaders on Goree Island
June 27, 2013

Well, let me just say thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. We've had a wonderful visit here in Senegal, and I had good opportunity to discuss a range of issues with President Sall this morning.

And obviously, it was very powerful to be visiting the Slave Museum here in Goree as a reminder of the potential for man's inhumanity to man, but also as a reminder that we all have to continually be vigilant on behalf of human rights.

The leaders—just for the press—the leaders who are gathered here today, these are all representatives of civil society, which is incredibly strong here in Senegal. And last year, when there were some significant questions as to whether Senegal's democracy would continue to represent the will of the people, it is leaders like these that were able to maintain the pressure and to maintain the focus on the peaceful transfer of power and the continuation of democratic traditions here in Senegal. And it's a reminder that democracy is not just about election day.

Democracy and good governance involves the need for transparency and accountability on the part of government, but also active citizens who are monitoring what the government is doing, that are speaking out. It involves a free press, freedom of assembly, rule of law. And it also involves organizations like this that aren't just working politically, but are also working to increase youth employment, helping to empower women, making sure that children and other vulnerable populations are protected. That's all part of the democratic process.

And I think that history shows that those countries that enjoy good governance, respect human rights, also end up having better economic growth, greater social stability and cohesion.

And so I just want to say, again, thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I'm

looking forward to hearing how we can be more helpful in forging stronger ties between the United States and Senegal, but also to continue to encourage the kinds of empowerment that all of you represent; and that a particular focus of mine is how do we encourage more young people to get involved.

So, for example, Aissatou here attended the Young African Leaders Forum that we held at the White House a couple of years ago, and we're going to be talking during the course of this trip about how we can continue to expand and recruit more outstanding young African leaders to network and participate.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. at the Goree Institute. In his remarks, he referred to Aissatou Padane, a participant in the White House Young African Leaders Forum held in August 2010.

Statement on National HIV Testing Day
June 27, 2013

Today is National HIV Testing Day, when we encourage people across the United States to get tested. Early detection and treatment for HIV saves lives, and yet over half of adults in the United States have never been tested. Nearly one in five people living with HIV in this country doesn't know his or her status. That delays treatment, increases the risk of transmission, and sets us back in our fight against the epidemic.

Getting an HIV test is easier and faster than ever. And this past April, the United States Preventive Services Task Force recommended that everyone between the ages of 15 and 65 get screened for HIV as part of their routine health care. That means, under the Affordable Care Act, new health care plans will be required to cover HIV testing without any additional out-of-pocket costs.

But more Americans still need to decide to take the test. We know from experience here at home and around the world that HIV testing opens the door to treatment, reduces the spread of the virus, and helps people lead longer, healthier lives. That's why, on a trip to Africa in 2006, Michelle and I were tested for HIV, because there should be no shame or stigma associated with knowing your status. And if we each do our part by getting tested and encourage our friends and family to do the same, then we will move closer to an AIDS-free generation.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Anthony R. Foxx as Secretary of Transportation
June 27, 2013

I am pleased that the Senate today voted unanimously to confirm Anthony Foxx as the next Secretary of Transportation. Anthony knows firsthand that investing in our roads, bridges, and transit systems is vital to creating good jobs and ensuring American businesses can grow and compete in a 21st-century global economy. I welcome Anthony to my team, and I look forward to working with him as we aim to modernize the infrastructure that powers our economy.

Statement on Senate Passage of Immigration Reform Legislation
June 27, 2013

Today, with a strong bipartisan vote, the United States Senate delivered for the American people, bringing us a critical step closer to fixing our broken immigration system once and

for all. I thank Majority Leader Reid, Senator Leahy, Senator Schumer, and every member of the Gang of Eight for their leadership, and I commend all Senators who worked across party lines to get this done.

The bipartisan bill that passed today was a compromise. By definition, nobody got everything they wanted: not Democrats, not Republicans, not me. But the Senate bill is consistent with the key principles for commonsense reform that I and many others have repeatedly laid out.

If enacted, the Senate bill would establish the most aggressive border security plan in our history. It would offer a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million individuals who are in this country illegally, a pathway that includes passing a background check, learning English, paying taxes and a penalty, and then going to the back of the line behind everyone who's playing by the rules and trying to come here legally. It would modernize the legal immigration system so that it once again reflects our values as a nation and addresses the urgent needs of our time. And it would provide a big boost to our recovery by shrinking our deficits and growing our economy.

Today the Senate did its job. It's now up to the House to do the same.

As this process moves forward, I urge everyone who cares about this issue to keep a watchful eye. Now is the time when opponents will try their hardest to pull this bipartisan effort apart so they can stop commonsense reform from becoming a reality. We cannot let that happen. If you're among the clear majority of Americans who support reform—from CEOs to labor leaders, law enforcement to clergy—reach out to your Member of Congress. Tell them to do the right thing. Tell them to pass commonsense reform so that our businesses and workers are all playing by the same rules and everyone who's in this country is paying their fair share in taxes.

We have a unique opportunity to fix our broken system in a way that upholds our traditions as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. We just need Congress to finish the job.

NOTE: The statement referred to Sens. Marco A. Rubio, Jeffrey L. Flake, John S. McCain III, Lindsey O. Graham, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, and Michael F. Bennet. It also referred to S. 744.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Mongolia
June 27, 2013

I congratulate President Ts. Elbegdorj on his success in the election held on Wednesday in Mongolia. President Elbegdorj has been an important leader in advancing democracy and freedom in his country and a key partner for the United States in Asia and globally. I look forward to working with him to further strengthen the friendship and ties between our two countries. Through its impressive democratic achievements and its progress on economic liberalization, Mongolia serves as a significant example of positive reform and transformation for peoples around the world.

Message to the Congress on Suspending Generalized System of Preferences Benefits to Bangladesh
June 27, 2013

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 502(f)(2) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the "1974 Act") (19 U.S.C. 2462(f)(2)), I am providing notification of my intent to suspend the designation of Bangladesh as a beneficiary developing country under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program. Section 502(b)(2)(G) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2462(b)(2)(G))

provides that the President shall not designate any country a beneficiary developing country under the GSP if such country has not taken or is not taking steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights in the country (including any designated zone in that country). Section 502(d)(2) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2462(d)(2)) provides that, after complying with the requirements of section 502(f)(2) of the 1974 Act, the President shall withdraw or suspend the designation of any country as a beneficiary developing country if, after such designation, the President determines that as the result of changed circumstances such country would be barred from designation as a beneficiary developing country under section 502(b)(2) of the 1974 Act.

Pursuant to section 502(d) of the 1974 Act, having considered the factors set forth in section 502(b)(2)(G), I have determined that it is appropriate to suspend Bangladesh's designation as a beneficiary developing country under the GSP program because it is not taking steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights to workers in the country.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 27, 2013.

NOTE: The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Macky Sall of Senegal in Dakar, Senegal
June 27, 2013

[*President Sall spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Sall. Your Excellency, Mr. President Barack Obama; distinguished First Lady Michelle Obama; distinguished First Lady of Senegal Marieme Sall; distinguished members of the American delegation; distinguished Speaker of the Parliament; distinguished Prime Minister; Madam President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council; distinguished senior ministers; distinguished ministers; honorable Members of Parliament; Your Excellencies, distinguished Ambassadors; dear friends and dear guests.

Mr. President, 3 months after having warmly received me at the White House, you are visiting me with your wife, your children, and the important delegation accompanying you. And you have honored us by choosing Senegal as your entry point to Africa for your first visit to the continent since your brilliant reelection last November.

In relationships between states, every choice conveys a symbol and a message. My fellow countrymen and myself, we understand and appreciate your visit as a token of friendship and esteem for us. This feeling, Mr. President, is mutual, and it is for you and for your great people.

[*President Sall spoke in English.*]

President Sall. We welcome you, Mr. President, and First Lady Michelle Obama. We wish you and your delegation a pleasant stay in Senegal, the land of *teranga.*

[*President Sall spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Sall. Ties between the American and Senegalese peoples are ancient, robust, and trustworthy. And the circumstances of history have bequeathed common memories to us.

In 1776, when the American people started their historical struggle for their freedom, in the north of Senegal, some revolutionaries rebelled the same year for the same principles of justice and freedom against excesses commit-

ted by the authorities in place. In 1761, according to Johnson and Patricia Smith in "Africans in America," it was said that in 1761, a 7-year-old Senegalese girl embarked for a one-way trip. She disembarked in Boston. Phillis Wheatley, which was her slave name, thanks to her creative genius, became the first known Black poetess in the United States of America.

This was a ray of light in our common history, even in the dark hours of slavery. More than two centuries later, another trip has united us, and this time, as free citizens. And, Mr. President, you wrote this in your bestseller, "Dreams From My Father." It was in Spain, in a bus bound for Barcelona; you took a liking to one of my compatriots, Mr. Sellé Dieng. I hope he is here in this room. Sellé—he's here.

[*Sellé Dieng shook hands with President Obama.*]

President Sall. Thank you, Sellé.

And, Mr. President, so in this book of yours, you said that he told you about his wife he had left behind in Senegal and of his dream to earn enough money to bring her over. He offered coffee and water to you: a coincidental meeting, a shared history, a small gesture of kindness, you said. This spontaneous gesture of human fraternity expresses the values uniting Senegalese and Americans, definite and strong values: faith in God, family and work, openness to the other, and attachment to democracy and freedom.

This is the reason why so many of my fellow countrymen feel so comfortable in your country and are successfully pursuing their American Dream. In Harlem, we have "Little Senegal" when you go to the 16th Street. It's well known to all our compatriots. We would like to thank the American people for their tradition of hospitality.

I would like to also commend the excellent quality of our bilateral relations. Our two countries are cooperating for peace and a safer world, rid of scourges of terrorism and cross-border crime. I commend your leadership, particularly in these times when the situation here in the Sahel has become a global threat and deserves special attention. I hope our countries can put together a joint strategy in response to this new challenge.

In the economic and social fields, we have a robust partnership with the commitment of the Peace Corps in Senegal for more than half a century, USAID's actions and the existence of other aid instruments such as AGOA and the Millennium Challenge Account. Mr. President, I cannot forget that during the preelection turmoil, which our country went through in 2011 and 2012, the United States of America maintained their trust in the maturity and resilience of the Senegalese people and relentlessly supported our democratic tradition. We greatly appreciated this gesture of solidarity in between peoples with common values.

Today, as agreed to in Washington, I would like to confirm our will to forge ahead with you: forge ahead for the promotion of democracy and good governance in the spirit of our commitments stemming from the last G–8 summit; forge ahead in opening new opportunities of partnership between our countries; forge ahead for the promotion of the youth; for the growth and prosperity of our peoples in a safer world.

[*President Sall spoke in English.*]

President Sall. Looking back to more than 50 years of commitment and achievement between our two countries, I am confident that even greater opportunities are laying ahead. And I want to tell you and the great American people that we are more than willing to go forward in our renewed partnership. And we are ready; yes, we are ready; and yes, we can. [*Laughter*]

[*President Sall spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Sall. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I'm happy to raise a toast to the health and well-being of our illustrious guests, President Barack Obama of the United States of America, the First Lady Michelle Obama, to whom I'd like to pay my respects; to the health and well-being of their children and their

delegation; and to the continuous prosperity of the friendly American people.

Long live the United States of America. Long live Senegal. Long live the friendship between Senegal and the United States of America. Thank you, and God bless you.

[*President Sall offered a toast.*]

President Obama. President Sall, Madam First Lady, distinguished guests and friends: On behalf of myself and Michelle and our children, our entire delegation, we want to thank you for the incredible hospitality that you've shown us today. We have been deeply moved and are deeply appreciative of all the arrangements that you've made.

I am told that you have a tradition here of singing poets. Do not worry, I am not going to sing. [*Laughter*] But I would like to quote from one of your greatest poets—one of the world's greatest poets—your first President, Léopold Senghor.

The year after Senegal achieved independence, President Senghor came to the White House and met with President Kennedy. And during his visit to the United States, President Senghor said, "Senegal is a small country, but it is a republic which is inspired by the principles of democracy."

And here in Senegal, we've seen—I've seen personally—the principles of democracy at work in this generation and, I believe, in future generations. Mr. President, I salute you and your administration for seeking what you have called a new mindset, a new consciousness, government that upholds the sanctity of the public good.

I've seen the principles of democracy in Senegal's commitment to human dignity. Michelle and I will never forget today's visit to Goree Island, where we looked out that door of no return. The world owes so much to Senegal for preserving this piece of history, one of the world's great heritage sites.

And as I said at Goree Island, it's a reminder of the potential in humanity that we can show one another, but it also, I think, reminds us of how vigilant we have to be in upholding the dignity and rights of all people.

And finally, I've seen the principle of democracy in the people of Senegal: the citizens that I met with today who stood up for democracy; the young girls that Michelle met today who are busy shaping this Nation—just incredible young women—because Senegal recognizes the value of women's leadership.

And I couldn't be here today if I didn't mention that today, back in the United States, is NBA draft day—[*laughter*]—and that there's going to be a team that makes a wise decision by drafting a favorite son of Senegal, Gorgui Dieng, who is an outstanding big man, and maybe the Bulls will get him. So—[*applause*].

So, Mr. President, I want to propose a toast to our gracious hosts, to our two great nations, to the abiding friendship between our peoples. *À votre santé. Salut.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:35 p.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Gorgui Dieng, center, University of Louisville Cardinals men's basketball team. President Sall referred to Speaker of the Parliament Moustapha Niasse and Prime Minister Abdoul Mbaye of Senegal; Aminata Tall, Chairwoman, Economic, Social, and Environmental Council of Senegal; and historian Charles Johnson.

Remarks Following a Tour of the Food Security Exposition in Dakar
June 28, 2013

Well, as all of you saw, I just had a wonderful opportunity to visit this expo and meet some remarkable men and women who are helping us to meet an urgent challenge that affects nearly 900 million people around the world: chronic hunger and the need for long-term food security.

Here in Africa, thanks to the economic progress across the continent, incomes are rising, poverty rates are declining, there's a grow-

ing middle class. At the same time, far too many Africans still endure the daily injustice of extreme poverty and hunger. And we're here today because improvements in agriculture can make an enormous difference. Here in Senegal and across Africa, most people are employed in agriculture. And we know that, compared to other sectors, growth in agriculture is far more effective in reducing poverty, including among women.

Part of why this work is so important is because, if you want broad-based economic growth in a country like Senegal, starting with these small-scale farmers, putting more income into their pockets ensures that it's not just a few who are benefiting from development, but everybody is benefiting, and it makes an enormous difference.

So that's why when I took office, we took—at new ways that we could provide assistance and partner with countries, and we decided to make food security a priority. We helped mobilize the leading economies around the world on this mission. So this was one of our top priorities at the G–8 meetings that I attended very early on in my Presidency. In the United States, we launched our new initiative called Feed the Future, which works in partnership with 12 African countries. At the G–8 last year, we launched the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. We kicked it off with Ghana, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. It's already grown by six more countries: Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin, Malawi, Mozambique, and Burkina Faso. And I'm very pleased about the next step: Senegal will be joining next year.

And rather than the old models of simply delivering food aid, the New Alliance takes an innovative approach. African countries are in the lead—identifying their priorities, devising their own plans—because they know their countries best. It also means that these programs are far more likely to be sustainable. Companies large and small—from Africa, but also from around the world—have pledged to invest in these plans. And there are companies here today making new commitments, bringing total investments in these efforts to $3.7 billion. So what we're doing is we're taking the private funds that are being leveraged and combining those with the aid funds that are being provided not just by the United States, but some of our other partner countries, and as a consequence, we're getting a much bigger bang for the buck.

We know this works. Today we're going to be releasing a report that shows progress so far under Feed the Future. We've already helped 7 million small farmers harness new techniques. We've boosted the value of their goods that they sell by more than $100 million, and that means higher incomes for farmers and more opportunities for farmers. And you met some of the farmers here today who are directly benefiting from this program. Not only are they able to improve their own situation, but now they're starting to hire people, and you're suddenly starting to see growth in these rural communities that makes all the difference for a country like Senegal.

In a place like Ethiopia, we've been hearing about farmers who are getting new loans, sometimes for small, mechanized products like this that can make all the difference. One farmer said this salary changed his life because he was able now to send his child to school. So this is making a profound difference in the lives of farmers; it's making a profound difference in communities all across the continent.

And here at this expo, we're seeing some of these new technologies that will unleash even more progress. That includes how farmers here in Senegal are using their cell phones to share data so they get the best price when they bring their products to market.

We've set a goal of lifting 50 million people from poverty within a decade, which is ambitious, but achievable. And given the millions of people that we're already reaching and the enthusiasm that we've seen today, I'm confident we're on our way. So, as I said before, I think this is a moral imperative. I believe that Africa is rising and it wants to partner with us, not to be dependent, but to be self-sufficient. And what we're seeing here today are businesspeople, farmers, academics, researchers, scientists, all combining some of the best practices that have been developed over the course now of

decades and leveraging it into concrete improvements in people's lives.

And I want to just say thank you to Raj Shah, the head of USAID, because Raj is an example of the kind of incredible work that's being done by our Government, helping to coordinate and facilitate this tremendous progress. And I want to thank all the farmers and researchers and workers who have been helping to make this possible here in Senegal and throughout this region.

So when people ask what's happening to their taxpayer dollars and foreign aid, I want people to know this money is not being wasted. It's helping feed families. It's helping people to become more self-sufficient. And it's creating new markets for U.S. companies and U.S. goods. It's a win-win situation. And I know that millet and maize and fertilizer doesn't always make for sexy copy, but I very much hope that all the press who were in attendance today generate a story about this, because I think if the American people knew the kind of work that was being done as a consequence of their generosity and their efforts, I think they'd be really proud.

So thank you very much, Raj, for the great work.

United States Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv J. Shah. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:52 a.m. at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Dakar.

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One En Route to Johannesburg, South Africa
June 28, 2013

U.S. Foreign Aid

The President. I just want to emphasize how important the work that we're doing on agriculture is, and I hope you got a sense from those folks who had set up their booths how much of a direct impact it can make in the lives of people in a really concrete way.

Obviously, we've got budget constraints back home, which means that we've got to come up with new and creative ways to promote development and deliver aid, and this Food for the Future program and our New Alliance on Food Security is doing exactly that. Every dollar that we're putting in, we're getting a huge amount of private sector dollars. We're focusing on how do people become more productive as opposed to simply giving them food or giving them medicine.

What we announce later on this trip around Power—what we're calling Power Africa—is going to be utilizing that same model. But what you're really starting to see is people understanding what works, working with small producers, leveraging—so, for example, you notice we're doing nutrition issues, but then also using it as an economic development tool.

And all that creates the kind of critical mass where—in a country like Senegal or Tanzania where maybe 70 percent of the people are involved in agriculture—you can see each one of those small farmers suddenly increasing their income by 20 percent, 30 percent, 50 percent. That then becomes the basis for a nascent middle class in those countries; that in turn can help create local manufacturers, local consumer goods. And eventually, these then become export markets for the United States. So it's not just a matter of alleviating hunger or reducing poverty, it's creating the basis for the entire continent to get incorporated into world markets in a way that ultimately will benefit not just Africa, but also the United States.

So our foreign aid budget is around 1 percent of our total Federal budget. It's chronically the least popular part of our Federal budget. But if you look at the bang for the buck that we're getting when it's done right, when it's well designed and when it's scaled at the local level with input from local folks, it can really make a huge difference. And what we've de-

signed, I think, is so effective that we've been able to see other countries essentially put their money into a similar model, and we're also thereby leveraging all of international assistance around this issue.

So it's something I'm really proud about, and I know Raj Shah already had a chance to brief with you guys, but you should get to know him during the course of this trip because I think he can really give you insight in terms of how much difference this is making.

President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief/U.S. Foreign Aid

Q. Can you talk about this—is this what you see as your legacy for Africa: a kind of changed model? I mean, a lot of analysts back in Washington are talking about how you're not making the kind of grand programs that Bush and Clinton did in Africa, and so I'm wondering if you can address that a little bit.

The President. First of all, if you look at a program like PEPFAR, President Bush deserves enormous credit for that. It is really important. And it saved lives of millions of people. But even on PEPFAR, for example, what we're doing is transitioning so that it's not just a matter of delivering antiviral drugs, it's also how do we create a health infrastructure in these countries that's sustainable.

And I think everything we do is designed to make sure that Africa is not viewed as a dependent, as a charity case, but is instead viewed as a partner; that instead of chronically receiving aid, it is starting to get involved in trade, get involved in production, and over time, is going to be able to feed itself, house itself, and produce its own goods. And that's what Africa wants.

Now, some of this is driven by necessity. Given the budget constraints, for us to try to get the kind of money that President Bush was able to get out of the Republican House for massively scaled new foreign aid programs is very difficult. We could do even more with more resources. But if we're working smarter, the amount of good that we can bring about over the next decade is tremendous.

International Relations of African Nations

Q. Mr. President, can you say—one of the criticisms leveled at the United States is that it's fallen behind China in terms of the amount of attention that it gives to Africa. President Xi has made numerous visits; this is your first extended visit. How does the United States compete with China in terms of showing its interest and in the reduced-budget world that we're living in?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's a good thing that China and India and Turkey and some of these other countries—Brazil—are paying a lot of attention to Africa. This is not a zero-sum game. This is not the cold war. You've got one global market, and if countries that are now entering into middle-income status see Africa as a big opportunity for them, that can potentially help Africa.

What we have going for us, though, is our values, our approach to development; our approach to democracy remains one that is greatly preferable to a country like Senegal. In my discussions, a lot of people are pleased that China is involved in Africa.

On the other hand, they recognize that China's primary interest is being able to obtain access for natural resources in Africa to feed the manufacturers in export-driven policies of the Chinese economy. And oftentimes, that leaves Africa as simply an exporter of raw goods, not a lot of value added—as a consequence, not a lot of jobs created inside of Africa—and it does not become the basis for long-term development.

But we shouldn't view the participation of a country like China or Brazil in Africa as a bad thing. It should be a signal to us, though, that there's great opportunity there and that we cannot afford to be left on the sidelines because we're still stuck with old stereotypes about what Africa's future is going to be.

U.S. Investment in Africa

Q. What kind of commitments do you think U.S. companies are looking for from you on this trip to be able to see Africa as a continent for investment? And what kind of signal does

the expo today—what should that be sending to companies back home?

The President. One of the main things that we want American companies to see is that Africa is ready to do business and that there's huge potential there. What African countries have to do—and this is a message I'm delivering consistently—is ensure that there's stability and good governance so that American companies can reduce some of those risks that have nothing to do with business and have to do with, will they be able to get their profits out? Will they have to pay a bribe? Will they have to find ways to negotiate with bureaucracies endlessly?

And that's why our first message in Africa, in Senegal, revolved around issues of democracy, transparency, accountability. There is a huge economic component to that. Those countries where businesses can feel confident that there will be peaceful transitions of power, that corruption is prosecuted, where there's rule of law, where there's protection of private property, where the government is practical and not wildly ideological; that is what will attract American businesses, because I think, when I talk to a lot of CEOs, they see the potential there, but what they don't want to do is find themselves 5 years out, suddenly, with a different government, suddenly, their money is stuck, their workers are being shaken down. That's the kind of thing we want to make sure that we emphasize throughout this trip.

Former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa

Q. Sir, looking forward to—your trip in South Africa comes at a time when obviously a lot of people in the region are focused on the ailing health of Nelson Mandela. I know you have a relationship with him. Do you hope to visit him? Do you think that your message there will change?

The President. I think the message will be consistent because it draws on the lessons of Nelson Mandela's own life, that if we focus on what Africa as a continent can do together and what these countries can do when they're unified—as opposed to when they're divided by tribe or race or religion—then Africa's rise will continue. And that's one of the central lessons of what Nelson Mandela accomplished not just as President, but in the struggle to overcome apartheid and his years in prison.

We'll see what the situation is when we land. I don't need a photo op, and the last thing I want to do is to be in any way obtrusive at a time when the family is concerned about Nelson Mandela's condition. I've had the opportunity to meet with him. Michelle and the girls had an opportunity to meet with him. Right now our main concern is with his well-being, his comfort, and with the family's well-being and comfort.

So when we get there, we'll gauge the situation, but I think the main message we'll want to deliver—if not directly to him, but to his family—is simply our profound gratitude for his leadership all these years and that the thoughts and prayers of the American people are with him and his family and his country. I think in that sense, the sentiment of Americans is universally shared around the world.

Q. Have you gotten an update on his condition or talked to his family lately?

The President. We'll find out more when we land.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:22 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to former President George W. Bush. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
June 29, 2013

Hi, everybody. A few days ago, I unveiled a new national plan to confront the growing threat of a changing climate.

Decades of carefully reviewed science tells us our planet is changing in ways that will have profound impacts on the world we leave our

children. Already, we know that the 12 warmest years in recorded history have all come in the last 15 and that last year was the warmest in American history. And while we know no single weather event is caused solely by climate change, we also know that in a world that's getting warmer than it used to be, all weather events are affected by it: more extreme droughts, floods, wildfires, and hurricanes.

Those who already feel the effects of a changing climate don't have time to deny it. They're busy dealing with it. The firefighters who brave longer wildfire seasons. The farmers who see crops wilted one year and washed away the next. Western families worried about water that's drying up.

The costs of these events can be measured in lost lives and livelihoods, lost homes and businesses, and hundreds of billions of dollars in emergency services and disaster relief. And Americans across the country are already paying the price of inaction in higher food costs, insurance premiums, and the tab for rebuilding.

So the question's not whether we need to act. The question is whether we will have the courage to act before it's too late.

The national Climate Action Plan I unveiled will cut carbon pollution, protect our country from the impacts of climate change, and lead the world in a coordinated assault on a changing climate.

To reduce carbon pollution, I've directed the Environmental Protection Agency to work with States and businesses to set new standards that put an end to the limitless dumping of carbon pollution from our power plants. We'll use more clean energy and waste less energy throughout our economy.

To prepare Americans for the impact of climate change we can't stop, we'll work with communities to build smarter, more resilient infrastructure to protect our homes and businesses and withstand more powerful storms.

And America will lead global efforts to combat the threat of a changing climate by encouraging developing nations to transition to cleaner sources of energy and by engaging our international partners in this fight. For while we compete for business, we also share a planet, and we must all shoulder the responsibility for its future together.

This is the fight America can and will lead in the 21st century. But it will require all of us, as citizens, to do our part. We will need scientists to design new fuels and farmers to grow them. We'll need engineers to devise new technologies and businesses to make and sell them. We'll need workers to man assembly lines that hum with high-tech, zero-carbon components and builders to hammer into place the foundations for a new clean energy age. We'll need to give special care to people and communities unsettled by this transition. And those of us in positions of responsibility will need to be less concerned with the judgment of special interests and well-connected donors and more concerned with the judgment of our children.

If you agree with me, I need you to act. Educate your classmates and colleagues, your family and friends. Speak up in your communities. Remind everyone who represents you, at every level of government, that there is no contradiction between a sound environment and a strong economy, and that sheltering future generations against the ravages of climate change is a prerequisite for your vote.

We will be judged—as a people, as a society, and as a country—on where we go from here. The plan I have put forward to reduce carbon pollution and protect our country from the effects of climate change is the path we need to take. And if we remember what's at stake—the world we leave to our children—I'm convinced that this is a challenge that we will meet.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on June 25 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on June 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 28, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 29.

The President's News Conference With President Jacob Zuma of South Africa in Pretoria, South Africa

June 29, 2013

President Zuma. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the media, good friends also. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, let me welcome you, your family, and your delegation to South Africa. This is your second visit to South Africa and your first as President of the United States. We are delighted to host you.

Let me also congratulate you on a reelection as President of the United States. Our talks have taken place against the background of the ill health of our beloved former President Nelson Mandela, the founding President of our democracy, who is much loved by our people and the world. I know that he is your personal hero as well, Mr. President.

The two of you are also bound by history, as the first Black Presidents of your respective countries. Thus, you both carry the dreams of millions of people in Africa and in the diaspora who were previously oppressed. We continue to pray for Madiba's good health and well-being.

As we prepare to celebrate 20 years of freedom and democracy in April next year, we extend our deepest gratitude to the antiapartheid movement in the United States for solidarity.

Mr. President, as a student you also participated actively in campaigns against apartheid, especially promoting dismantlement of—dismantlement and disinvestment from apartheid South Africa of the investments that had been made in the history by the United States.

We are pleased to be working with you today with a common goal of expanding trade relations between our two countries. We are in essence shifting from disinvestment to reinvestment in the era of freedom and democracy.

Mr. President, you are visiting Africa at the right time. Africa is rising. It is the second fastest growing region after Asia and has become an attractive market for investment, thus the United States strategy towards sub-Saharan Africa that you launched last year is well timed to take advantage of this growing market.

We already see immense value in our strategic partnerships such as BRICs and IBSA and look forward to strengthening the U.S.-Africa partnership. We are pleased with the growing bilateral trade and investment. There are 600 U.S. companies in South Africa, which have created in excess of 150,000 jobs.

The U.S. is also a major export market for South African products. South Africa, in turn, is your biggest market in Africa, accounting for more than 7 billion U.S. dollars of exports.

We reaffirm the need for the extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which expires in 2015. Our mutual trade has reached the levels preceding the global recession largely due to the act. Arising out of this visit, we would like to see increased investment in the South African economy for mutual benefit. We have placed on the table bankable projects, which range from infrastructure development to skills development for the youth, and also across a number of sectors, like information and communication technologies, agriculture, and the green economy. We have urged that underpinning these investments should be the drive for regional integration, industrialization, and localization of supply and manufacture.

Mr. President, youth development is a key focus area for South Africa given that a third of our population is under the age of 15. This is a key feature of our national development plan. Therefore, we welcome our cooperation in education, especially the School Capacity and Innovation Programme, as well as investment in primary education and teacher training. It is also our wish to extend cooperation on vocational training to develop our further education and training colleges.

We acknowledged the ongoing cooperation in the area of defense under the auspices of the South Africa-U.S. Defense Committee and the training of the security services in crime fighting.

We have lauded the successful health cooperation under the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief funding to address HIV and AIDS and other infectious diseases, which has contributed to the successes and increase in life expectancy.

On promoting the African agenda, we reaffirm our common commitment to strengthening democratic governance and advancing the protection of human rights on the continent. We would like to cooperate with the U.S. in enhancing peace building and postconflict reconstruction and development cooperation under the umbrella of the United Nations and the African Union.

We are concerned about the mushrooming of rebel movements in some countries in the continent at a time when the AU is promoting adherence to its policy of zero tolerance for people who come to office through unconstitutional means. This is a threat to a hard-won peace in many countries in the continent.

Mr. President, we are encouraged by the relaxation of sanctions on Zimbabwe by the U.S. Government, and urge further steps in this regard as it will strengthen the economy of Zimbabwe. We are hopeful that the African Union, with the support of the international community, will find solutions to the challenges we face in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Niger, and Central African Republic and Somalia.

Solutions that are African-led will be able to yield results. The problems in the Sahel region arise primarily from the manner in which the U.N. Security Council handled the Libyan situation. There are lessons to be learned in the episode. We have talked about this in our meeting.

Mr. President, South Africa remains concerned at the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. We unequivocally support the Palestinian bid for statehood and believe in the principle of a two-state solution. We have noted your latest attempts to revive the stalled negotiations, and you have our support in this regard.

At the same time, we are of the view that a lasting peace in the Middle East would not be possible without addressing the other ongoing conflicts in the region, which are a source of much insecurity and instability. We are encouraged by the positive steps you have taken, Mr. President, to relax longstanding restrictions on Cuba. I further urge you, Mr. President, in light of the economic and financial challenges in the U.S. and in the euro zone to encourage our traditional supporters not to abandon their pledges to Africa.

Let me also add that the reform of the United Nations Security Council is long overdue and remains a high priority to South Africa, the African Continent, and the developing world as a whole.

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to reiterate South Africa's commitment to the relationship with the U.S.A. I'm happy that you will visit Robben Island during your visit, which was home to Madiba and many freedom fighters in our country for decades.

I wish you pleasant and productive stay in South Africa for the remainder of your visit. We are truly honored to host you, Mr. President. And I thank you. I now invite you, Mr. President, to address the media. You have the floor.

President Obama. Well thank you so much, Mr. President, for your generous words and your kind welcome. It is wonderful to be back in South Africa. As you mentioned, I had the pleasure of visiting South Africa before when I was a U.S. Senator. Michelle and our daughters were here just 2 years ago. And we're now thrilled to be back as a family. And I know that the press corps, by the way, is happy to be here because this is much more elegant than the White House press room. [*Laughter*] It's a big improvement.

I have to begin, of course, by saying that our thoughts and those of Americans and people all around the world are with Nelson Mandela and his family and all of South Africans. The struggle here against apartheid, for freedom, Madiba's moral courage, this country's historic transition to a free and democratic nation has been a personal inspiration to me. It has been an inspiration to the world, and it continues to be. In so many regions that are divided by

conflict, sectarian disputes, religious or ethnic wars, to see what happened in South Africa—the power of principle and people standing up for what's right—I think continues to shine as a beacon.

And so the outpouring of love that we've seen in recent days shows that the triumph of Nelson Mandela and this nation speaks to something very deep in the human spirit: the yearning for justice and dignity that transcends boundaries of race and class and faith and country. That's what Nelson Mandela represents. That's what South Africa, at its best, can represent to the world. And that's what brings me back here, on what will be a 2-day trip in which I have an opportunity to meet with a whole range of leaders here in South Africa.

The President and I have enjoyed our company quite a bit in the G–20 and in various multilateral forums. Usually, unfortunately, when we're meeting there is some crisis going on around the world. We had a more leisurely conversation today. And we both agreed that the state of bilateral relations between the United States and South Africa are extraordinarily strong.

As one of the BRICs, South Africa's growth reflects the new realities of a global economy. And we welcome that, we don't simply recognize it. That's one of the reasons why I institutionalized the G–20, because it reflects the reality of today's world and today's economy and the need for this continent to be represented in any discussions about the direction of the world economy.

So the United States views South Africa as a critical partner. And, Mr. President, I very much appreciate our personal friendship and partnership. As you've noted, Africa is on the rise and South Africa is always at the forefront of trends in Africa. I see South Africa as critical to one of my top priorities on this trip, and that is to promote trade and investment that helps unleash economic growth here in Africa and ultimately will benefit the United States of America.

We export more products to South Africa than any other nation in sub-Saharan Africa. Hundreds of companies, as you noted, operate here in South Africa. South African companies are investing back in the United States, like Sasol, with plans for billions of dollars in investment in U.S. energy and manufacturing, including my home State of Illinois. And as the largest economy in the region, growth here can drive growth all across Africa. So I want our countries to be doing more business together.

And one of the things that I've said to our press corps during this trip is that, all too often, attention is only paid to Africa when there is a crisis. But in fact, 6 of the 10 largest economies in the world—or 6 of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world are in Africa. There's enormous progress being made and enormous potential to be made. But obviously, we have a lot more work to do, and I think we can do it better together.

Today, almost all of South Africa's exports to the United States—98 percent—already enter our markets duty free. And I told President Zuma that I want to renew, but also improve and update the African Growth and Opportunity Act so we're generating more trade and more jobs. I've got to be able to show American companies that are operating on a level playing field when they invest or are trying to export into South Africa. So we're going to make sure that our trade negotiators have a serious conversation about how we get a win-win formula that delivers jobs and opportunity for people here in South Africa and also in the United States.

Our commitment to progress and human dignity extends to our shared efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. Since I took office, we've continued the good work of PEPFAR, and we've built on it. So, here in South Africa, we're delivering antiretroviral treatments to 1.6 million people, which along with our prevention efforts is helping to save millions of lives. And I want to commend South Africa for its outstanding leadership on this issue. Within a few years, South Africa will become the first country in Africa to fully manage its HIV care and treatment program, and the United States will increasingly focus on prevention and strengthening public health systems. So this is an example of how rather than a one-way street of aid

to Africa, instead this is a partnership of equals working together to solve common challenges. And that's what we need to see in all areas of endeavor.

We're working together to advance the dignity of all of our citizens. Since opportunities for women and girls means greater prosperity for everybody, I'm hopeful that we will be able to welcome South Africa to our Equal Futures Partnership, an effort internationally to make sure that every country is committed to developing the possibilities and opportunities for women and for girls. Some people know that my mother was involved in international development. She taught me when I was very young: You can measure how well a country does by how well it treats its women. If it's educating its women and giving them opportunities, that country does well. When they do not, that country does not advance. And I believe that.

So I also want to commend your Parliament for passing a landmark law to combat the modern slavery that is human trafficking, something that is still a crisis around the world.

This afternoon I'll be in Soweto to announce a major expansion of our initiative to invest in the young Africans who will shape this country, and this continent, for decades to come. And, regionally, I want to thank South Africa for being a leading voice in the African Union, from promoting peace between Sudan and South Sudan to encouraging economic cooperation across the continent.

As the President mentioned, we discussed the situation in Zimbabwe. And President Zuma has played an important role in the region's mediation efforts. We agreed that the harassment of citizens and groups needs to stop, and reforms need to move forward so the people of Zimbabwe can cast their votes in elections that are fair and free and credible. We also discussed the Congo, where I've assigned a new U.S. Envoy to the region, Russ Feingold, a former Senator and chairman of the Africa committee. He's going to lead our efforts in support of the framework for peace. And the United States and South Africa agree that all nations should implement the commitments under that framework quickly to bring the tragedy of the Congo to an end.

And finally, as President Zuma mentioned, we discussed a range of global challenges. Our governments don't agree on every issue; no two countries do. But we've seen the progress that we can make together: on nuclear security, on climate change. Given South Africa's history and given what it represents to the world, and given the interests we share—as democracies that believe in constitutions, rule of law, and human rights and the dignities of all people—I believe that we can stand shoulder to soldier—shoulder to shoulder for issues of security and justice and human rights. And I believe that when the United States and South Africa stand together on an issue in multilateral fora, it's hard to resist. It's hard to resist.

So, President Zuma, I want to thank you for welcoming me here today. I want to thank you for the work that we've done together. It is a great joy for me to be visiting and spending time here in South Africa. I've had occasion to visit Robben Island myself, but for me to be able to bring my daughters there and teach them the history of that place and this country and help them to understand not only how those lessons apply to their own lives, but also to their responsibilities in the future as citizens of the world, that's a great privilege and a great honor.

So I thank you. And to all the people of South Africa, there is enormous affection and admiration for you in the United States, and I hope that I adequately express that during my visit.

Moderator. Thank you very much, Your Excellencies. We will now take questions. [*Inaudible*]—SABC.

International Relations of African Nations/United Nations Security Council Reform

Q. Warm greetings to both Presidents. I'll ask the questions to both Presidents, maybe starting with President Obama. You have come to Africa, to South Africa, of course, to boost and strengthen trade. So perhaps someone is saying, well, the United States is somehow threatened because there are other players

who are coming to Africa, especially China. China is not only coming here in word, but also in deed. So is perhaps President Obama not threatened that the leading role that—[*inaudible*]—played is in danger?

And the other quick question, President Obama: South Africa's bid to U.N. Security Council, should it come, will the United States support it? Is it at the U.N.?

To President Zuma, you, as the leading voice, as President Obama has indicated, on the African Continent in trying to bring stability and peace, we have seen some pockets of rebels, as you indicated, in Congo, in Mali, and elsewhere. So what sort of assistance, perhaps, have you asked from President Obama, I mean, as America is one of the advanced countries that can help in many areas? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, first of all, I'm here in Africa because I think the United States needs to engage in a continent full of promise and possibility. I think it's good for the United States, regardless of what others do. I actually welcome the attention that Africa is receiving from countries like China and Brazil and India and Turkey because, number one, the more interest they show in Africa, the more tools we have and mechanisms we have to further incorporate Africa into the global economy, which has the potential of creating jobs and businesses and opportunity. So I don't feel threatened by it. I think it's a good thing.

Now, I do think that it's important for Africans to make sure that these interactions are good for Africa, because—let me just take the example of natural resources. I think there's been a long history of extracting resources from Africa. You take raw materials, you send them to someplace else where they get used, processed, sometimes sold back to Africa. The profits stay there, the jobs stay there, and not much stays in Africa. There's a long history of that.

Well, the truth is, the United States, at this point, on issues of energy, for example, frankly, we don't need energy from Africa. Because of advances that have been made, we're seeing oil production and natural gas production, as well as clean energy production, all growing at a rapid rate in the United States.

So our primary interest when it comes to working with Africa on energy issues has to do with how do we power Africa so that it can be an effective market creating jobs and opportunity in Africa, but then we also then have somebody to trade with and sell iPods to and airplanes and all kinds of good stuff. [*Laughter*]

So when we look at what other countries are doing in Africa, I think our only advice is make sure it's a good deal for Africa. If somebody says they want to come build something here, are they hiring African workers? Somebody says that they want to help you develop your natural resources, how much of the money is staying in Africa? If they say that they're very interested in a certain industry, is the manufacturing and value added done in Africa? Are they tolerating corruption that's not benefiting the people, but just benefiting a few at the top in their interactions with African countries?

Those are the questions Africa should be asking. And hopefully, one of the things that we can do is—in our interactions, as a country that doesn't have a colonial history here, as a country that has made large investments in development on issues like HIV/AIDS—hopefully, we can garner some trust when people ask us what are the kinds of development strategies that are going to be sustaining over the long term.

But as I said, I want everybody playing in Africa. The more, the merrier. I think that's good. And it gives Africans leverage, which I think is useful. But again, ask those questions; don't just assume that folks come here and they're automatically benefiting Africans. And that includes that United States. Ask questions in terms of what we do.

With respect to the United Nations, President Zuma and I discussed the fact that just as I wanted to institutionalize the G–20 because it's more reflective of the world, I think the United Nations structure, which was created post-World War II, is going to have to be updated. How we do that, in what fashion, is complicated. It's difficult. And it involves all kinds of politics. I will say this—that an expan-

sion of, let's say, the Security Council in which the continent of Africa had no representation would be odd. But how that moves forward is something that I think will involve a lot of negotiations and a lot of discussions.

And the one thing that I share with President Zuma is, everybody wants a seat at the table, but when it comes time to step up and show responsibility, sometimes, people want to be free riders. They love sitting around the table deciding what to do, except when it comes to bearing the burdens, bearing the costs, sometimes sharing the blame for difficult decisions that have to be made, then suddenly: "Well, I'm neutral; I'm not aligned. Don't ask me to"—I'm not referring to South Africa particularly, I'm just saying, countries generally like the idea of being part of foras. But one of the things that the United States has done—and obviously, we're not perfect—but our seat at the table comes by virtue of the fact that we bear a lot of responsibility.

If there's a crisis in the world, people ask us, "What are you doing about it?" They ask: "Why haven't you intervened militarily? You're letting people die." And if we intervene militarily, they ask, "Why did you intervene militarily?" They ask us to foot the bill, and the expectation is, why aren't you footing the bill? If there's poverty or crisis or a humanitarian disaster, the natural expectation immediately is, what's the United States doing?

Now, we shoulder that burden gladly. We think that's part of our responsibilities. We have been incredibly blessed. But the simple point I make—and I say this everywhere I go—is with rights come responsibilities and burdens, and it's not always comfortable, and you can't always make everybody happy. It's like being President of a country. [*Laughter*]

President Zuma. [*Laughter*] Absolutely.

Thank you. Well, thank you very much. Firstly, the question of Africa and its history and the developments globally, I think, should be taken from what they are, without assumptions. Today we are talking about the globalized world. If the world is globalizing, why should there be a question about Africa, that Africa must remain somewhere, when everybody is working together really?

I think since the end of the cold war, the world is working together. There is no country that is isolated. China has a lot of relations with the U.K., U.S.A. Africa as a region, why must it be singled out for some views, so to speak? I don't think in my own understanding, much as the question are understandable, but I think it's being unfair to Africa. Why should Africa be told to whom it must have relations with and not this one and that one? I don't think that talks to our acceptance of globalization. We are globalizing, and Africa must be part of globalization. And you can't say we are globalizing because we have relations with certain regions, not other regions; and if we have relations with other regions, then we are questioned. Nor do I think countries that come to interact with Africa should be questioned: Why are you doing it?

I think it is in the nature of globalization that, in fact, Africa is saying it can no longer be bypassed by events that change the world. We are part of it. And that's why we relate to the bigger countries, bigger economies. We want the relationship, as President Obama was saying, that benefits both. Because historically, the kind of relations we had with other regions were one sided. All what the President was saying: that we want localization to be taken into account, whoever is trying to make relations with us, beneficiation of our resources so that they benefit us.

We ourselves, as another kind of area, we have said we need to do trade among ourselves—intratrade in the continent of Africa—where we are putting our five economic regions together so that we work as a continent together. We are having massive program in terms of the infrastructure to implement what you're talking about, to create that necessary platform, so that whoever comes to invest we don't ask: Are you an American? Are you a Chinese? No. We enter into the relationship that must benefit both. And I'm happy that the United States shares that view as well.

So that is how these interaction are interpreted insofar as the African Continent is

concerned. We have been growing to speak with one voice, and we are now speaking in one voice as a continent. And that's why we look at those who tried to put one country this side and the other that side. That's why even the relation that we have with other regions, we are trying to do them as a unit, as an entity, as a region, rather than as individual countries. So that's what is happening.

So we don't regard to those who come to us that they are coming here because of other reasons that we don't know. We take them genuinely that you're establishing relations that must benefit us, who must also appreciate the history of the continent: where we come from, why we are lacking behind, what is that they could do to help us in terms of the relationships that we have to move forward as well.

With regard to the issue of the United Nations Security Council, I again agree with the President that really this institution was done in the midforties, when many countries did not exist; they did not participate in drawing up the rules and regulations. Things have changed. The world is different today. We can't continue with those kind of conditions. It does not reflect the reality of what is happening today. And that's why we believe each and every region must be represented at all levels so that we can be part of decisionmaking in this international important body.

So the process is important that it is looked at, but also should be realistic, because again, once we say we need that, as the President was saying, we don't want people who are just going to come and sit there and enjoy status; countries must be looked at or regions. Why should countries be members of this important body that take financial decision? Do they have a contribution to make? What is it that is going to be used as a criteria for countries, individual countries, let alone the regions, as to why this particular country must be a member?

Those are matters I think those who are in the national—or the AU and national security council or—U.N. Security Council, rather, they must begin to discuss those matters. What is it that you are going to say are important criteria to say this country can come so that we help the process? Because if big countries are not talking about it, you then allow the process to stay there and people saying all sorts of things. Even the smallest countries, they have got the right to say something. But they may be expecting to be there, and they may have no contribution to make. I'm not saying other countries can't; they can. But we are talking about an institution that take very decisive decisions about the life of this globe.

So I'm just saying, I would be happy if this matter is pushed quicker so that final decisions are taken.

On question regarding whether we discussed what is the United States could do to help Africa in the processes that it is trying to help itself economically, security situation, et cetera, we discussed that, and we have agreed. And I'm very happy. Their agreement is very clear that Africa has said we need the African-led kind of processes and that others should help support that process. And we are at one with President Obama on that one, and it's absolutely correct, so that we should be supported.

We are looking at very specific things. One of them is the issue, for an example, of this new trend of rebels in the continent. We need to do something to stop it, because if it's not stopped, it could be another huge chapter, like the chapter of coups in Africa, and we want to nip it in the bud. And therefore, the last summit of the AU took a decision and asked countries to volunteer: Who could be part of a standby force to react immediately if there is an action, to deal with it? And we would want big countries like the United States to support us in those kinds of actions. And I think we are in agreement with that one.

Thank you very much.

Moderator. Thank you, Your Excellencies. And now hand over to Jay.

White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney. From the Associated Press, Julie Pace.

Egypt/Kenya/Former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa/Zimbabwe

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to first see if you could comment on the situation

in Egypt and the U.S. concern about protests there. And also, politics in Kenya appear to have affected your ability to travel there despite your family ties. Can you reflect personally on not being able to go to the country where your father was born? And what does a situation in Kenya and in places like Zimbabwe say about the difficulties of fulfilling Nelson Mandela's vision for democracy on the continent?

And, President Zuma, a similar question for you: Given your country's high unemployment and other social challenges, is the ANC in its current form living up to Mandela's legacy?

Thank you.

President Obama. Well, on Egypt, obviously, we're all looking at the situation there with concern. The United States has supported democracy in Egypt. It has been challenging given that there is not a tradition of democracy in Egypt. And the Egyptian people have been finding their way.

Our most immediate concern with respect to protests this weekend have to do with our Embassies and consulates. And so we have been in direct contact with the Egyptian Government, and we have done a whole range of planning to make sure that we're doing everything we can to keep our Embassies and consulates protected and our diplomats and personnel there safe.

But more broadly, what we've said publicly and what we've said privately is that we support peaceful process—or peaceful protests and peaceful methods of bringing about change in Egypt. I think every party has to denounce violence. We'd like to see the opposition and President Mursi engaged in a more constructive conversation around how they move their country forward, because nobody is benefiting from the current stalemate that exists there.

And we do not take sides in terms of who should be elected by the Egyptian people. We do take sides in terms of observing a process for democracy and rule of law. And that all the players there engage in the necessary tough compromises so that they can start focusing on the things that probably matter most to the ordinary Egyptian, which is jobs, energy costs, food costs, housing, schooling for their kids, creating economic opportunity. And Egypt, I think, for the last year and a half, 2 years, has had great difficulty focusing on those vital issues.

So again, top priority: Making sure that our Embassies and consulates are prepared for this wave of protests. Number two, we are supportive of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly inside of Egypt, but we would urge all parties to make sure that they're not engaging in violence, and that police and military are showing appropriate restraint. And number three: How do we make sure that we get this political process back on track? And that's a difficult and challenging situation. But Egypt is the largest country in the Arab world, and I think the entire region is concerned that if Egypt continues with this constant instability, that that has adverse effects more broadly.

Your second question: Kenya. There had just been an election in Kenya that thankfully did not see the same kind of violence as the previous election; a newly installed President, but let's be honest, a situation in which this new Government was still working out issues with the international community, in part dating back to the previous election. And the timing was not right for me as the President of the United States to be visiting Kenya when those issues are still being worked on and, hopefully, at some point resolved. And we believe that Kenya needs to abide by various international commitments that it's made.

Having said that, Kenya is one of our oldest partners in the continent. We have outstanding bilateral relations. The people-to-people contacts between the United States and Kenya remain extraordinarily strong. We work with them on all sorts of issues: economic, security, youth exchanges, you name it. And that will continue.

And my personal ties to the people of Kenya by definition are going to be strong and will stay strong. And I have been to Kenya multiple times in the past, and I expect I will be to Kenya multiple times in the future and will continue to be deeply concerned with the progress that's made in that country. And I think it has

enormous potential. Kenya is like South Africa. This is a country blessed with incredible resources, incredible beauty, brilliant people. There have been times in the past where government held back progress, and then sometimes, ethnic conflict held back progress. And obviously, prior to that, colonialism and racism sometimes held back progress.

But the future for Kenya, like the future of the continent, is potentially bright, and the United States wants to be a partner in that process.

Did you have a third question for me?

Q. How the situation in Kenya and also in places like Zimbabwe, will they speak to—[*inaudible*]?

President Obama. Well, absolutely. Look, Nelson Mandela showed what is possible, and the people of South Africa have shown what's possible when a priority is placed on constitutions and rule of law and respect for human dignity and that all people are treated equally, and that we rise above our parochial concerns. And what Nelson Mandela also stood for is the recognition that the well-being of a country is more important than the interest of any one person.

One of the reasons that George Washington is our most admired President is because after two terms, he said: Enough, I'm going back to being a citizen. And if you look at U.S. history, there was no rule at the time in the Constitution; there were no term limits. And he was so popular, he could have easily been President of the United States for life, but he said: I'm a citizen, I served my time, I engaged my service, and then it's time for the next person, because that's what a democracy is about.

And Nelson Mandela, similarly, I think was able to recognize, despite how revered he was, that part of this transition process was to make sure that it was bigger than just one person—even one of the greatest people in history. What an incredible lesson that is. And so I think for the entire continent, for every leader—not just in Africa—for every leader around the world to think about those principles, that governance for the people has to be based on constitutions and rules in which every person is treated equally and nobody is above the law; and that we as leaders, we occupy these spaces temporarily, and we don't get so deluded that we start thinking that the fate of our countries depends on how long we stay in office.

When you have that as a foundation, and then you start building in transparency and accountability and good governance and delivering services for people, then you've got a recipe for success. And the economy then starts booming and the private sector starts being effective. And so my hope would be that every country around the world, but certainly in Africa, can benefit from those lessons.

If you look at Zimbabwe, it used to be one of the wealthiest countries on the continent. And bad governance has led to an economic disaster. It's now starting to come back. And thanks to the work of people like President Zuma, there's an opportunity now to move into a new phase where perhaps Zimbabwe can finally achieve all its promise. But that requires fair and free elections, and it requires those currently in power in Zimbabwe to recognize that the interests of all people have to be served there.

President Zuma. Thank you. Well, with regard to the question directed to me—whether the ANC government is still in keeping with Mandela's beliefs—absolutely, yes. I know that people at times forget that we have not changed policy, we are pursuing policies that were crafted together with Mandela as we started our democracy in 1994.

What we've been doing is to enhance those policies, deepen them. And I believe if you look at South Africa, and perhaps if you take the continent of Africa, in 19 years we have made such progress that no country in the continent has ever made in the history of decolonization. And I've had an opportunity, perhaps because of the job that I've been given, that when Madiba was a pensioner sitting at his home, I visited him very regularly, firstly to report to him as one of the leaders of the ANC, but also to check how he feels about the situation. He has been expressing happiness, actually commending what has been done in terms of this government that he started.

So I have no doubt that what we've been doing is part of what Mandela would be doing if he was here. You know, when people at times we forget, they've been criticizing our economic policies of mixed economy. It is actually Mandela who led us into that policy: the mixed economy. And others say, look, Mandela was for nationalization of X, Y, Z. Mandela debated that issue in the circumstances and said this is the route to take. So we are pursuing the dreams and policies that Mandela was part of, and we'll continue to do so.

We're happy. He is happy. In fact, some of the visits I made before his health changed, he was saying, you know, when I go to sleep I will be very happy, because I will know that I left South Africa moving forward. So other people could have other views, but Mandela has a clear view that we are together on these issues. He has never been afraid to debate issues, even if it was out of government, when he must have felt something has not been done properly.

So we are happy as government, as the ANC, that we are moving in the footsteps of former President Mandela.

Thank you very much.

Press Secretary Carney. Ed Henry, Fox News.

Afghanistan/Middle East/Africa/Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. President Zuma, thank you for being a great host. And I wonder if you can give us any news overnight, any update on President Mandela's health that you may know about. And I wonder if you can—you mentioned the shared history of President Obama and President Mandela, first Black President of each nation. What do you think President Obama's legacy in this continent in future years will be?

And, President Obama, you mentioned—and I think the phrase was, "We occupy these spaces temporarily." You almost reached 6 months in your second term. And on foreign policy, you heard about violence in Egypt, Turkey, Syria, China, and Russia, kind of a complicated relationship right now. How do you prioritize all of that? What are your top two or three foreign policy goals in your final 3½ years?

And on the home front, student loans, gun control, balance a budget deal have been elusive. Are you disappointed? But on immigration reform, you've cleared one big hurdle in the Senate. But Speaker Boehner is suggesting he's going to wait a while. Are you going to push him? What's your next step? Do you push him to deal with this quickly, or are you going to give him more time? Or do you push him quickly to stick to your summer deadline of getting it done by the end of the summer?

Thank you.

President Obama. Mr. President, do you want to——

President Zuma. Thank you. Well, the position of former President Mandela in terms of his health, he remains critical, but stable. So nothing has changed so far. That's where the situation is. But we are hoping that it is going to improve. And I think with all the prayers and good wishes that have been made certainly must do something. As you have seen even in the country and abroad, everyone is wishing Mandela well, a speedy recovery. And the doctors who are attending to him are doing everything, and these are very excellent doctors who are dealing with him. So we place our hopes as well that they will do better. We hope that very soon he will be out of hospital.

With regard to what do we think will be the legacy of President Obama, I always avoid to talk about legacies of people who are still there, generally. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

President Zuma. People always ask me: How can I judge my legacy, really? It's better judged when a person has done the job. But I think what President Obama is doing right now, I think he's focused on the continent. And his approach to—in terms of policy—to how he works together with the continent in terms of helping the continent to move forward, as a leading country in the world and as a leading democracy, he's helped to help deepen and enhance democracy in the continent. That, I think, will be an important one.

As you know, the United States has been looked at as a country that could play a role in influencing the proper direction in the continent of Africa. I think that would be a very good legacy, that when we judge it—at the right time that we judge it, because at the moment it is ongoing. But I think that ongoing process, the fact that he has come here and, I think, to South Africa, he has, for an example, made very objective observation about South Africa. They are unbiased, uninfluenced by anything. He is making very clear. And he, therefore, precisely because of that, he's clear what kind of relationship we should make with South Africa, with the continent. And that will certainly leave the legacy, and I think it would be a good legacy insofar as the continent of Africa.

Thank you.

President Obama. Ed, when it comes to foreign policy, there are a whole range of issues that are top priorities. Some of them are proactive; some of them are in response to very tough situations. So first and foremost in my mind is, we still have a war going on in Afghanistan, and I've still got young men and women there who are making enormous sacrifices, and families back home who are waiting to see their loved ones again. And us managing that transition properly, so that by the end of 2014 our troops are out and we've got a stable situation inside of Afghanistan, I think is going to require continued focus and attention.

Keeping the American people safe continues to be an area of focus and attention. And I can't deviate from that too much. I've got to make sure that our team understands those priorities.

But there are also enormous opportunities internationally, and so I'll just make mention of a couple. Number one is that despite the enormous turmoil in the Middle East—and we're going to have to continue to work on Syria, we're obviously actively monitoring the situation in Egypt, the situation in Libya is challenging—I continue to believe that this period that we're going through in the Middle East has the potential to move the Middle East over the long term in a better direction, because the past arrangements were not sustainable over the long term.

Democracy is hard. It is messy. And in the Middle East, there are obviously all kinds of sectarian divisions that make it that much more challenging and dangerous. But I continue to believe that we have to invest time, energy, and effort in helping to midwife a more representative and more responsive governing arrangement throughout that region. And if we do that effectively, then the Middle East, I think, can be part of the world economy and in ways that are more than just, how much oil are they producing. And obviously, it would have an impact on the security of the entire world. And that includes, by the way, us continuing to work on peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which I think would change the dynamic in the region and certainly how much leverage we have on some of these other issues.

It includes dealing with Iran and their nuclear program. If we can get Iran, which now has a new President, to recognize the need for negotiations and a diplomatic resolution whereby they have peaceful nuclear power like South Africa does, without nuclear weapons, and can give the international community confidence on that; that would change the dynamic in the region again. So that continues to be important.

And then, there are going to be some multilateral issues. Africa: We're here, and one of the things that I've said is, I want to see greater trade, not just aid; African-led economic growth, as opposed to outsiders dictating to Africa how it can grow. But we have an important role to play. The food for the future and food security alliance that we highlighted when we were in Senegal: You've got 7 million small farmers all across Africa who are now being empowered to increase yields and productivity, to get their products to market, connect with Internet lines and wireless so that they can get fair prices that they can then reinvest in buying tractors, which further increases yields, which then means you're creating a middle class. And now shopkeepers have people who can buy their goods, and slowly, Africa is growing. We

now have nine countries across the continent who are participating, and we're already seeing enormous benefits and an increase of about $150 million in incomes and revenues for those who are participating. That's the kind of thing that America can do well.

And yes, we're putting money into it, but we're also listening and working with Africans to partner with them in a more effective way. And we intend to do the same thing on power, something that we've been hearing all across the region. The whole issue of intra-African trade—how can we help to build infrastructure throughout the continent. We'll partner with the Chinese—the young man who was asking that question earlier—we'll be happy to work with anybody around intra-Africa trade. And that's an example of where we want to partner with Africa, we want to partner with others who want to help Africa, but we want to make sure that it's done to benefit Africa.

And I think that as much as the security issues in my foreign policy take up a lot of my time, I get a lot of—more pleasure from listening to a small farmer say that she went from 1 hectare to 16 hectares and has doubled her income. That's a lot more satisfying, and that's the future.

And finally, on domestic policy, on immigration reform, I was very pleased to see the Senate pass it. I called Senators McCain and Graham and Schumer and others who were involved to congratulate them for it. I think they worked very hard. It's not the perfect bill, but it's consistent with the principles I laid out of strong border security, of reformed legal immigration system, and a pathway to citizenship for those who are currently in undocumented status inside the United States.

Now the ball is in the House's court. I've called both speakers—Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi—and encouraged them to find a path to get this done. And the framework that the Senate has set up is a sound framework. It doesn't reflect everything that I would like. Nobody is going to get a hundred percent of what they want: not labor, not business, not the advocates, not me. But the time is right.

And one thing I know about why the United States is admired around the world—and I think President Zuma would confirm this—people do recognize that America is a nation of immigrants; that, like South Africa, it is a multiracial and multicultural nation. And that makes it stronger. Our diversity is a source of strength. So we need to get this right. We can be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

And I do urge the House to try to get this done before the August recess. There's more than enough time. This thing has been debated amply, and they've got a bunch of weeks to get it done. And now is the time. All right?

Moderator. Thank you. Last one. [*Inaudible*]

South Africa/International Criminal Court

Q. Welcome, Mr. President, and thank you for this opportunity. This is a question to both of the Presidents here today. It's the issue of transitional justice in the International Criminal Court. The United States is not a signatory to the Rome Statute and yet appears to encourage and push African leaders and African countries to essentially follow the rulings of the International Criminal Court. So the question, President Obama, is how legitimate do you view the international criminal justice system? And specifically to President Zuma, what can be done to bring about more equity to the international criminal system or justice system?

But also, having met, how would you describe the state of the relationship currently between South Africa and the United States? Considering the fact that the United States is the biggest economic power and South Africa has the largest economy here, can we expect any key initiative coming from both of these countries? Thank you.

President Zuma. Well, thank you very much. We certainly are saying we want to strengthen our relations as two countries. And I think, as we said earlier, the very visit of President Obama talks to the issue we are raising—what is that we can do. We are both saying we need to do more. And of course, and I think the—our private sector are very much aware of this. We are creating the enabling environment that we should grow as much as possible.

Our ministers have been talking, and officials, on specific issues on what is it that we think needs to be done to go forward. We are, for an example, expecting the United States companies to invest in what we have here as opportunities. For example, the massive infrastructure opportunities that are here with bankable kind of projects, those are the kind of opportunities we believe the United States companies will take advantage of. And that will therefore deepen the economy.

On the issue of justice internationally, it's a very serious matter as viewed by the African countries. As you know, there have been cases where Africa has felt we are being treated unfairly, because we have entered into discussions as to how could we deal with justice, level the playing fields. Africa is, for example, in the process of trying to initiate an interaction with the ICC to discuss specifically those kind of issues.

I'd imagine, in our relations with the United States, our legal people, in fact, should be given an opportunity to discuss these matters at that level as to how could we bring about equal justice globally. Because it is important that we are seen in action to be treating matters, or people, that they're equal before the law. There is a view in the continent that this is not done. And it may be a subjective view, but there is that view that therefore says countries that are in the leadership should have more interaction to address those matters, because they become very much important.

One of the issues that was asked, for an example, was the issue of Kenya—what is it that must happen there. How do you look at people who are charged—in other words, who are supposed to answer questions in court, who are not yet convicted—how do they look like before the law?

Now, we think that the saying is that you are innocent until proven guilty, right? What is the role of the people who are not knowing the law, who are not sophisticated, who are given an opportunity to vote and they exercise their vote—which is within their rights—respecting their rights, and they produce a particular verdict? What do you say in terms of the law? Those are the issues we believe need to be looked at, because there are specific circumstances at some point. Because if we are able to discuss those issues and agree, it's not going to be difficult to collaborate if there were people, for an example, who must appear before in a court, because it would be moving from a particular kind of understanding.

It is also important to remove the perceptions that people could have about certain things. If we don't talk, we don't engage, the perceptions then become an impediment—whether we could move forward in bringing about equal justice, respect of the law globally, so to speak. I'm just saying, from my point of view, the interaction and the deepening of relations is going to help to deal with those matters—of course, with people who have expertise on those kind of matters. I don't think they are matters that cannot be resolved. They will be resolved through engagement. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Well, first of all, when it comes to U.S.-South Africa relations, as I said, I think the bilateral relationship is very strong. What we've agreed to is, is that we have to do a better job communicating on multinational issues to make sure that we anticipate potential areas of tension, that we understand ourselves clearly, that sometimes, it's important for us to be able to express to each other the way in which history shapes how we view some of these issues. And I think the more dialogue we have on those issues, I think because we are democracies that stand for human rights and stand for certain principles, the truth is we should be aligned internationally.

But the bilateral relationship is strong. I just want to make sure it's stronger. I think that on issues like HIV/AIDS, where we're now transitioning, building capacity, South Africa is stepping up and doing tremendous work. That's a perfect model for how you can have an effective partnership.

On trade and investment, we can do more. There's more business to be done. And I'm confident that we're moving in the right track. I just want to accelerate it a little bit more, partly because, as Ed Henry pointed out, I only

have 3½ years left. [*Laughter*] I want to try to get as much done as possible.

On the issue of international justice, it's true the United States is not a signatory, but we've been very supportive of the International Criminal Court. Obviously, it is a difficult thing. We don't have a single world government. You don't have a single world police force. And yet I think it was created, and the idea of international justice was created, for those extraordinary circumstances in which you see a leader operating in ways that is so contrary to international norms and basic beliefs that we have about the dignity of people that the international community sees the need to speak and to render judgment. In part to prevent that kind of action from taking place in the future, in part to put leaders on notice that they can't simply act with impunity simply because they control the biggest military or the biggest faction inside their country. That does not give them license to do whatever they please. And I think that principle is important to uphold.

I know that there's been talk about, well, does the ICC pick on Africa? But truthfully, probably the most high-profile work that the ICC has done actually had to do with the situation in Serbia and the Balkans and Kosovo and Bosnia. And so I'm confident that in fact the ICC is not thinking simply regionally on these issues.

I do share with President Zuma, however, the notion that if that's a perception inside of Africa, then it's useful for the African Union—and as a disinterested organization in the sense that it's not just representing one country or one individual—to be able to have constructive conversations with the ICC to see if some of those perceptions can be dissipated. I would caution, though, that you wouldn't want, in the name of African unity, to be trying to water down principles that then allow a Charles Taylor, let's say, to engage in the kinds of actions that he did. That was brutal and inexcusable. And to the extent that the notion was that actions like those of slaughtering people and unleashing troops to rape and pillage with impunity that somehow you can get away with that, that's not good for Africa. And the African Union should find a way, as President Zuma indicated, to allay some of these concerns, perhaps get a greater sense of consistency or transparency or clarity in terms of how the ICC is operating. But don't lose that basic sense that we're all accountable in some fashion to the basic precepts that our countries respectively are founded on.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:57 a.m. at the Union Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya; President-elect Hassan Rouhani of Iran; Nimna Diayté, president, Saloum Federation of Corn Producers; and former President Charles Taylor of Liberia. He also referred to S. 744.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Young African Leaders Initiative Town Hall Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa
June 29, 2013

Moderator Nkepile Mabuse. You guys are an amazing crowd. Good afternoon, and welcome to the University of Johannesburg's Soweto campus. My name is Nkepile Mabuse, and I will be the moderator this afternoon.

I really do hope that the strong significance and symbolism of what is happening here in Soweto today does not escape you. There really are no two occasions in recent time that have had a more profound impact on the African people than when Nelson Mandela walked out of prison a free man in 1990 and, of course, the election of Barack Obama in 2008.

Now, these two men are politicians, and their legacies will be judged by history. But there's absolutely no doubt that these two developments in history have had a profound impact on the African Continent. They have

brought hope in Africa and also began the process of restoring pride and dignity in the African people.

Now, as I speak to you and as you all know, President Nelson Mandela is lying in hospital, critically ill. The euphoria that engulfed this continent when President Obama was elected is fading, but in this room—look around you—is Africa's brand new hope. These young people are doing amazing things in their communities. They have already been identified as leaders and leaders who are committed to serving others and not themselves.

Exactly 37 years ago this month, young school children here in Soweto braved apartheid bullets, fighting for freedom. It's no coincidence that a new generation of young people is here today. And like the '76 generation, they refuse to conform, but are inspired to transform their world.

When President Obama launched the Young African Leaders Initiative in 2010, he described them as the Africa that is overlooked. Well, at this moment, the world can see and hear you. President Obama will come here, address you, and then engage you. We will take a question here in South Africa before we cross to Kenya, Uganda, and then Lagos, Nigeria. When the President selects you, please, be proud. Introduce yourselves, and ask a short, sharp, smart question. [*Laughter*]

As a fellow African, I really want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for keeping hope alive in Africa. Please join me in welcoming onstage the 44th President of the United States of America, Barack Obama.

The President. Hello, everybody! *Yebo Mzansi!* Oh, it is wonderful to be back in South Africa. Everybody, have a seat, everybody have a seat. Relax. Yes, I'm excited too.

It is wonderful to be here with all these extraordinary young people: young people from across this magnificent country, but also from all across the continent. And I want to give special thanks and special welcome to those who are watching from Nigeria and Uganda and Kenya, a country obviously very close to my heart.

When I travel around the world, this is one of my favorite things to do, meeting and talking with young men and women like you. And our format today, this town hall, is a longstanding tradition in America, and I get asked all sorts of things. I remember one event, a person asked a question that's often on a lot of people's minds when I show up: Where's Michelle? [*Laughter*] Sometimes, people ask me, you seem to have gotten so old since you were elected—[*laughter*]—what happened?

So this format can be a little humbling, but it energizes me because it gives me a chance to hear from you directly what you're thinking, what you care about, what your vision is. And I'm making this trip to Africa because I believe this is a region on the move. Even as this continent faces great challenges—and they are great, and we can't paper over them or pretend that those challenges don't exist—even as too many Africans still endure tremendous hardship and great injustice, there is, as the song says, a "new Africa": more prosperous, more confident, taking its place on the world stage.

And one of the reasons is because of your generation. And it's fitting that we've gathered here, in Jo'burg, in Soweto, because here we learned that history is in our hands. Not far from here, in Orlando West, two young men came of age who would transform this nation and inspire the world: Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. And President Mandela once said that during all those years in that cell, it was his home here in Soweto—that small red-brick house—that was what he called the "center point of my world."

And obviously, he's on our minds today, and we join the people of the world in sending our prayers to Madiba and his family, because he still inspires us all.

Now, not far from here, on a June morning, young students gathered in peaceful protest for the right to be taught in their own language, for the right to be treated like human beings. And after all the police bullets, after the smoke cleared, the world was shocked by that image: protesters holding the body of a young boy, Hector Pieterson. And what a powerful tribute it is to Hector's sacrifice and to all

who struggled that we can gather here today in a free South Africa, at a university that serves all South Africans.

And I know the story of Soweto inspires you in your lives, but keep in mind, it inspired me too. The uprising here helped open my mind to a broader world and to our responsibilities to choose between fairness and injustice, between right and wrong. And as a Senator, during my first visit to South Africa, I was able to go to Hector Pieterson's memorial and pay tribute to an African boy who moved the world. And humbled by the sacrifices of all who have gone before us so that we can stand here as free men and women, I am honored to return to Soweto now as President of the United States of America.

Now, tomorrow I'll be down in Cape Town at the University of Cape Town, and I'll speak about the future that we can build together, Africans and Americans. And that's where Robert Kennedy delivered his eloquent address to another generation of young people. The challenges of our world, he said, demand "the qualities of youth; not a time in life, but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease." That's what young people are. That's the spirit of youth, and it's still true.

That's why 3 years ago, I launched a new effort to make sure we're tapping those qualities of youth; the imagination, the courage, the "yes, we can" attitude of young Africans like you. It's our Young African Leaders Initiative, and I kicked it off by welcoming young men and women from across Africa to the White House, and we had a town hall similar to this one. I think some of you were there, in fact.

And since then, we've helped empower young people across this continent with new skills and entrepreneurship and leadership and new partnerships in education and health and technology. Michelle came here to Soweto for a forum with some inspiring young women, and she's here today in Jozi, meeting with students who—[*laughter*]—did I say that right?—meeting with students who, like you, are going to determine the future of your countries.

So today I'm proud to announce a significant expansion of this initiative. We're launching a new program that's going to give thousands of promising young Africans like you the opportunity to come to the United States and develop your skills at some of our best colleges and universities.

It's called the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, and I hope all of you apply because we're joining with our top schools, public and private. We'll focus on civic leadership and public administration and business and entrepreneurship, the skills you need to serve your communities and start and grow businesses and run effective ministries. And you'll interact with Americans from all walks of life, because our citizens—especially our young people—can learn from you too. You'll meet with leaders in business and nonprofits and government, including me. And I look forward to welcoming you at a summit that I'll host in Washington, because I want to hear directly from you: your hopes, your dreams, what we can achieve together.

And your time in America will be just the beginning. When you come back home, new grants will help you turn your ideas into new businesses and new nonprofits. And we're going to partner with American companies here in Africa to provide internships and mentoring and job opportunities to help you grow into the next generation of business leaders. We're going to partner with your Governments and regional organizations here in Africa and foundations and civil society to amplify your voices as you stand up for democracy and equality. And with the connections you make as a Washington Fellow, you'll have something else for the rest of your life, and that is a network of Africans and Americans ready to collaborate on the future that you want to build.

So this won't be the most expensive program that we have, but I actually believe this is going to end up being one of the most important. And it's important to me personally, because it's a great way for me to show my faith and confidence in all of you. I believe in you, and I

intend to make this a lasting part of our engagement with Africa beyond my Presidency, for years to come.

We want to empower entrepreneurs like Fred Swaniker. Where's Fred? He's from Ghana. Where is he? There he is. [*Applause*] So Fred has got a fan club over here. [*Laughter*] Fred helped to start a biotech company and now uses his expertise to help other young Africans develop their leadership skills so that they can come back and put those skills to use serving their communities, starting businesses, creating jobs. So thank you, Fred, for the great work that you're doing.

We want to empower citizens like Khadija Patel. Where's Khadija? Khadija? So Khadija is a fearless journalist here in South Africa. She's reported on Sudan and Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She's exposed the roots of conflict; she's challenged leaders as a voice for peace and justice. So we're very proud of the work that you do, Khadija. Thank you.

We want to empower advocates like Jacob Jabari. Where's Jacob? Right here. So here in South Africa, Jacob decided he was not going to hide the fact that he was HIV-positive; he embraced it, he became a counselor. He helps guide others, because he says the key to saving lives and slowing the spread of AIDS is an honest approach, and that takes great courage. Thank you, Jacob.

And we want to empower women like Lebo Bogapane. Lebo? Growing up, Lebo endured domestic abuse and violence, which led to homelessness and hunger. Over many years, she didn't simply rebuild her own life; she built a crisis center here in South Africa that's helped thousands of women and children escape abuse as well. What a great legacy. Thank you, Lebo.

So building the future that you seek, realizing the vision that you have, not just for your own countries, but for the world, it will not be easy. It will not be easy. But as you go forward, I want you to think of the man who's in our prayers today. Think about 27 years in prison. Think about the hardships and the struggles and being away from family and friends.

Reflecting on his years in prison, Nelson Mandela wrote that there were dark moments that tested his faith in humanity, but he refused to give up. And he said: "I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed towards the Sun, one's feet moving forward."

So, in your lives, there will be time to test your faith. But no matter how old you grow, I say to all of you today, don't lose those qualities of youth: your imagination, your optimism, your idealism. Because the future of this continent is in your hands, and if you keep your head pointed towards the Sun and you keep your feet moving forward, I promise you will have no better friend and partner than the United States of America.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

So now I get to do what I really want to do, which is to hear from you. So why don't we open it up for questions. And I understand that we've got somebody from South Africa here perhaps.

Ms. Mabuse. Yes, the plan is to get somebody here in Soweto before we move across to other parts of the continent.

The President. Okay.

Ms. Mabuse. The choice is yours, Mr. President.

The President. Well, this is a good-looking group. Let me—[*laughter*]—I'm going to call on this young lady right here. Introduce yourself.

African Growth and Opportunity Act

Q. Good afternoon, President Obama. My name is Melissa. I'm an attorney, and I'm passionate about telecoms in Africa. My question is: The African Growth and Opportunities Act, the term expires in 2015, and I understand there's a bill which provides for an extension to 2019. Do you think this bill will be passed? And if it isn't passed, what do you think the impact will be on small states in Africa that are benefiting, such as Lesotho and Togo?

The President. Well, it's a great question. By the way, what kind of law are you practicing?

Q. Oh, right now I actually do cross-border African work.

The President. Excellent.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Fantastic. Well, for those of you who are not as familiar with it, the program we call AGOA is basically a trade arrangement that allows probably 95 percent of goods from Africa to come into the United States without tariffs, duty free. And as a consequence, it obviously gives African exports a greater advantage.

And the whole idea is that historically, if you look at the relationship between Africa and the rest of the global market, dating back to colonial days, the idea was somehow that raw materials get sent somewhere else, they get produced somewhere or refined somewhere else; sometimes, they're sold back to Africa, but the jobs, the value, the profits are all someplace else.

And we graduated from those colonial times to the idea of aid, which continues to be critically important. There are parts of Africa that—where, right now people just need food, or right now people just need medicine, and it is the obligation of wealthier nations to help deliver that food or that medicine.

But everywhere I go in Africa, what's very clear is people want to break out of a dependency trap. The idea is not that Africa somehow should be the ward of some other country. What we need is an Africa that is building, manufacturing, creating value, inventing, and then sending those products around the world and receiving products in return in fair terms of trade. And if we do that, then there's no reason why Africa cannot succeed.

So part of what I'm trying to highlight during this trip is the enormous opportunities for an Africa that is intimately integrated into the world market. I want small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs and startups here in Africa to see their potential not just in the local market, but to be able to sell goods and service all around the world and to bring those profits back to Africa and reinvest in Africa and hire Africans.

And so, as part of that, we want to make sure that the United States is a critical trading partner. And by the way, we're not doing it out of charity. We're doing it because if Africa is doing well, then now we've got a market of people who want to buy more iPads and—[*laughter*]—Boeing airplanes and all the good stuff that we sell, right? And Africa, by the way, is the youngest continent, which means that demographically, this is going to be a larger and larger share of the world market.

So, specifically, in terms of AGOA, you're right. The current AGOA structure expires in 2015. It is my hope that we get it renewed. Now, what I mentioned to President Zuma today, and I said this at a press conference, is that we will have to engage in some negotiations to find ways to both improve what we're currently doing, but also to reflect on the fact that South Africa is becoming more and more successful, and that U.S. businesses—in order for me to get it through Congress in the United States, U.S. businesses have to feel as if they're getting a level playing field relative to, for example, some of the European companies who are able to operate here, because there's a free trade agreement between Europe and the United States.

But I'm confident that with good negotiations, that we should be able to get it done. The broader point I want to make, though, is that the future is going to be in creating value here in Africa and making sure then that Southeast Asia and China and Turkey and all these other places around the world, that everybody is starting to see the benefits of global trade patterns. And Africa cannot just be a source of raw materials for somebody else. It has to be a source of the kinds of products and services and imagination that is going to be the future of the 21st century. Thank you.

Ms. Mabuse. We have a young person in Kenya who has a question for you. Kenya, you ready? There we go.

[*At this point, live video of a group in Nairobi, Kenya, was displayed on the monitors.*]

Kenyan Moderator. Thank you, South Africa. You are watching us, broadcasted to you

live from Nairobi here in Kenya's capital. And indeed I'm joined by eight young Kenyans who have come in from five different counties within the country, quite excited. I think I speak for all of them when I say that, indeed, it's an honor to be able to engage with you, Mr. President, while directly during this program.

And I'll just get right to it and give an opportunity for one of the Kenyans who is with me here in studio to be able to ask a question to you, Mr. President. Margaret, you have the floor now.

Kenya/Democracy in African Nations/Economic Development in African Nations

Q. Thank you, Katherine. *Jambo*, Barack Obama, President. We are honored to be with you live today this afternoon from Nairobi, Kenya. Our question to you really is, given the recent shift of trade ties of Kenya to the East, how does this impact on American foreign policy towards Kenya? And does the ICC indictment of our President and his Deputy prevent the U.S. from engaging with Kenya both politically and economically? In addition, Mr. President, many Kenyan youth would like to know, what are your thoughts and plans on youth empowerment in the devolved structure of governance to Kenya? Thank you.

Kenyan Moderator. Now, Mr. President, as you prepare to respond to that question, I'm sure you're alive to the fact that there has been a lot of speculation in the Kenyan media and also in the social media for your reasons for not visiting Kenya on your second tour of Africa. Maybe if you recall, in an interview that you did have with this channel, that is way back on the 1st of June 2010, you did a promise that during your tenure as President of the United States of America, you will be touring Kenya. Well, will you still keep your word on that? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, *asante sana.* It's wonderful to see all of you. [*Laughter*] First of all, let me just say that I'm going to be President for another 3½ years, so—[*laughter*]. One of the things that you learn as President is not only do people want you to fulfill your promises, but they want you to fulfill your promises yesterday. [*Laughter*]

And part of the reason that I wasn't able to visit Kenya this time is I've been to Kenya multiple times and there hadn't been a sustained visit by me in West Africa; and then South Africa, given the importance of the work that we're doing together; Tanzania is a country I hadn't visited before. So I was trying to spread the wealth a little bit in terms of my visit.

But what's also true, I won't deny, is that Kenya just had an election. I was very proud to see the restraint in which the election was held. We did not see a repeat of the violence that we saw in the last election. But with a new administration that's also having to manage some of the international issues around the ICC, I did not think it was the optimal time for me to visit. But as I said, I'm going to—I've got 3½ years. So if in 3 years and 7 months, I'm not in Kenya, then you can fault me for not following through on my promise. [*Laughter*]

You raise the issue of whether our attitudes towards Kenya changed because of Kenya's orientation towards trade and commerce with the East. And this was asked of me before. It's a general question that I get during this visit: people saying, well, China is here a lot, and is this what's motivating America to want to be more involved? And I want to make two points.

First of all, our commitment to Africa is based on our belief in Africa's promise and Africa's future, and we want to be part of that future. Second of all, I think everybody should be involved in Africa. I want China, and I want India, and I want Brazil, and I want Singapore—everybody, come on down—[*laughter*]—to Africa because 6 of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world are right here in Africa.

You are seeing the—a shift inside of Africa in which a commitment to democracy and transparency is beginning to take hold. I just visited Senegal, where President Sall has embarked on a reform agenda, including, by the way, shortening his term from 7 years to 5 years, and a belief that, for example, members who join the government need to disclose their

assets—just basic measures that can help to root out corruption.

And so when you start seeing these changes, everybody should be excited about wanting to do business here in Africa and doing business with Kenya. Now, what I said during a press conference today I want to repeat, which is, I want to make sure that as countries come to Africa, that it's benefiting Africans. So if somebody is building a road here in Africa, make sure they're hiring some Africans. If there's going to be manufacturing taking place of raw materials, locate some of those plants here in Africa.

And so I do want to make sure that whoever you're dealing with—and as you enter into government and business—whoever you're dealing with, making sure you're getting a good deal that's benefiting the people here and can help to spur on broad-based development. And hopefully, that's the kind of relationship that you'll be able to develop with the United States of America. And that's the kind of relationship I want Kenya to have with every country on Earth.

We're in a global economy with a global supply chain, and I don't want Africa to continually just be at the bottom of the supply chain. You produce the raw materials, sold cheap, and then all the way up the chain somebody else is making the money and creating the jobs and the value.

So part of what your generation's challenge will be is making sure that, first of all, you have a transparent, accountable, noncorrupt, open government, because economic development is not going to happen in the absence of that kind of certainty. That's what businesses want. They don't want to have to pay a bribe just to get phone lines installed in their business. They don't want to have to hire somebody's cousin just to open a business. And we have to be honest about it. In a lot of countries, that's still the case, and that discourages investment.

And then as you move into positions of power, I want to make sure that you're negotiating a good deal with these other countries. Now, it's got to be realistic. It's got to be based on what assets do you bring to bear. And initially, at least in some countries and in some regions in parts of Africa, you're looking at a certain type of manufacturing or a certain type of industry that may not be very capital intensive, for example, because there may not be as much capital initially to invest. So it may start at a smaller scale, but continually upgrading and improving the prospects for Africa, I think, will require that kind of tough, hardheaded negotiations. But I want every country to be here.

Last point on Kenya—I already made this for all countries—yes, I want young people to be involved in holding their governments accountable. Now, there is a lot of variety here in Africa in terms of quality of governance. And I don't want to reinforce for the American press that are here this attitude that Africa is just one big piece of land on the map. Right?

There's a lot of variation. Some countries are doing great work when it comes to accountability and democracy and an act of civil society and a free press and freedom of assembly. And some countries are not doing as well. But what's exciting right now is, you're starting to see more and more a norm, a standard, take hold in Africa. And young people, I think especially, have high expectations about how government should function, and it should function for the public good, not for the benefit of just a few. And people should be able to speak their mind, and they should be able to organize without fear of retribution. And they should be able to cast a ballot without problem.

And South Africa, I think, has been a great model. This is one of the greatest legacies of Nelson Mandela, is to show that through a commitment to the constitution and rule of law, and equal treatment for all people, that a country can prosper despite a tragic history. And the same should be true in Kenya, which is why I was heartened that the process of the last election at least did not result in chaos.

And that should be true for every country. And President Zuma said something important today at the press conference, and I'm going to see what we can do to work with them. The African Union I think is trying to create sort of a peer review system so that it's not just the United States coming in and lecturing some

African country that's not observing democracy, it's fellow Africans who are saying, what are you doing? Why are you suppressing your people? Why are you throwing political dissidents in jail? Why are you blocking people's ability to organize new political parties?

And when peers are organizing in that fashion, then slowly, standards get raised and new norms are established, and all of you can be at the forefront of that. Thank you, Kenya.

Ms. Mabuse. We are going to stay in East Africa and take a question from Kampala, Uganda.

The President. Fantastic.

[*Live video of a group in Kampala, Uganda, was displayed on the monitors.*]

Ugandan Moderator. Hello from Kampala in Uganda, "the pearl of Africa," as we are known. I am Nancy Kacungira, a news presenter with NTV Uganda. And Uganda is a very youthful nation; more than half of our population is actually under the age of 15. I'm here today with a group of vibrant and dynamic young people. And as you can see, they are very excited to be addressing President Obama today and asking him a question.

Now, I've had the chance to interact with the young people here today, and they're all great young leaders in their own right. And they all have different backgrounds and different experiences, but I've found that one of the things they do have in common is their passion: their passion for a better Uganda and for a better Africa. Mr. President, one of them is now going to ask you a question on behalf of the rest of the group.

Entrepreneurship/Economic Development in African Nations

Q. Hello, Mr. President. It's an honor. My name is Eirene Ikomon. My question comes on behalf of everyone seated here with me. Unfortunately, it's also regarding trade. Mr. President, as young Ugandan leaders, we are looking to the world for equal business partners and commitments and not necessarily aid. We are not looking for donors. And yet, Mr. President, the policy you have just described right now seems to emphasize help coming in from the U.S., but emphasizing offering jobs and employment within the countries that they come into. As young leaders, Mr. President, we want to do the businesses at home and be the ones to own our home markets. So how do you, Mr. President, plan on assisting us in reaffirming the U.S. policy to achieve this vision?

The President. Well, with respect to U.S. policy, I think you mischaracterize it, because our policy is to see success here in Africa. Now, there's no doubt that U.S. businesses also want to sell into Africa, because as President of the United States, I want to create some jobs in Africa as well.

But my attitude is that the more successful African entrepreneurs are, then the more they're going to be purchasing and interested in purchasing U.S. goods. And conversely, when the economy in the United States is doing strong, then we're going to buy more from Africa, and everybody's standards of living can rise. But as you heard me say earlier, I completely agree with you that we want more investment and value creation here in Africa.

Now, one thing we haven't spoken about, which I think is critical, is intra-African trade. All too often, it's easier to export, say, tea and coffee from East Africa or flowers from East Africa to Europe than it is to export it someplace else in Africa.

And part of that is the legacy of colonialism, an orientation out of Africa rather than internal to Africa. Part of it is a lack of basic infrastructure, so port facilities, trains, rail, roads. So one of the things that we're going to be very interested in is working with the African Union as well as various regional organizations to find ways that we can start linking up markets inside of Africa, because particularly for new businesses, if you're starting a business here in South Africa, then the best chance you have initially for export might be closer to home, one of the surrounding countries.

If Uganda—if you have a business that you want to get started, and initially, you've gotten your product popular inside of Uganda, the next step before you think about selling to the

United States, you might say to yourself, let me start selling some in Kenya, or let me start selling in Tanzania or Rwanda. And so part of what we have to do is to find additional ways in which Africans can also trade with each other.

The last point I will make—because it's related to trade and capacity-building—I just came, as I said, from Senegal. And one of the things that we were featuring was our Feed the Future Program and a food security alliance that we're creating here in Africa. And we've already gotten nine countries to join, and Senegal just determined that it was going to join as well. But we've already helped 7 million small farmers in Africa to pool their resources, access lower credit, link themselves together as one producer group so that they can market and sell more effectively. And we've seen those farmers increase their yields and their sales by 10, 20, 30, in some cases, 50 or 100 percent.

I met with a young woman farmer who had started off with one hectare, now has 16. She has been able to achieve enough growth that she has now bought a tractor. She's hired eight people. Now, that's not what we ordinarily think of as business or entrepreneurship, but if you think about the number of Africans who are involved in agriculture and giving them the tools where suddenly, they're getting better prices for their crops, they've got access to a marketplace, they now are getting enough credit to be able to mechanize their operations, and now suddenly, they're able to hire some people in their surrounding villages, you've just suddenly seen a small business grow. And the next step may be then they start doing some small food processing. And next thing you know, now they're suddenly supplying these processed foods to a school. And next thing you know, they're supplying those processed foods to the whole country.

And so not every business is going to be an Internet business, an app—[*laughter*]—I mean, I know that's what young people are all about—I'm just going to create an app. I'm the next Facebook. That's great, and I hope some of you do that. But when we think of development of Africa as a whole, especially if we're thinking about broad-based development, then part of what we have to recognize is that a huge number of people inside of Africa are still in the agricultural sector, and the work that we're doing is trying to create capacity for those small farmers who are essentially small entrepreneurs to be successful, because if they've got more money in their pockets, now they can afford to buy your app.

So thank you very much for the question, Uganda. Appreciate it.

Ms. Mabuse. Mr. President, we're moving over to West Africa now, and we're going to take a question from Lagos, Nigeria.

[*Live video of a group in Lagos, Nigeria, was displayed on the monitors.*]

Nigerian Moderator: Well, welcome, Mr. President, to Lagos, Nigeria, home to perhaps Africa's biggest youth population. I'm Maupe Ogun for Channels Television here. And here with me in the studio are a selection of some of Nigeria's brightest and best, and I must tell you, Mr. President, they're mostly women, so you better be careful around them. [*Laughter*] And they say they're on the march, and they have their question ready. Over now to you, Aisha.

Education/Economic Development in African Nations/Terrorism

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Aisha Myna, and I represent seven other people here. In acknowledging our challenges and our responsibility as the young leaders of Nigeria to accept our challenges and make the difference, we would like to thank you for your support to Nigeria and Africa as a whole. The largest resource in Nigeria is our human capital, and we would like to ask a two-pronged question.

The first is, how can the United States deepen its investment in deploying technology that will develop our vast human capital as well as the education of her youth? My second question—it's two-pronged, sorry, Mr. President—considering how long the war on terror has been on for, would you say that we're winning the war on terror, seeing that there are new

terrorist groups developing in Africa, one of which is in Nigeria? Thank you.

The President. Well, those are both great questions. Thank you.

And before I answer the question, I just want to be clear: I am surrounded by opinionated women in my house all day long—[*laughter*]—so I've got good practice dealing with strong women. You guys haven't met Michelle, but you've probably seen her on TV. She's not shy. [*Laughter*] And Malia and Sasha, they're just taking right up after her. So every night at dinner, I'm surrounded.

In terms of human capital and young people, I think there is no doubt that the most important investment any country can make—not just an African country—any country can make is educating its youth and providing them the skills they need to compete in a highly technological advanced world economy. Countries that do not do that well will not succeed. Countries that excel at training their young people are going to succeed, because these days businesses can go anywhere. And one of the key criteria for any business is, where can I find outstanding workers? Where can I find outstanding people to manage a plant or manage my sales force? And if you have countries with high illiteracy rates or limited skills, you're going to have problems.

And I want to be clear that this is a problem in the United States, not just a problem in Africa. One of the main things that I'm spending a lot of time on is trying to push Congress to improve our early childhood education, because it turns out that children are most susceptible to learning between the ages of 0 and 3. And so working with parents, particularly mothers, around reading to their children, proper nutrition, stimulating activities. Then, when they get to school, making sure that our schools are prepared and redesigned for today, because a lot of the schools in the United States were first created during the agricultural era and aren't always appropriate for what's required today. And then on into what we call community colleges, which are 2-year colleges, or 4-year colleges and universities.

[*A noise could be heard from offstage.*]

Somebody should have told my helicopter to quiet down while I'm talking. [*Laughter*]

So across the board, we're having to rethink education and workforce training. And one of the things that we want to do is to partner with a country like Nigeria and identify ways that we can provide direct value added, whether it's in helping to train teachers, helping to incorporate technologies into the education process.

So, for example, one of the things that you hear across the continent is, because a lot of Africans still live in rural areas, it may be difficult for them to access education and schooling once they get beyond a certain level. Well, are there ways in which we can pipe in, essentially, a university into a rural community? And suddenly, you've got the lecturer right there, without the same costs or obligation for a young person to take on when they go to travel far away from home in order to study.

And so I think that there are some excellent ideas that sometimes we're doing country by country, depending on the country plan. But this is an area where I would love to get more input from young people in terms of what they think would work. And so part of the Young African Leaders Initiative may be to elicit additional ideas from those—particularly those who may be working in education and have a sense of what are the barriers right now for young people in order to succeed.

Now, with respect to the so-called war on terror, there's no doubt that we've made some progress in dealing with some extremist groups—for example, core Al Qaida and bin Laden, that was based in the FATA area between Pakistan and Afghanistan—that they have been greatly diminished. But what is also true is that in some ways, the problem has metastasized. You have more regional terrorist organizations, like a Boko Haram in Nigeria, espousing an extremist ideology, showing no regard for human life. And although they may not have the same transnational capacity that some of the earlier organizations did, they're doing great harm in Africa and in the Middle East and in South Asia.

People always talk about the terrorist threat to the United States or the West, but the truth of the matter is, is that the number of people who are killed by terrorist attacks in African countries or in Muslim countries or in South Asia far outstrips any deaths that are experienced by Westerners. It's typically people right there where these organizations are based that are most likely to be killed. When the Kenya Embassy bombing happened, the overwhelming majority of people who were killed were Kenyans, not Americans. And so this is not just a problem for us, this is a problem for everybody.

Now, the question is, how do we address this problem? It is my strong belief that terrorism is more likely to emerge and take root where countries are not delivering for their people and where there are sources of conflict and underlying frustrations that have not been adequately dealt with. The danger we have right now, for example, in a place like Somalia is that it's been two generations, maybe three since there was a functioning government inside of Somalia. Now we've started to see actually some progress, in part because of intervention by African nations in Somalia to clear the space, to create the space for governance.

But you look at what's happening in Mali, for example, right now. Part of the problem is, is that you had a weak central government and democratic institutions that weren't reaching out as far into the country as were necessary, and we've got to build those institutions. A lot of what we talked about in terms of responsiveness and governance and democracy, those things become defense mechanisms against terrorism. They're the most important defense against terrorism.

So I don't start with the attitude of a military solution to these problems. I think the more that we're giving people opportunity, the more that we're giving people education, the more that we're helping resolve conflicts through regular democratic processes, the less likely they are to take root. Now, having said that, there are some extremist groups that will not compromise or work through a democratic process, and we have to also be realistic about that. And what we want to do is partner with African countries to figure out how we can help.

But I promise, this notion somehow that we want to somehow expand our military reach—I was elected to end a war. I've ended one. I'm now in the process of ending another one. Every few weeks, I go and visit soldiers who are your age, who have had their legs blown off in Afghanistan or worse. Every week, I'm writing letters to the families of fallen soldiers. Sometimes, I go to Arlington National Cemetery, where our heroes are buried, and I hug those families, and I feel their sobs on my shoulder.

This idea somehow that we want to get more involved militarily around the world is simply not true. First of all, it costs a lot of money, and the United States, just like every country around the world, has to think about its budget. And where we intervene, oftentimes, it's not very effective, because unless you've got a local population that is standing up against terrorism, we end up being viewed as interlopers and intruders.

So with—in the Africa context, what we want to do is to build African capacity. We want the African Union and other regional organizations to build up the capacity to send in peacekeepers, to be able to nip terrorist cells that may be forming before they start and gain strength. And we can provide advice and training and in some cases equipment, but we would love nothing more than for Africa collectively to say no to extremism, say no to terrorism, to say no to sectarianism—which, in the case of Boko Haram, for example, is an example of essentially a religious rationale for this kind of violence—and the United States to be able to step back and worry about selling iPads and planes. That's what we would like to do.

But what we won't do is just stand by if our Embassy is being attacked or our people are in vulnerable situations. And we expect countries to work with us to try to deal with some of these threats. And this is a global issue; it's not just one related to the United States. Okay. All right.

Ms. Mabuse. We have time to take one last question from Soweto.

The President. If it's a really short question, I'll give a short answer, and we'll get two in. [*Laughter*] Gentleman right here, yes, go ahead. Everybody has got—you've got to describe why you're all wearing orange. [*Laughter*]

Education

Q. Okay. Firstly, my name is Hans Dinkelman. I'm nervous. [*Laughter*] I'm a student at UJ. I'm an honor student, also studied education. You said education people should stand up. [*Laughter*] My education is—oh, my question is we've got a lot of barriers in this country, and one of those barriers is the amount of students in our classes versus a single person. And what I find difficult is, how does that one person stand up and control, in some cases—we've just come back from training—some cases 90 to 100 kids in one class? It's difficult enough to carry 40 in my class. How do you carry those 90—I find it very difficult—and try to make an impact in their lives?

The President. Good. I think that's a great question. First of all, I think it's wonderful that you're going into education. Very proud of you. No job more important than educating our young people. This is a challenge that we have in the United States as well, and that is the issue of class size.

Now, our problem typically is that our class sizes are around 35 or 33, and we'd like to see if we can get it down in the twenties. If you're talking about 90—[*laughter*]—that's a whole other level. Now, we're—I'm assuming we're talking about primary and secondary education, we're not talking about universities, because by the time you get to university it's—you better be focused on your studies. It's not the job of the teacher to make you do your work and pay attention, because you're now an adult. But when it comes to young people, studies do show that particularly for poorer children, the more one-on-one attention that they can get from their teachers, the more personalized instruction they can get, the better they're going to do.

So the first response is, if you can budget—if a government can budget smaller class sizes, that's better. But not every country is going to have the resources to do that. And one of the things that we're starting to see in the United States is, how can you effectively use, for example, teacher's assistants in a class, who may not be fully certified teachers but can break up, let's say, a class of 90 into smaller groups. This is also where technology can also potentially make a difference, because it's conceivable that if you've got some sort of technology—a couple of laptops—that you can leverage one teacher into multiple instruction.

The question you raise, though, makes me want to suggest to my team when we leave here that we start taking some of the best practices and some of the things that we're learning in the United States and seeing if there may be some application we can—might be able to start some pilot programs here in South Africa to see if we can make an impact there.

Good. All right. Last question? One more. All right. All these folks have been so patient in the back, I don't want them to feel neglected. So the—this gentleman right here, because he seems very eager. Right here. Yes, yes, you right there. [*Laughter*] Go ahead. The—but you guys can—feel free to stand together if you want, but—[*laughter*]—I'm only going to take a question from one of you. [*Laughter*] What's your name?

Q. My name is Sydney Mukumu. I'm from Limpopo. Thank you. President Obama, I met you in 2006. I was working for the Embassy.

The President. Excellent.

Environment/Climate Change

Q. Yes. I'm very much worried about some of United States international—I mean foreign policy, especially on the environment. President Obama, today I want you to tell these young leaders about the foreign policy of the United States on the environment.

The President. On the environment?

Q. Yes, because South Africa is facing the same problem. Whatever is happening in America, it's affecting us. Please tell these—this is your children—tell us today—[*laughter*].

The President. Yes.

Q. Just like people who are protesting outside, there are people who are crying, and now you must address them here——

The President. Okay, let's go.

Q. ——and tell them outside what is happening. Make it clear, and then when you go back, you will have a safe trip. Thank you very much, President.

The President. I'm ready. I'm ready. I'm ready. [*Laughter*] I'll see if I can make it clear. U.S. environmental policy is something that I care deeply about. As some of you know, I grew up in Hawaii, one of the most beautiful places on Earth. And as a child, I was just taught to treasure what the Earth gives us and to make sure that we leave it for the next generation. And obviously, in a country like South Africa, with incredible beauty and natural resources, that same mentality about conserving the Earth and nurturing it to pass on to future generations, I think, applies here just as much as it does in the United States.

The biggest challenge we have environmentally—and it is an international challenge that we cannot solve alone—is the issue of climate change. There are other issues: dirty water, dirty air. But the truth is, is that we've made enormous progress over the last several years, over the last several decades in the United States. And if you come to the United States, environmental quality is pretty good. And internationally, we've promoted policies around how mercury is released into the environment, and how other poisons are released in the environment and how businesses have to be held to international standards in terms of worker safety. Those are areas where the United States have been at the forefront. We've been at the front of the line, not the back of the line when it comes to those issues.

But the existential challenge that we face has to do with a warming planet. And your generation is the one that's going to be the most severely affected. Now, the United States and other highly industrialized, developed countries over the last 50, 100 years have been pumping up carbon emissions into the atmosphere. And slowly, this has been building up and it is warming the planet, and we may be reaching a tipping point in which if we do not solve this problem soon, it will spin out of control and change weather patterns in ways that we can't anticipate, with drought, floods, much more severe natural disasters. And unfortunately, in those situations. it's often poorer countries that are affected the most by these changing climate patterns.

So I just gave a speech this past week on what the United States is going to do on our next phase of reducing our carbon emissions. The United States actually reduced our carbon emissions more than any other country since I came into office. I just want to make that point. We doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars. We're investing in clean energy like solar and wind. And we actually want to share that technology, because we think that all countries need to benefit. And part of the opportunity for Africa is to see if we can leapfrog some of the polluting practices of America or Europe and go straight to the clean energy strategies that will allow you to advance economic growth, but not corrupt the planet.

So we've made progress, but we haven't done enough. And what I did was to say I challenge the United States. I said we've got to do more. We're going to start regulating our power plants more efficiently. We're going to make sure that we redouble our efforts to reduce our carbon emissions, and we're setting a goal to meet the agreements that we had both in Copenhagen and in Durban for advanced countries that have a big carbon footprint.

But let me make one last point: The United States cannot do it by itself. And the biggest emitter of carbon right now is China. They still have a much lower carbon footprint per person than the United States, but because they have so many people, it's going up rapidly. And Chinese leaders understand this. The same thing that's sending all the carbon into the atmosphere is also making it difficult to breathe in Beijing. So they recognize, they've got to come up with a new development model. India is going to have to come up with new development models—Africa.

We're going to all have to work together to find ways in which collectively, we reduce carbon, but we make sure that there's some differentiation so that countries that are very wealthy are expected to do more and countries that are still developing, obviously, they shouldn't be resigned to poverty simply because the West and Europe and America got there first. That wouldn't be fair. But everybody is going to have to do something. Everybody is going to have to make some important choices here. And I expect that it's going to be your generation that helps lead this, because if we don't, it's going to be your generation that suffers the most.

Ultimately, if you think about all the youth that everybody has mentioned here in Africa, if everybody is raising living standards to the point where everybody has got a car and everybody has got air conditioning and everybody has got a big house, well, the planet will boil over, unless we find new ways of producing energy. And tomorrow, or the next day, when I visit Tanzania, I'm actually going to be going to a power plant to focus on the need for electrification, but the need to do it in an environmentally sound way.

So let me just close by saying this has been an unbelievable conversation. I had a lot of faith in all of you before I came here; now I have even more faith in you. You guys are all going to do great things. I'll be retired by the time you do them, and so I'll just sit back and watch—[*laughter*]—and I'll be proud of you. But what I promise you is that the United States Government and the American people are going to want to be your partner for the duration of your careers. And I hope all of you, again, apply for the Young African Leaders Initiative. We want to hear from you about how we can work even more effectively with this great continent, because we see a bright future ahead.

I hope you've enjoyed it. Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:48 p.m. at the University of Johannesburg, Soweto Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Emeritus Desmond M. Tutu of Cape Town, South Africa; and Nimna Diayté, president, Saloum Federation of Corn Producers. The questioner from Nairobi, Kenya, referred to President Uhuru Kenyatta and Deputy President William Ruto of Kenya.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Jacob Zuma of South Africa in Pretoria, South Africa
June 29, 2013

President Obama. Well, good evening, everyone. President Zuma, Madam Zuma, distinguished guests: Thank you for your incredible hospitality. When I was last here, as a Senator, my entourage was a little smaller. [*Laughter*] By that I mean no entourage. [*Laughter*] The Speaker just helpfully showed me a photograph of me and him from that first visit and pointed out that I had no gray hair in the photo—[*laughter*]—and that the years had taken their toll.

I also want to thank President Zuma's staff for making my staff feel much better, because this is not the first time that a President has come to the podium without notes—[*laughter*]—that were supposed to be there. And they are greatly relieved that that does not only happen to them. [*Laughter*]

Traveling to South Africa the first time was different because part of the thing about not having an entourage is it meant I could go take walks on the streets of Johannesburg and Soweto and Cape Town. And that's how you truly get to appreciate a country: the small interactions with shopkeepers or people who are willing to give you some directions. And I've never forgotten the beauty of this country, the warmth of its people. And tonight I am reminded of that again, and Michelle and I can't thank you enough.

I will not speak long. I have spoken enough today; I know Michelle heartily agrees.

[*Laughter*] I will be giving another speech tomorrow about what this nation represents to me and about the future that I believe that we can build together.

I'm told that there's a word, a concept that has come to define the way many South Africans see themselves and each other. And I'm not sure it translates easily into English. But it's the recognition that, here on Earth, we're bound together in ways that are sometimes invisible to the eye; that there's a basic oneness to our humanity. It's the belief that we can only achieve true excellence and our full potential by sharing ourselves with each other, by caring for those around us. I believe that you call it *ubuntu.*

And we feel that spirit tonight. We feel it in the lives of all those, including President Zuma, who endured the prisons and the beatings to end an unjust system so that we might stand here today in a free South Africa. And to President Zuma and to all of you who participated in that struggle, the world will always remember your sacrifice. It's a sacrifice that resonated in the United States in the same way that the U.S. civil rights movement helped to create bonds of solidarity with those in South Africa who were seeking their freedom.

We feel that spirit in the bonds between our two peoples that I think are unique in human history. I would not be here were it not for those freedom fighters, and I certainly would not be here if people weren't willing to fight for the principles that both our countries hold dear.

Now, America's founding principles—our belief that "all men are created equal"—which would find expression in your Freedom Charter, which declared that this nation "belongs to all who live in it, Black and White," with all people "enjoying equal rights and opportunities." In time, the tables turned. Just as I believe that many South Africans were inspired by people like Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy, we drew inspiration from your struggle. And your success reminded us that all things were possible, including the improbable idea that a son of an African man might even become an American President.

And we feel that spirit—*ubuntu*—tonight because, we must admit, our minds and our hearts are not fully here because a piece of us, a piece of our heart is with a man and a family who is not far away from here. Much has been said about Madiba today. More will be said in the years to come. This evening I'd simply like to close with the words that he turned to so often himself, in that cell, the poem he read to the others in their darkest moments to give them strength:

> Out of the night that covers me,
> Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
> I thank whatever gods may be
> For my unconquerable soul.
>
> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced nor cried aloud.
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed.
>
> Beyond this place of wrath and tears
> Looms but the Horror of the shade,
> And yet the menace of the years
> Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
>
> It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate:
> I am the captain of my soul.

And so I propose a toast: To a man who has always been a master of his fate, who taught us that we could be the master of ours; to a proud nation and South Africa's unconquerable soul; and to President Zuma and Madam Zuma for their outstanding leadership in carrying on the great traditions of the South African struggle. *Pula!*

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:05 p.m. at the Union Building. In his remarks, he referred to Thobeka S. Zuma-Madiba, wife of President Jacob Zuma of South Africa; and Speaker of the National Assembly Max Sisulu of South Africa.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion at the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation Youth Center in Cape Town, South Africa
June 30, 2013

The President. It is a great pleasure to be here at the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation Youth Center. It is appropriately named after somebody who has done heroic work, not only on behalf of peace and justice and the ending of apartheid, but also who, very early on, took on the challenge of HIV/AIDS here in South Africa and around the world. And so I'm so proud to be with my friend again and——

Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town Desmond M. Tutu. Thank you.

The President. ——an unrelenting champion of justice and human dignity.

South Africa obviously has faced a heavy burden from HIV as well as other diseases, tuberculosis, most recently. But the great news is that South Africa is now leading the way in caring for its citizens, in paving the way for a brighter future for the South African people and their families, and I am very proud the United States has been such a terrific partner on this issue.

I was hearing stories from all these incredible folks, some of whom are counselors and outreach workers, some of whom have struggled with HIV/AIDS themselves. And the great news is that, in part because of leadership from people like Archbishop Tutu, but also because of the great work of nurses like Sister Iris, or young people like Mbulelo, and wonderful counselors like Lindiwe, what we've seen is a reduction of the stigma around testing on HIV/AIDS, greater education around prevention. And what we've seen is treatment that allows people to manage HIV and live long and productive lives.

And a lot of that has to do with the terrific work of the South African people, but the United States has really done wonderful work through the PEPFAR program, started under my predecessor, President Bush, and continued through our administration. We've seen more than $3.7 billion in supporting South Africa's efforts to combat HIV and AIDS.

Together, we're investing in building South Africa's capacity to manage a national response to HIV/AIDS. South African Government is showing leadership up and down the line, and the Health Minister here has talked about all the initiatives that are taking place. And this center is a wonderful example of that transition. It's moving from receiving U.S. Government support through PEPFAR to now independent funding that continues to secure the health and success of Africa's next generation.

And part of what makes this center so successful is it combines not just health advice and testing and counseling, but it also provides educational opportunities, sports activities, recreational activities so that young people are able to come here without the fear of stigma or potentially running into their parents; and getting honest, smart advice about what they need to do to keep themselves healthy and to ensure that they are not infected by HIV/AIDS.

So because of the wonderful work that's being done on the ground, because of the partnership between the United States and South Africa—a model, by the way, that has been duplicated across the continent—we have the possibility of achieving an AIDS-free generation, achieving an AIDS-free generation and making sure that everybody in our human family is able to enjoy their lives and raise families and succeed and maintain their health, here in Africa and around the world.

So I just want to say thank you to all of you for sharing your stories with me. I want to give a special thanks to Ambassador Eric Goosby, who doesn't always get a lot of attention, but has been an outstanding leader on behalf of our global AIDS efforts. And if it weren't for people like Eric, as well as the people around this room, we'd be far, far behind, and a lot more people would be suffering tragedy. So thank you all.

And Archbishop Desmond Tutu needs to say something, because his picture is over

there. [*Laughter*] His name is on the project. I think it's fair to say that——

Archbishop Tutu. Yes, I should have said this earlier but then I—anytime is okay. It is a very great honor to have—to welcome the President of the United States, even at such a somber time for us South Africans.

It is a special joy to welcome the President to Africa, the continent of his forbearers, the cradle of humanity. I don't have to compete against your beautiful Michelle doing pushups in public. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, when you became the first Black incumbent of the White House, you don't know what you did for our psyches. My wife sat in front of the TV with tears running down her face as she watched the celebrations in Chicago. You won. And we won. And you repeated the feat when the odds were stacked against you. So welcome home, even if you're about to go. [*Laughter*]

Thank you and the American people. You've heard everyone here thanking you so much for the contribution that the PEPFAR fund has made in our struggle against TB, HIV, and AIDS and malaria, not just here, but in other parts of Africa. Our center, as you have heard, is run by the HIV center of the university where you are going just now. You have funded us. You funded funding a center in the University of Stellenbosch TB Center. And we have just rejoiced to hear that the HIV infections in infants has dropped by a whopping 63 percent, in very large measure due to the financial support that we have received from yourselves. So thank you.

As you have been here before—I mean Africa—you have heard us speak of something called *ubuntu*, and we've said a person is a person to other persons. Your success is our success. Your failure, whether you like it or not, is our failure.

And so we want to assure you that we pray for you to be a great success. We want you to be known as having brought peace to the world, especially to have brought an end to the anguish of all in the Middle East. We pray that you will be known as having brought peace in all of these places where there is strife. You will have brought peace and no need for a Guantanamo Bay detention center. You'll have brought peace, and we won't be weeping as we do for the anguish of our sisters and brothers in the Middle East. We are bound to you. You belong to us. And your victory is our victory.

So thank you.

The President. Thank you. Love you. Come on, give me a hug. Thank you.

[*At this point, the President hugged Archbishop Tutu.*]

The President. All the respect. Keep praying. I'll always need prayer. All right? Thank you everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lindiwe Mvandaba, HIV lay counselor, Desmond Tutu TB Centre-Etafeni; former President George W. Bush; and Minister of Health Pakishe Aaron Motsoaledi of South Africa. Archbishop Tutu referred to his wife Nomalizo L. Tutu.

Remarks at the University of Cape Town in Cape Town
June 30, 2013

The President. Thank you. Please, please, everybody, have a seat. Hello, Cape Town!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Thobela. Molweni. Sanibona. Dumelang. Ndaa. Reperile.

Audience members. Reperile!

The President. See, I've been practicing. *How-zit?* Did I leave anybody out? All right, I didn't want to leave anybody out here.

I want to thank Vice Chancellor Max Price, who's here, and—as well as Archbishop Njongonkulu. It's wonderful to have them in attendance.

I am so happy to be here today. It is wonderful to see all of these outstanding young

people. I just had the honor of going to Robben Island with Michelle and our two daughters this afternoon. And this was my second time; I'd had the chance to visit back in 2006. But there was something different about bringing my children. And Malia is now 15, Sasha is 12, and seeing them stand within the walls that once surrounded Nelson Mandela, I knew this was an experience that they would never forget. I knew that they now appreciated, a little bit more, the sacrifices that Madiba and others had made for freedom.

But what I also know is, is that because they've had a chance to visit South Africa for a second time now, they also understand that Mandela's spirit could never be imprisoned, because his legacy is here for all to see. It's in this auditorium: young people, Black, White, Indian, everything in between—[*laughter*]—living and learning together in a South Africa that is free and at peace.

Obviously, today Madiba's health weighs heavily on our hearts. And like billions all over the world, I—and the American people—have drawn strength from the example of this extraordinary leader and the nation that he changed. Nelson Mandela showed us that one man's courage can move the world. And he calls on us to make choices that reflect not our fears, but our hopes: in our own lives and in the lives of our communities and our countries. And that's what I want to speak to all of you about today.

Some of you may be aware of this, but I actually took my first step into political life because of South Africa. This is true. I was the same age as some of you, 19 years old, my whole life ahead of me. I was going to school on a campus in California, not quite as pretty as this one, but similar. And I must confess, I was not always focused on my studies. [*Laughter*] There were a lot of distractions. [*Laughter*] And I enjoyed those distractions.

And as the son of an African father and a White American mother, the diversity of America was in my blood, but I had never cared much for politics. I didn't think it mattered to me. I didn't think I could make a difference. And like many young people, I thought that cynicism—a certain ironic detachment—was a sign of wisdom and sophistication.

But then, I learned what was happening here in South Africa. And two young men—ANC representatives—came to our college and spoke, and I spent time hearing their stories. And I learned about the courage of those who waged the Defiance Campaign and the brutality leveled against innocent men, women, and children from Sharpseville to Soweto. And I studied the leadership of Luthuli and the words of Biko and the example of Madiba, and I knew that while brave people were imprisoned just off these shores on Robben Island, my own Government in the United States was not standing on their side. And that's why I got involved in what was known as the divestment movement in the United States.

It was the first time I ever attached myself to a cause. It was the first time, also, that I ever gave a speech. It was only 2 minutes long—[*laughter*]—and I was really just a warmup act at a rally that we were holding demanding that our college divest from apartheid South Africa. So I got up on stage, I started making my speech, and then, as a bit of political theater, some people came out with glasses that looked like security officers and they dragged me off the stage. [*Laughter*] Fortunately, there are no records of this speech. [*Laughter*] But I remember struggling to express the anger and the passion that I was feeling and to echo, in some small way, the moral clarity of freedom fighters an ocean away.

And I'll be honest with you, when I was done, I did not think that I'd made any difference; I was even a little embarrassed. And I thought to myself, what's a bunch of university kids doing in California that is somehow going to make a difference? It felt too distant from what people were going through in places like Soweto. But looking back, as I look at that 19-year-old young man, I'm more forgiving of the fact that the speech might not have been that great, because I knew—I know now that something inside me was stirring at the time, something important. And that was the belief that I could be part of something bigger than myself;

that my own salvation was bound up with those of others.

That's what Bobby Kennedy expressed, far better than I ever could, when he spoke here at the University of Cape Town in 1966. He said, "Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Now, the world was very different on that June day in 1966 when Bobby Kennedy spoke those words: Mandela faced many more years as a prisoner; apartheid was entrenched in this land. In the United States, the victories of the civil rights movement were still uncertain. In fact, on the very day that Kennedy spoke here, the American civil rights leader James Meredith was shot in Mississippi, where he was marching to inspire Blacks to register to vote.

Those were difficult, troubled, trying times. The idea of hope might have seemed misplaced. It would have seemed inconceivable to people at that time that less than 50 years later, an African American President might address an integrated audience at South Africa's oldest university and that this same university would have conferred an honorary degree to a President, Nelson Mandela. It would have seemed impossible.

That's the power that comes from acting on our ideals. That's what Mandela understood. But it wasn't just the giants of history who brought about this change. Think of the many millions of acts of conscience that were part of that effort. Think about how many voices were raised against injustice over the years: in this country, in the United States, around the world. Think of how many times ordinary people pushed against those walls of oppression and resistance and the violence and the indignities that they suffered, the quiet courage that they sustained. Think of how many ripples of hope it took to build a wave that would eventually come crashing down like a mighty stream.

So Mandela's life, like Kennedy's life, like Gandhi's life, like the life of all those who fought to bring about a new South Africa or a more just America, they stand as a challenge to me, but more importantly, they stand as a challenge to your generation, because they tell you that your voice matters: Your ideals, your willingness to act on those ideals, your choices can make a difference. And if there's any country in the world that shows the power of human beings to affect change, this is the one. You've shown us how a prisoner can become a President. You've shown us how bitter adversaries can reconcile. You've confronted crimes of hatred and intolerance with truth and love, and you wrote into your Constitution the human rights that sustain freedom.

And those are only the most publicized aspects of South Africa's transformation, because alongside South Africa's political struggle, other battles have been waged as well to improve the lives of those who, for far too long, have been denied economic opportunity and social justice.

During my last journey here in 2006, what impressed me so much was the good works of people on the ground teaching children, caring for the sick, bringing jobs to those in need. In Khayelitsha Township—I'm still working on some of these—[*laughter*]—I met women who were living with HIV. And this is at a time back in 2006, where there were still some challenges in terms of the policies around HIV and AIDS here in South Africa. But they were on the ground, struggling to keep their families together, helping each other, working on behalf of each other. In Soweto, I met people who were striving to carry forward the legacy of Hector Pieterson. At the Rosa Parks Library in Pretoria, I was struck by the energy of students who—they wanted to capture this moment of promise for South Africa.

And this is a moment of great promise. South Africa is one of the world's economic centers. Obviously, you can see it here in Cape Town. In the country that saw the first human heart transplant, new breakthroughs are being made in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. I was just talking to your vice chancellor. People come to

this university from over 100 countries to study and teach. In America, we see the reach of your culture, from Freshlyground's concerts to the—we've got the Nando's just a couple of blocks from the White House. [*Laughter*] And thanks to the first World Cup ever held on this continent, the world now knows the sound of the vuvuzela. I'm not sure that's, like, the greatest gift that South Africa ever gave. [*Laughter*] But it—[*laughter*]—but progress has also rippled across the African Continent. From Senegal to Côte d'Ivoire to Malawi, democracy has weathered strong challenges.

Many of the fastest growing economies in the world are here in Africa, where there is a historic shift taking place from poverty to a growing, nascent middle class. Fewer people are dying of preventable disease. More people have access to health care. More farmers are getting their products to market at fair prices. From microfinance projects in Kampala to stock traders in Lagos to cell phone entrepreneurs in Nairobi, there is an energy here that can't be denied: Africa rising.

We know this progress, though, rests on a fragile foundation. We know that progress is uneven. Across Africa, the same institutions that should be the backbone of democracy can all too often be infected with the rot of corruption. The same technology that enables record profits sometimes means widening a canyon of inequality. The same interconnection that binds our fates makes all of Africa vulnerable to the undertow of conflict.

So there is no question that Africa is on the move, but it's not moving fast enough for the child still languishing in poverty in forgotten townships. It's not moving fast enough for the protester who is beaten in Harare or the woman who is raped in Eastern Congo. We've got more work to do, because these Africans must not be left behind.

And that's where all of you come in, the young people of Africa. Just like previous generations, you've got choices to make. You get to decide where the future lies. Think about it: Over 60 percent of Africans are under 35 years old, so demographics means young people are going to be determining the fate of this continent and this country. You've got time and numbers on your side, and you'll be making decisions long after politicians like me have left the scene.

And I can promise you this: The world will be watching what decisions you make. The world will be watching what you do. Because one of the wonderful things that's happening is, where people used to only see suffering and conflict in Africa, suddenly, now they're seeing opportunity: for resources, for investment, for partnership, for influence. Governments and businesses from around the world are sizing up the continent, and they're making decisions themselves about where to invest their own time and their own energy. And as I said yesterday at a town hall meeting up in Johannesburg, that's a good thing. We want all countries—China, India, Brazil, Turkey, Europe, America—we want everybody paying attention to what's going on here, because it speaks to your progress.

And I've traveled to Africa on this trip because my bet is on the young people who are the heartbeat of Africa's story. I'm betting on all of you. As President of the United States, I believe that my own Nation will benefit enormously if you reach your full potential.

If prosperity is broadly shared here in Africa, that middle class will be an enormous market for our goods. If strong democracies take root, that will enable our people and businesses to draw closer to yours. If peace prevails over war, we will all be more secure. And if the dignity of the individual is upheld across Africa, then I believe Americans will be more free as well, because I believe that none of us are fully free when others in the human family remain shackled by poverty or disease or oppression.

Now, America has been involved in Africa for decades. But we are moving beyond the simple provision of assistance, foreign aid, to a new model of partnership between America and Africa: a partnership of equals that focuses on your capacity to solve problems and your capacity to grow. Our efforts focus on three areas that shape our lives: opportunity, democracy, and peace.

So, first off, we want a partnership that empowers Africans to access greater opportunity in their own lives, in their communities, and for their countries.

As the largest economy on the continent, South Africa is part of a trend that extends from south to north, east to west: More and more African economies are poised to take off. And increased trade and investment from the United States has the potential to accelerate these trends, creating new jobs and opportunities on both sides of the Atlantic.

So I'm calling for America to up our game when it comes to Africa. We're bringing together business leaders from America and Africa to deepen our engagement. We're going to launch new trade missions and promote investment from companies back home. We'll launch an effort in Addis to renew the African Growth and Opportunity Act to break down barriers to trade, and tomorrow I'll discuss a new Trade Africa initiative to expand our ties across the continent, because we want to unleash the power of entrepreneurship and markets to create opportunity here in Africa.

It was interesting, yesterday at the town hall meeting, I had with a number of young people, first three questions had to do with trade, because there was a recognition—these young people said, I want to start a—I want to start something. I want to build something, and then I want to sell something. Now, to succeed, these efforts have to connect to something bigger.

And for America, this isn't just about numbers on a balance sheet or the resources that can be taken out of the ground. We believe that societies and economies only advance as far as individuals are free to carry them forward. And just as freedom cannot exist when people are imprisoned for their political views, true opportunity cannot exist when people are imprisoned by sickness or hunger or darkness.

And so the question we've been asking ourselves is, what will it take to empower individual Africans?

For one thing, we believe that countries have to have the power to feed themselves, so instead of shipping food to Africa, we're now helping millions of small farmers in Africa make use of new technologies and farm more land. And through a new alliance of governments and the private sector, we're investing billions of dollars in agriculture that grows more crops, brings more food to market, gives farmers better prices, and helps lift 50 million people out of poverty in a decade. An end to famine, a thriving African agricultural industry, that's what opportunity looks like. That's what we want to build with you.

We believe that countries have to have the power to prevent illness and care for the sick. And our efforts to combat malaria and tropical illness can lead to an achievable goal: ending child and maternal deaths from preventable disease. Already, our commitment to fight HIV/AIDS has saved millions and allows us to imagine what was once unthinkable: an AIDS-free generation. And while America will continue to provide billions of dollars in support, we can't make progress without African partners. So I'm proud that by the end of my Presidency, South Africa has determined it will be the first African country to fully manage its HIV care and treatment program. That's an enormous achievement. Healthy mothers, healthy children, strong public health systems, that's what opportunity looks like.

And we believe that nations must have the power to connect their people to the promise of the 21st century. Access to electricity is fundamental to opportunity in this age. It's the light that children study by, the energy that allows an idea to be transformed into a real business. It's the lifeline for families to meet their most basic needs. And it's the connection that's needed to plug Africa into the grid of the global economy. You've got to have power. And yet two-thirds of the population in sub-Saharan Africa lacks access to power, and the percentage is much higher for those who don't live in the cities.

So today I am proud to announce a new initiative. We've been dealing with agriculture, we've been dealing with health. Now we're going to talk about power: Power Africa, a new initiative that will double access to power in sub-Saharan Africa—double it. We're going to

start by investing $7 billion in U.S. Government resources. We're going to partner with the private sector, who themselves have committed more than $9 billion in investment. And in partnership with African nations, we're going to develop new sources of energy. We'll reach more households not just in cities, but in villages and on farms. We'll expand access for those who live currently off the power grid. And we'll support clean energy to protect our planet and combat climate change. So a light where currently there is darkness, the energy needed to lift people out of poverty, that's what opportunity looks like.

So this is America's vision: a partnership with Africa that unleashes growth and the potential of every citizen, not just a few at the very top. And this is achievable. There's nothing that I've outlined that cannot happen. But history tells us that true progress is only possible where governments exist to serve their people and not the other way around.

If anyone wants to see the difference between freedom and tyranny, let them come here, to South Africa. Here, citizens braved bullets and beatings to claim that most basic right: the ability to be free, to determine your own fate, in your own land. And Madiba's example extended far beyond that victory. Now, I mentioned yesterday at the town hall, like America's first President, George Washington, he understood that democracy can only endure when it's bigger than just one person. So his willingness to leave power was as profound as his ability to claim power.

The good news is that this example is getting attention across the continent. We see it in free and fair elections from Ghana to Zambia. We hear it in the voices of civil society. I was in Senegal and met with some civil society groups, including a group called Y'en Marre, which meant "fed up"—[*laughter*]—that helped to defend the will of the people after elections in Senegal. We recognize it in places like Tanzania, where text messages connect citizens to their representatives. And we strengthen it when organizations stand up for democratic principles, like ECOWAS did in Côte d'Ivoire.

But this work is not complete. We all know that. Not in those countries where leaders enrich themselves with impunity. Not in communities where you can't start a business or go to school or get a house without paying a bribe to somebody. These things have to change. And they have to change not just because such corruption is immoral, but it's also a matter of self-interest and economics. Governments that respect the rights of their citizens and abide by the rule of law: do better, grow faster, draw more investment than those who don't. That's just a fact.

Just look at your neighbor Zimbabwe where the promise of liberation gave way to the corruption of power and then the collapse of the economy. Now, after the leaders of this region, led by South Africa, brokered an end to what has been a long-running crisis, Zimbabweans have a new Constitution, the economy is beginning to recover. So there is an opportunity to move forward, but only if there is an election that is free and fair and peaceful, so that Zimbabweans can determine their future without fear of intimidation and retribution. And after elections, there must be respect for the universal rights upon which democracy depends.

These are things that America stands for, not perfectly, but that's what we stand for, that's what my administration stands for. We don't tell people who their leaders should be, but we do stand up with those who support the principles that lead to a better life. And that's why we're interested in investing not in strongmen, but in strong institutions: independent judiciaries that can enforce the rule of law, honest police forces that can protect the people's interests instead of their own, an open government that can bring transparency and accountability. And yes, that's why we stand up for civil society—for journalists and NGOs and community organizers and activists—who give people a voice. That's why we support societies that empower women, because no country will reach its potential unless it draws on the talents of our wives and our mothers and our sisters and our daughters.

Just to editorialize here for a second, because my father's home country of Kenya—like much of Africa—you see women doing work and not getting respect. And I tell you, you can measure how well a country does by how it treats its women. And all across this continent, and all around the world, we've got more work to do on that front.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We've got some sisters saying, "Amen." [*Laughter*]

Now, I know that there are some in Africa who hear me say these things, who see America's support for these values, and say that's intrusive. Why are you meddling? I know there are those who argue that ideas like democracy and transparency are somehow Western exports. I disagree. Those in power who make those arguments are usually trying to distract people from their own abuses. Sometimes, they are the same people who, behind closed doors, are willing to sell out their own country's resource to foreign interests, just so long as they get a cut. [*Laughter*] I'm just telling the truth.

Now, ultimately, I believe that Africans should make up their own minds about what serves African interests. We trust your judgment, the judgment of ordinary people. We believe that when you control your destiny, if you've got a handle on your governments, then governments will promote freedom and opportunity, because that will serve you. And it shouldn't just be America that stands up for democracy, it should be Africans as well. So here in South Africa, your democratic story has inspired the world. And through the power of your example, and through your position in organizations like SADC and the African Union, you can be a voice for the human progress that you've written into your own Constitution. You shouldn't assume that that's unique to South Africa. People have aspirations like that everywhere.

And this brings me to the final area where our partnership can empower people: the pursuit and protection of peace in Africa. So long as parts of Africa continue to be ravaged by war and mayhem, opportunity and democracy cannot take root. Across the continent, there are places where, too often, fear prevails. From Mali to Mogadishu, senseless terrorism all too often perverts the meaning of Islam—one of the world's great religions—and takes the lives of countless innocent Africans. From Congo to Sudan, conflicts fester, robbing men and women and children of the lives that they deserve. In too many countries, the actions of thugs and warlords and drug cartels and human traffickers hold back the promise of Africa, enslaving others for their own purposes.

Now, America cannot put a stop to these tragedies alone, and you don't expect us to. That's a job for Africans. But we can help, and we will help. I know there's a lot of talk of America's military presence in Africa. But if you look at what we're actually doing, time and again, we're putting muscle behind African efforts. That's what we're doing in the Sahel, where the nations of West Africa have stepped forward to keep the peace as Mali now begins to rebuild. That's what we're doing in Central Africa, where a coalition of countries is closing the space where the Lord's Resistance Army can operate. That's what we're doing in Somalia, where an African Union force, AMISOM, is helping a new Government to stand on its own two feet.

These efforts have to lead to lasting peace, not just words on a paper or promises that fade away. Peace between and within Sudan and South Sudan, so that these governments get on with the work of investing in their deeply impoverished peoples. Peace in the Congo, with nations keeping their commitments, so rights are at last claimed by the people of this war-torn country and women and children no longer live in fear.

Audience member. That's my country—[*laughter*].

The President. Absolutely.

Peace in Mali, where people will make their voices heard in new elections this summer. In each of these cases, Africa must lead and America will help. And America will make no apology for supporting African efforts to end conflict and stand up for human dignity.

You know, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the OAU, now the African Union; an occasion that is more historic because the AU is taking on these challenges. And I want America to take our engagement not just on security issues, but on environmental issues and economic issues and social issues, educational issues, I want to take that engagement to a whole new level. So I'm proud to announce that next year, I'm going to invite heads of state from across sub-Saharan Africa to a summit in the United States to help launch a new chapter in U.S.-African relations. And as I mentioned yesterday, I'm also going to hold a summit with the next class of our Young African Leaders Initiative, because we want to engage leaders and tomorrow's leaders in figuring out how we can best work together.

So let me close by saying this: Governments matter; political leadership matters. And I do hope that some of you here today decide to follow the path of public service. It can sometimes be thankless, but I believe it is—can also be a noble life. But we also have to recognize that the choices we make are not limited to the policies and programs of government. Peace and prosperity in Africa and around the world also depends on the attitudes of people.

Too often, the source of tragedy, the source of conflict involves the choices ordinary people make that divide us from one another: Black from White, Christian from Muslim, tribe from tribe. Africa contains a multitude of identities, but the nations and people of Africa will not fulfill their promise so long as some use these identities to justify subjugation, an excuse to steal or kill or disenfranchise others.

And ultimately, that's the most important lesson that the world learned right here in South Africa. Mandela once wrote: "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

I believe that to be true. I believe that's always been true, from the dawn of the first man to the youth today, and all that came in between here in Africa: kingdoms come and gone; the crucible of slavery and the emergence from colonialism; senseless war, but also iconic movements for social justice; squandered wealth, but also soaring promise.

Madiba's words give us a compass in a sea of change, firm ground amidst swirling currents. We always have the opportunity to choose our better history. We can always understand that most important decision: the decision we make when we find our common humanity in one another. That's always available to us, that choice.

And I've seen that spirit in the welcoming smiles of children on Goree Island and the children of Mombasa on Kenya's Indian Ocean coast. That spirit exists in the mother in the Sahel who wants a life of dignity for her daughters and in the South African student who braves danger and distance just to get to school. It can be heard in the songs that rise from villages and city streets, and it can be heard in the confident voices of young people like you.

It is that spirit—that innate longing for justice and equality, for freedom and solidarity—that's the spirit that can light the way forward. It's in you. And as you guide Africa down that long and difficult road, I want you to know that you will always find the extended hand of a friend in the United States of America.

Thank you very much. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:14 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Max Price, vice chancellor, University of Cape Town; and former Archbishop Winston Hugh Njongonkulu Ndungane of Cape Town, South Africa. He also referred to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

January 1

The White House announced that the President will travel to Honolulu, HI, in the evening.

In the evening, the President traveled to Honolulu, HI, arriving the following morning.

January 2

In the morning, upon arrival at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, HI, the President traveled to Kailua, HI, where he had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Christopher J. Christie of New Jersey and Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York to discuss Congressional action on the Hurricane Sandy supplemental request.

In the afternoon, the President signed H.R. 8, the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012.

During the day, the President had an intelligence briefing. He also signed H.R. 4310, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013.

January 3

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with House Majority Leader Eric I. Cantor and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to extend his welcome to all Members of the 113th Congress.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to congratulate them on being redesignated to lead their respective parties in the House.

During the day, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of John Dramani Mahama as President of Ghana in Accra, Ghana, on January 7:

Daniel W. Yohannes (head of delegation);
Gene A. Cretz;
Johnnie Carson; and
Donald G. Teitelbaum.

The President announced the renomination of Robert E. Bacharach to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit.

The President announced the renomination of Caitlin J. Halligan and Srikanth Srinivasan to be judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

The President announced the renomination of William J. Kayatta, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

The President announced the renomination of Jill A. Pryor to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

The President announced the renomination of Patty Shwartz to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

The President announced the renomination of Richard G. Taranto to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

The President announced the renomination of Elissa F. Cadish to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada.

The President announced the renomination of Valerie E. Caproni and Analisa Torres to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

The President announced the renomination of Sheri Polster Chappell to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

The President announced the renomination of Pamela Ki Mai Chen to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

The President announced the renomination of Brian J. Davis to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

The President announced the renomination of Rachelle L. "Shelly" Deckert Dick to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana.

The President announced the renomination of Jennifer A. Dorsey and Andrew P. Gordon to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada.

The President announced the renomination of Katherine Polk Failla to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

The President announced the renomination of Kenneth J. Gonzales to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico.

The President announced the renomination of Ketanji Brown Jackson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The President announced the renomination of Rosemary Márquez to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona.

The President announced the renomination of Michael J. McShane to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon.

The President announced the renomination of Raymond P. Moore to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado.

The President announced the renomination of Troy L. Nunley to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California.

The President announced the renomination of Beverly Reid O'Connell to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

The President announced the renomination of William H. Orrick III to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

The President announced the renomination of Nitza I. Quiñones Alejandro, Luis F. Restrepo, and Jeffrey L. Schmehl to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

The President announced the renomination of Nelson S. Román to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

The President announced the renomination of William L. Thomas to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

The President announced the renomination of Derrick K. Watson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii.

The President announced the renomination of Mark A. Barnett and Claire R. Kelly to be judges on the U.S. Court of International Trade.

The President declared a major disaster in Ohio and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding due to the remnants of Hurricane Sandy on October 29 and 30, 2012.

January 4

During the day, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will return to Washington, DC, on January 5.

January 5

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with former Sen. Charles T. Hagel to discuss his nomination to be Secretary of Defense.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

January 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to the White House on January 11.

January 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

January 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Family Theater, he hosted a screening of NBC's "1600 Penn" program for castmembers and crew.

January 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Nicholas L. Saban of the University of Alabama football team to congratulate him and his team on winning the BCS Championship.

During the day, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with his senior advisers.

The President declared a major disaster in Pennsylvania and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area affected by Hurricane Sandy from October 26 through November 8, 2012.

January 11

In the morning, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an expanded bilateral meeting with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Then, in the Oval Office, he had a restricted bilateral meeting with President Karzai.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch with President Karzai.

The White House announced that the President will award the Medal of Honor to S. Sgt. Clinton L. Romesha, USA, on February 11.

January 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S.: Ryszard Marian Schnepf of Poland, Kenichiro Sasae of Japan, Palan Mulonda of Zambia, Altangerel Bulgaa of Mongolia, Kairat Umarov of Kazakhstan, Fernando Antonio Pfannl Caballero of Paraguay, Aunese Makoi Simati of Tuvalu, Ahmed Sareer of Maldives, and Eduardo Medina Mora Icaza of Mexico.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Minister of Interior Muhammad bin Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to discuss Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations, congratulate him on his appointment as Minister of Interior, and convey his greetings to King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud. Also during the day, in the Cabinet Room, he and Vice President Biden met to discuss proposals to reduce gun violence.

January 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

January 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

January 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he dropped by a meeting between Deputy National Security Adviser Denis R. McDonough and President Hassan Sheikh Mahamud of Somalia.

In the afternoon, the President visited the headquarters of the Presidential Inaugural Committee to thank the staff for its hard work.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the hostage situation in Algeria, the situation in Mali, and United Kingdom-U.S. relations.

January 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Obama hosted a "Benefactors' Brunch" for supporters of the Obama 2012 reelection campaign.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a reception for supporters of the reelection campaign.

January 20

In the morning, the President and Vice President Joe Biden traveled to Arlington, VA, where they participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the morning, in the Blue Room, the President took the oath of office at the official swearing-in ceremony. Mrs. Obama and their daughters Malia and Sasha attended the ceremony, and the oath was administered by Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts, Jr.

January 21

In the morning, at St. John's Episcopal Church, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha attended a church service with Vice President Joe Biden and his wife Jill T. Biden. Then, they returned to the White House. Later, they traveled to the U.S. Capitol.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, Vice President Biden, and Mrs. Biden attended the Inaugural Parade.

In the evening, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the President, Mrs. Obama, Vice President Biden, and Mrs. Biden attended the Inaugural Ball.

January 22

In the morning, at the National Cathedral, the President and Mrs. Obama attended a national prayer service with Vice President Joe Biden and his wife Jill T. Biden.

During the day, in the Blue Room, the President and Mrs. Obama greeted visitors during an Inaugural open house.

January 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2012 National Basketball Association champion Miami Heat to the White House on January 28.

January 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

January 25

In the morning, the President met with leaders of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to discuss immigration reform.

During the day, the President met with his senior advisers. Also during the day, he had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to discuss the situations in Mali, Algeria, Libya, and Syria.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Las Vegas, NV, on January 28.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the National Council on the Humanities:

Gerald L. Early;
Patricia Nelson Limerick;
Shelly C. Lowe;
Daniel I. Okimoto; and
Katherine H. Tachau.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Council on Disability:

Chester A. Finn;
Jonathan F. Kuniholm;
Jeff Rosen;
Lynnae M. Ruttledge; and
Alice Wong.

The President announced the appointment of Denis R. McDonough as White House Chief of Staff.

The President announced the appointment of Robert L. Nabors II as Assistant to the President and Deputy White House Chief of Staff for Policy.

The President announced the appointment of Antony J. Blinken as Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser.

The President announced the appointment of Danielle C. Gray as Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary.

The President announced the appointment of Katy A. Kale as Assistant to the President for Management and Administration.

The President announced the appointment of Lisa O. Monaco as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism and Deputy National Security Adviser.

The President announced the appointment of Jennifer M. Palmieri as Assistant to the President and Communications Director.

The President announced the appointment of H. Daniel Pfeiffer as Assistant to the President and Senior Adviser.

The President announced the appointment of Miguel E. Rodriguez as Assistant to the President and Director of Legislative Affairs.

The President announced the appointment of David Simas as Assistant to the President and Deputy Senior Adviser for Communications and Strategy.

January 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to congratulate him on his party's success in the recent parliamentary election and to discuss Israel-U.S. relations. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with of the Boys and Girls Club of America Youth of the Year finalists.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the opening ceremony of the 10th Special Olympics World Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, on January 29:

Thomas J. Vilsack (head of delegation);
Sung Kim;
Judith E. Heumann; and
Julie Petty.

January 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with young people from the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Then, he traveled to Las Vegas, NV.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm on December 25 and 26, 2012.

January 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had lunch. Later, in the Library, he participated in separate television interviews with Jose Diaz-Balart of Telemundo and Maria Elena Salinas of Univision.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy to the White House on February 15.

The White House announced that the President will award the 2011 National Medal of Science and the National Medal of Technology

and Innovation at the White House on February 1.

January 31

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Minneapolis, MN, on February 4.

The President announced the nomination of Jane Kelly to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

The President announced the nomination of Gregory Alan Phillips to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

February 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Janet L. LaBreck to be Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jonathan Safran Foer as a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert Listenbee, Jr., as Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to appoint James H. Stock as a member of the Council of Economic Advisers.

February 4

In the morning, the President traveled to Minneapolis, MN, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, at the Minneapolis Police Department Special Operations Center, the President met with local leaders and law enforcement officials to discuss ways of reducing gun violence. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

February 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with progressive and labor leaders to discuss immigration reform.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with business leaders to discuss immigration reform and its effect on economic growth and the Federal deficit. Then, in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with Head Coach John Harbaugh and General Manager Ozzie Newsome, Jr., of the National Football League's Baltimore Ravens to congratulate them on their team's victory over the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl XLVII. Later, also in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Director of Speechwriting Jonathan E. Favreau and Deputy Director of Speechwriting Cody S. Keenan to prepare for his State of the Union Address.

February 6

In the morning, the President traveled to Annapolis, MD, where, at the Westin Annapolis hotel, he participated in the Senate Democratic Issues Conference.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

February 7

In the morning, the President traveled to Leesburg, VA.

In the afternoon, he returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with members of the Cabinet to discuss immigration reform. Later, in the Oval Office, the President met with Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Jr., to discuss HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention issues, especially in the African American community.

The President announced the nomination of Raymond T. Chen and Todd M. Hughes to be judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

February 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Then, the President traveled to Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the recipients of the 2012 Presidential Citizens Medal to the White House on February 15.

February 10

The White House announced that the President will travel to the Asheville, NC, area on February 13, the Atlanta, GA, area on February 14, and Chicago, IL, on February 15.

The President declared an emergency in Connecticut and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from a severe winter storm beginning on February 8 and continuing.

February 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced further details on the President's travel to Arden, NC, on February 13, and Decatur, GA, on February 14.

The President announced his intention to nominate Karol V. Mason to be Assistant Attorney General for Justice Programs at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to appoint Catherine A. Allen as a member of the Board of Directors of the Valles Caldera Trust.

February 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

Also in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea to discuss North Korea's nuclear test, affirm close cooperation in impeding North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and discuss South Korea-U.S. relations.

February 13

In the morning, the President traveled to Arden, NC, where he toured a Linamar North Carolina manufacturing facility with General Manager Mark Treffinger, Operations Manager Thomas Grein, and Group Vice President of Linamar Driveline Systems Group Global Phil McCulloch.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, he met with Sens. Richard J. Durbin, Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, and Michael F. Bennet to discuss immigration reform. Vice President Joe Biden, Assistant to the President and Director of the Domestic Policy Council Cecilia Muñoz, and Assistant to the President and Director of Legislative Affairs Miguel E. Rodriguez also attended.

Later in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to discuss North Korea's recent nuclear test, international diplomatic efforts toward a response, and Japan-U.S. relations.

The White House announced further details on the President's travel to Chicago, IL, on February 15.

The White House announced that the President will travel to the West Palm Beach, FL, area on February 15.

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on February 10 and continuing.

February 14

In the morning, the President traveled to Decatur, GA.

In the afternoon, the President toured College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center, where he met with students and teachers. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

February 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Chicago, IL. Upon arrival, he traveled to Hyde

Park Academy High School, where he participated in a roundtable discussion with students enrolled in a school-based antiviolence program. Later, he traveled to West Palm Beach, FL, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President traveled to Palm City, FL, where he remained overnight at the Floridian Yacht and Golf Club.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to the White House on February 22.

The White House announced that the annual Easter egg roll will take place on April 1.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Park Geun-hye as President of South Korea in Seoul, South Korea, on February 25:

Thomas E. Donilon (head of delegation);
Sung Kim;
James D. Thurman; and
Daniel R. Russel.

February 18

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

February 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had separate telephone conversations with Sens. Lindsey O. Graham, John S. McCain III, and Marco A. Rubio to discussion immigration reform and the Federal budget.

February 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, he had separate interviews with television news anchors from the Boston, MA, Charleston, SC, Baltimore, MD, Oklahoma City, OK, Wichita, KS, San Antonio, TX, San Francisco, CA, and Honolulu, HI, media markets. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Ernest Bai Koroma as President of Sierra Leonein Freetown, Sierra Leone, on February 22: Carrie Hessler-Radelet (head of delegation); and Kathleen FitzGibbon.

February 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had separate interviews for the syndicated radio programs of Alfred C. Sharpton, Jr., Joe Madison, and Yolanda Adams.

February 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, they attended a meeting of the Democratic Governors Association.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan.

The President declared a major disaster in Louisiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from January 8 through 17.

February 23

The White House announced that the President will travel to Newport News, VA, on February 26.

February 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Indian Treaty Room of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President attended a farewell reception for U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk.

February 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President Muhammad Mursi of Egypt to discuss Egypt-U.S. relations; democracy efforts, economic concerns, and human rights issues in Egypt; the Arab-Israeli peace process; and Secretary of State John F. Kerry's upcoming visit to Egypt. Then, also in the Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Newport News, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jannette L. Dates and Bruce M. Ramer to be members of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen J. Hadley to be a member of the Board of Directors of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The President announced his intention to nominate Geoffrey R. Pyatt to be Ambassador to Ukraine.

The President announced his intention to appoint Teresa Isabel Leger as a member of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Stephen L. Mayo as a member of the National Science Board at the National Science Foundation.

February 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

February 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden attended the swearing-in ceremony for Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he and Vice President Biden had lunch.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with American Legion National Commander James E. Koutz.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the BCS National Champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide to the White House on March 6.

March 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss Russia-U.S. relations, the situation in Syria, the upcoming Group of Eight (G–8) summit in Northern Ireland in June, and President Obama's visit to St. Petersburg for the Group of Twenty (G–20) meeting in September. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid, Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell, Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to discuss pending mandatory Federal spending cuts.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama had dinner with former President William J. Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The President declared a major disaster for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and ordered Federal aid to supplement tribal recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from January 14 through 17.

March 2

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Sens. Robert P. Corker, Jr., Robert J. Portman, and other Members of Congress to discuss tax reform legislation and the Federal budget.

March 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had separate telephone conversations with Sen. Susan M. Collins and other

Members of Congress to discuss tax reform legislation and the Federal budget.

March 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Bethesda, MD, where, at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, he met with wounded U.S. military personnel and their families, presented Purple Hearts to two servicemembers, and participated in a promotion ceremony for one servicemember. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will have a signing ceremony for the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 on March 7.

The President declared a major disaster for the Navajo Nation and ordered Federal aid to supplement tribal efforts in the area affected by a severe freeze from December 15, 2012, through January 21, 2013.

March 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

In the evening, at the Plume restaurant in the Jefferson hotel, the President had dinner with a group of Republican Senators and discussed tax reform legislation and the Federal budget.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei to the White House on March 12.

The White House announced that the President will visit the U.S. Capitol next week, where he will meet separately with the Democratic and Republican Caucuses of the House of Representatives and Senate to discuss his legislative agenda.

March 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with leaders of Jewish organizations to discuss his upcoming trip to Israel.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Reps. Christopher Van Hollen, Jr., and Paul D. Ryan and discussed tax reform legislation and the Federal budget.

In the evening, the President met with business leaders and renewable energy experts to discuss energy policy.

March 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with religious leaders to discuss immigration reform.

During the day, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Vice President Biden attended the swearing-in ceremony for John O. Brennan as Director of Central Intelligence.

March 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The White House announced that the President will award the Medal of Honor to Capt. Emil J. Kapaun, USA, on April 11.

March 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Blue Room, the President had lunch with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei. Then, at the U.S. Capitol,

he met with the Senate Democratic Caucus. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland to the White House on March 19.

The President announced his intention to appoint Henry Claypool, Julian Harris, and Carol Raphael as members of the Commission on Long-Term Care.

The President announced his intention to appoint Diana Shaw Clark and Greg A. Rosenbaum as members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

March 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Capitol, the President met with the House Republican Conference. Later, in the Oval Office he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Then, in the Situation Room, he met with business leaders to discuss cybersecurity issues.

Later in the afternoon, in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President met with business leaders to discuss immigration reform and economic issues. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

The White House announced that the President will travel to the Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, IL, on March 15.

The President announced his intention to nominate Deborah K. Jones to be Ambassador to Libya.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Knight to be Ambassador to Chad.

The President announced his intention to appoint Lesley L. Weiss as Chair and member of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

March 14

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Xi Jinping of China to congratulate him on his new position and discuss China-U.S. relations.

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Capitol, the President had separate meetings with the Senate Republican Conference and the House Democratic Caucus. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing.

March 15

In the morning, the President traveled to Lemont, IL. Upon arrival, he toured the facilities of Argonne National Laboratory.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the installation of Pope Francis in the Holy See (Vatican City) on March 19:

Joe Biden (head of delegation);
Susana Martinez;
Nancy Pelosi; and
John J. DeGioia.

March 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone, President Macky Sall of Senegal, President Joyce Banda of Malawi, and Prime Minister José Maria Pereira Neves of Cape Verde to the White House on March 28.

March 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland.

In the evening, the President traveled to Tel Aviv, Israel, arriving the following afternoon.

The President announced his intention to nominate Catherine M. Russell to be Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State.

The President announced the nomination of Patricia E. Campbell-Smith and Elaine D.

Kaplan to be judges on the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

The President announced the nomination of Michael K. O'Keefe and Robert D. Okun to be judges on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The President declared a major disaster in New Hampshire and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from February 8 through 10.

March 20

In the afternoon, at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, the President toured an Iron Dome antimissile battery. Then, he traveled to the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the President's Residence, where he signed the guest book and participated in a tree-planting ceremony and photographic opportunity with President Shimon Peres of Israel. Then, he traveled to the Prime Minister's Residence, where he signed the guest book and was greeted by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

In the evening, at the Prime Minister's Residence, the President and Prime Minister Netanyahu had a working dinner. Later, he returned to the King David Hotel, where he remained overnight.

March 21

In the morning, the President traveled to the Israel Museum, where he and Prime Minister Netanyahu viewed the Dead Sea Scrolls. Then, also at the museum, they toured an Israeli technology exposition, where the President greeted U.S. Army veteran Theresa Hannigan, who demonstrated an apparatus designed to aid spinal cord injuries. He also met with Israeli high school students and alumni of Cisco Israel's Digital Cities Project.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Ramallah, West Bank, where, at the Muqata Presidential Compound, he participated in an arrival ceremony and photographic opportunity with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority. Then, also at the Presidential Compound, he met with President Abbas.

In the afternoon, at the Muqata Presidential Compound, the President had a working lunch with President Abbas. Later, he traveled to Al-Bireh, West Bank, where, at the Youth Development Resource Center, he and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority toured a robotics lab and watched a youth dance performance. Then, also at the Resource Center, he participated in a roundtable discussion with Palestinian youth. Later, he returned to Jerusalem.

In the evening, the President traveled to the U.S. Consulate General, where he met with consular and U.S. Embassy–Tel Aviv personnel. Then, he returned to the King David Hotel.

Later in the evening, the President traveled to the President's Residence. Then, he returned to the King David Hotel, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2012 Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings and the 2012 Major League Soccer champion Los Angeles Galaxy to the White House on March 26.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia L. Attwood to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stuart F. Delery to be Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Fred P. Hochberg to be President of the U.S. Export-Import Bank.

The President announced his intention to nominate Allison M. Macfarlane to be a Commissioner of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and upon appointment, to designate her as Chair.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia M. Wald to be a member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

The President declared a major disaster in Connecticut and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from February 8 through 11.

March 22

In the morning, the President traveled to Israel's national cemetery at Mount Herzl, where, accompanied by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres of Israel, he laid a wreath and stone at the grave of Theodor Herzl and signed the guest book. He also laid a wreath and stone at the grave of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and met with members of the Rabin family. Then, he traveled to Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, where he, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and President Peres toured the Hall of Names, the Art Museum, and the Children's Memorial. He also laid a wreath in the Hall of Remembrance and signed the guest book.

Later in the morning, the President returned to the King David Hotel, where he had lunch with Prime Minister Netanyahu.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Bethlehem, West Bank, where he toured the Church of the Nativity with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and met with church leaders and local government officials. He also visited the Church of Saint Catherine, where he greeted Palestinian children. Then, he traveled to Tel Aviv, Israel, where, at Ben Gurion Airport, he had a private meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Amman, Jordan, where, upon arrival, he traveled to the Royal Al Hummar Offices, the headquarters of King Abdullah II of Jordan.

In the evening, at the Al Hummar Offices, the President participated in an arrival ceremony with King Abdullah II. Later, he traveled to Beit Al Urdun, where he and King Abdullah had dinner.

The President declared a major disaster in Rhode Island and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm on February 8 and 9.

March 23

In the morning, at the Four Seasons Amman Hotel, the President met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. Later, he traveled to Petra, Jordan, where he toured the ancient ruins and monuments with Professor Suleiman A.D. Al Farajat of the University of Jordan.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Amman, Jordan, where, at Queen Alia International Airport, he was greeted by King Abdullah II of Jordan. Then, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

March 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a signing ceremony establishing the Río Grande del Norte National Monument in New Mexico, the First State National Monument in Delaware, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument in Maryland, the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Ohio, and the San Juan Islands National Monument in Washington. Vice President Biden and Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar also attended.

In the evening, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a Seder to mark the beginning of Passover.

The President declared a major disaster in Maine and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, snowstorm, and flooding on February 8 and 9.

March 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Miami, FL, on March 29.

The President announced his intention to appoint Julia A. Pierson as Director of the U.S. Secret Service at the Department of Homeland Security.

March 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Blue Room, the President participated in separate television interviews with Lourdes Meluza of Univision and Lori Montenegro of Telemundo. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden participated in a swearing-in ceremony for Julia A. Pierson as Director of the U.S. Secret Service at the Department of Homeland Security.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore to the White House on April 2.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Mexico and Costa Rica from May 2 through 4.

March 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President signed Executive Order 13639 establishing the Presidential Commission on Election Administration.

March 29

In the morning, the President traveled to Miami, FL, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, at PortMiami, the President toured a tunnel infrastructure project. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

March 30

The White House announced that the President will travel to Denver, CO, on April 3.

March 31

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha attended an Easter Sunday service at St. John's Church.

April 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, on the South Lawn, he and Mrs. Obama participated in the annual Easter egg roll. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Robbie Novak, who stars as "Kid President" in self-made YouTube videos, and gave him a personal tour of the Oval Office.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Northern California on April 3 and 4.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brian C. Deese to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force:

Janine Davidson;
Dennis M. McCarthy;
F. Whitten Peters; and
Margaret C. Harrell.

The President announced his intention to appoint Hyman Bass, Carlos Castillo-Chavez, and Joseph S. Francisco as members of the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science.

April 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel. Then, in the Family Theater, he and Mrs. Obama hosted a screening of the film "42" for members of Jackie Robinson's family, castmembers, and crew.

April 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later he traveled to Denver, CO, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, at the Denver Policy Academy, the President met with local law enforcement officials and community leaders to discuss gun control. Later, he traveled to San Francisco, CA.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Intercontinental San Francisco hotel, where he remained overnight.

April 4

In the morning, the President traveled to Atherton, CA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The White House announced that the President will award the Medal of Honor posthumously to Capt. Emil J. Kapaun, USA, on April 11.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces, to the White House on April 16.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Hartford, CT, on April 8.

April 5

In the morning, in the Blue Room, the President met with religious leaders. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a telephone interview with Cliff Kelley and Matt McGill of WVON in Chicago, IL.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations to the White House on April 11.

The White House announced that the President will award the 2012 Commander in Chief's Trophy to the U.S. Naval Academy football team at the White House on April 12.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar to the White House on April 23.

The White House announced that the President will welcome King Abdullah II of Jordan to the White House on April 26.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to the White House on May 16.

April 7

The White House announced that the President will travel to West Hartford, CT, on April 8.

April 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to West Hartford, CT, where, at the University of Hartford, he met with the families of victims killed in the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, on December 14, 2012.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC, accompanied aboard Air Force One by family members of victims killed in the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from February 24 through 26.

April 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to discuss the transition of security operations to Afghan forces, preparations for Afghanistan's 2014 elections, Afghan-led peace and reconciliation efforts, and Afghanistan-U.S. relations.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark G. Pearce to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board and, upon appointment, to designate him as Chairman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Harry I. Johnson III and Philip A.

Miscimarra to be members of the National Labor Relations Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Tammie Kahn, George Kerscher, and Jacquelyn K. Sundstrand as members of the National Museum and Library Services Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Samuel N. Gordon and Maureen Schulman as members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Melanie N. Roussell as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

April 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

Also in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Geno Auriemma of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NCAA championship game.

In the evening, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had dinner with Republican Senators.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Rick Pitino of the University of Louisville men's basketball team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NCAA championship game. Also during the day, he met with Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, to discuss U.S. policies regarding the detention of alleged terrorists at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

April 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with members of the Financial Services Forum to discuss the national economy.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in a conference call with local elected officials and business and community leaders from around the Nation to discuss youth employment opportunities.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with family members of victims killed in the December 14, 2012, shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, to discuss Senate action on gun control legislation.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the BCS National Champion University of Alabama football team to the White House on April 15.

The White House announced that the President will welcome 2012 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series champion Brad Keselowski to the White House on April 16.

The President announced his intention to nominate Matthew C. Armstrong to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rick Lowe to be a member of the National Council on the Arts.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tulinabo Salama Mushingi to be Ambassador to Burkina Faso.

The President announced his intention to appoint Eric P. Schwartz as a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

April 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

April 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Library, he taped a television interview with Savannah Guthrie of NBC's "Today" program for later broadcast.

In the afternoon, the President was notified of the explosions that occurred at the Boston Marathon in Boston, MA. Later, in the Oval Office, he received a teleconference briefing from Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco, and White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough on the ongoing investigation of the explosions. Then, he had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts and Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston, MA, to extend his condolences for the loss of life, express his concern for those injured, and offer Federal assistance.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S.: Maria Cecilia Nahon of Argentina, Cui Tiankai of China, Mohktar Chaouachi of Tunisia, Archil Gegeshidze of Georgia, and Ruben Ignacio Zamora Rivas of El Salvador. Later, he received an update from Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano on the explosions in Boston, MA.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Park Geun-hye of South Korea to the White House on May 7.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the funeral of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom in London, United Kingdom, on April 17: George Shultz and James A. Baker III (heads of delegation); Barbara Stephenson; and Louis Susman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vernon S. Broderick to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rachel E. Barkow, Charles R. Breyer, and William H. Pryor, Jr., to be Commissioners on the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Thomas Murray as a member of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee.

April 16

In the morning, the President received a briefing on the ricin-laced letters sent to the White House and the office of Sen. Roger Wicker. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, Deputy National Security Adviser Antony J. Blinken, National Security Adviser to the Vice President Jake Sullivan, Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco, White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III to discuss the ongoing investigation into the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had a working lunch with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the United Arab Emirates. Later, on the South Lawn, he welcomed NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Champion Brad Keselowski to congratulate him on his victory and thank him for NASCAR's public service. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Sens. John S. McCain III and Charles E. Schumer to discuss immigration reform. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

In the evening, the President received an update on the ricin-laced letters sent to the White House and the office of Sen. Roger Wicker.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Boston, MA, on April 18.

The White House announced that the President's planned visit to Lawrence, KS, on April 19 had been canceled.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend a commemoration ceremony for the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Warsaw, Poland, on April 19:

Stephen D. Mull (head of delegation);
Douglas A. Davidson;
Lesley L. Weiss;
Joseph D. Gutman; and
Estelle W. Laughlin.

April 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed on the ongoing investigation into the terrorist attack in Boston, MA. Later, he had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Also in the morning, he received an update on the ricin-laced letters sent to the White House and the office of Sen. Roger Wicker.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with the recipients of the 2013 Goldman Environmental Prize.

During the day, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with the families of victims killed in the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, on December 14, 2012.

In the evening, at the Jefferson hotel, the President had dinner with members of the Senate Democratic Caucus to discuss immigration reform, gun control, and the national economy.

The White House announced further details on the President's travel to Boston, MA, on April 18.

The President announced his intention to nominate Avril D. Haines to be Legal Adviser at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Andrea Levere to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Consumer Cooperative Bank.

The President announced his intention to appoint Brian Kamoie as Assistant Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jim W. Balsiger and Gary T. Smith as U.S. Commissioners of the U.S. Section of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission.

The President declared an emergency in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from explosions in Boston on April 15 and covering eligible activities through April 22.

April 18

In the morning, the President received a briefing on the investigation into the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA, from Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco. Then, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to Boston, MA.

In the afternoon, at Massachusetts General Hospital, the President visited with survivors of the bombings, their family members, and hospital staff. Later, he and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, in the East Room, the President hosted a reception for Greek Independence Day.

The White House announced that the President will host the White House Science Fair on April 22.

April 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Situation Room, he was briefed by his national security team on the latest developments in the investigation into the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA, and the manhunt for surviving bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev in Watertown, MA.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed by his national security team on the latest developments in the investigation into the Boston terrorist attack. Then, he

had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts and Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston, MA, to express his condolences for the death of Massachusetts Institute of Technology Police Officer Sean A. Collier, who was fatally shot in pursuit of bombing suspects Tamerlan Tsarnaev and Dzokhar Tsarnaev on the evening of April 18.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to accept his condolences for the loss of life in the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston and discuss Russia's support and continued cooperation on counterterrorism and security matters.

The President declared a major disaster in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local response efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, snowstorm, and flooding on February 8 and 9.

The President declared an emergency in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from an explosion beginning on April 17 and continuing.

April 20

In the morning, in the Situation Room, the President met with Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco, National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon, Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper, Jr., and Director of Central Intelligence John O. Brennan to discuss the ongoing investigation into the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA. Vice President Joe Biden also participated via video conference.

The White House announced that the President will honor the 2013 National Teacher of the Year and finalists on April 23.

April 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the East Garden and State Dining Room, the President viewed science fair projects at the White House Science Fair. Later, in the Oval Office, he observed a moment of silence in honor of the victims of the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA. Then, he had separate telephone conversations with Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge Richard DesLauriers and Boston Police Commissioner Edward F. Davis to commend the professionalism, bravery, and coordination of the Joint Terrorism Task Forces and the Boston Police Department.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will travel to Dallas, TX, on April 24.

The White House Announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will travel to Waco, TX, on April 25.

April 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, he met with his senior advisers.

In the evening, in the State Dining Room, the President had dinner with a bipartisan group of women Senators.

The President announced his intention to nominate D. Michael Bennett to be a Governor on the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roberto R. Herencia to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Yvette Roubideaux to be Director of the Indian Health Service at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm on February 8 and 9.

April 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Then, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to Dallas, TX, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Omni Dallas Hotel, where they remained overnight.

April 25

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the George W. Bush Presidential Center on the campus of Southern Methodist University, where they toured the center, posed for a photograph with former Presidents and First Ladies, and attended a luncheon.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Waco, TX, where, at Baylor Univeristy's Ferrell Center, he met with families of the victims of the West Fertilizer Co. plant explosion.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nanci E. Langley to be a Commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Howard A. Shelanski to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced his intention to nominate William S. Jasien to be a member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brent F. Nelsen to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

April 26

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with a group of U.S. business leaders to discuss expanding U.S. commerce in Mexico and Central America.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a snowstorm from February 20 through 23.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to emergency conditions resulting from flooding beginning on April 22 and continuing.

April 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to offer his condolences for the loss of life in the April 26 fire at Psychiatric Hospital No. 14 in Ramenskiy, continuing Russia-U.S. counterterrorism and security cooperation, the upcoming 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi, and the situation in Syria. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with Latino leaders to discuss the President's upcoming travel to Mexico and Costa Rica.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with pediatric brain cancer patient Jack Hoffman of Atkinson, NE, and signed a football for him.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the investiture of King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on April 30: Adm. James G. Stavridis, USN (head of delegation); and Fay Hartog-Levin.

April 30

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Colin S. Bruce to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sara Lee Ellis and Andrea R. Wood to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

May 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

May 2

In the morning, the President traveled to Mexico City, Mexico, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, in the Salon de Recepciones at the Palacio Nacional, he met with President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico. Later, at the InterContinental Presidente Hotel, he met with U.S. Embassy personnel.

In the evening, at Los Pinos, the official residence of the President of Mexico, the President and President Peña Nieto had a working dinner.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Columbus, OH, on May 5.

May 3

In the morning, at the National Anthropology Museum, the President met with Mexican entrepreneurs.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to San Jose, Costa Rica. Later, upon arrival in San Jose, he traveled to the InterContinental Real Hotel, where he met with U.S. Embassy personnel. Then, at the Casa Amarilla, the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, he met with President Laura Chinchilla Miranda of Costa Rica.

Later in the afternoon, at the Casa Amarilla, the President and President Chinchilla participated in a cultural event with Costa Rican youth.

In the evening, at the National Theater, the President participated in a group photo and a working dinner with President Chinchilla and the leaders of the Central American Integration System.

The President declared a major disaster in Minnesota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm from April 9 through 11.

May 4

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

May 5

In the morning, the President traveled to Columbus, OH.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 6

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Joint Base Andrews, MD, where he played golf with Sens. Robert P. Corker, Jr., Saxby Chambliss, and Mark E. Udall. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to the Austin, TX, area on May 9.

The President declared a major disaster in Iowa and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm from April 9 through 11.

May 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with President Park Geun-hye of South Korea.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch with President Park. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

Later in the afternoon, at the St. Regis Washington, D.C. Hotel, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

May 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the Department of Energy, the President met with energy utility executives and trade association leaders to

discuss lessons learned and actions taken since Hurricane Sandy as well as joint preparations for the upcoming hurricane season. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

Later in the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with leaders from the Asian American and Pacific Islanders community to discuss immigration reform, health care, and the national economy.

In the evening, at the Jefferson hotel, the President had dinner with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss regional security and peace efforts in the Middle East and Israel-U.S. security cooperation.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to the White House on May 13.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Sebastian Piñera Echenique of Chile to the White House on June 4.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Ollanta Humala of Peru to the White House on June 11.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph W. Nega and Michael B. Thornton to be judges on the U.S. Tax Court.

The President announced his intention to nominate Davita Vance-Cooks to be Public Printer of the United States at the Government Printing Office.

The President announced his intention to appoint Margaret W. Burcham as a Commissioner on the Mississippi River Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Leonard Forsman as a member of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

May 9

In the morning, the President traveled to Austin, TX, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Manor, TX, where, at Manor New Technology High School, he toured classrooms, viewed technology and engineering projects, and visited with students and staff. Then, he traveled to Austin, TX, where, at Stubb's Bar-B-Q restaurant, he had lunch with local residents Tyson Simmons, Caroline Sweet, Joe Alonzo, and Agnes Wommack. Then, at Capital Factory, a technology startup incubator and coworking space, he toured the facility with founder Joshua Baer and visited with resident entrepreneurs.

Later in the afternoon, at Applied Materials, Inc., the President toured manufacturing facilities with Michael R. Splinter, chief executive officer, Rick G. Gesing, vice president of global operations manufacturing, and Mary Humiston, senior vice president of global human resources, and visited with staff. Then, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with King Mohammed VI of Morocco to discuss Morocco-U.S. relations.

The President announced the nomination of Madeline Hughes Haikala to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama.

The President announced the nomination of Gregory H. Woods to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

May 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New York City on May 13.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will travel to the United Kingdom and Germany from June 17 through 19.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ryan C. Crocker to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the

area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from April 8 through 10.

The President declared a major disaster in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding from April 16 through May 5.

May 13

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New York City.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Najib Razak of Malaysia to congratulate him on his party's victory in the recent parliamentary elections and discuss Malaysia-U.S. relations.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 14

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Nawaz Sharif, president of the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz, to congratulate him on his party's success in the recent parliamentary elections and discuss Pakistan-U.S. relations. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Baltimore, MD, on May 17.

May 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. John S. McCain III to discuss immigration reform and other issues. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew and other senior Treasury Department officials to discuss the situation related to the Internal Revenue Service's process for approving tax-exempt status.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Thein Sein of Burma to the White House on May 20.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Atlanta, GA, on May 19.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel R. Russel to be Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard T. Metsger to be a member of the National Credit Union Administration Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Michael G. Whitaker as Deputy Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

The President announced his intention to appoint Alphonso Maldon, Jr., as a member and Chairman of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mary C. Pete as a member of the Arctic Research Commission.

May 16

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, USA, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other Defense Department officials to discuss sexual assault in the military. Then, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

In the evening, in the Red Room, the President and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey had a working dinner.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jon M. Holladay to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to appoint Natalie Wyeth Earnest as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gregory L. Parham as Assistant Secretary for Administration at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gabrielle D. Giffords as a member of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

The President announced the nomination of Debra M. Brown to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi.

The President announced the nomination of Carolyn B. McHugh to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

The President announced the nomination of Pamela L. Reeves to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

The President announced the nomination of Elizabeth A. Wolford to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York.

The President announced the appointment of Daniel I. Werfel as Acting Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service.

May 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, he traveled to Baltimore, MD, where, at Moravia Park Elementary School, he participated in a literacy lesson in the library with prekindergarten students.

In the afternoon, at Ellicott Dredges, LLC, the President toured the manufacturing facility with President and Chief Executive Officer Peter A. Bowe, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Martin E. Barnes, Jr., and General Manager Robert E. Croom. Later, at the Center for Urban Families, he participated in a roundtable discussion with current and former students, employers, and trainers from the STRIVE Baltimore Employment Training program. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, the President met with incoming acting Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Daniel I. Werfel.

May 19

In the morning, the President traveled to Atlanta, GA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 20

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon to discuss the situation in Syria and commend President Sleiman's leadership in overseeing the political transition in Lebanon. He also had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy to congratulate him on his election victory and discuss the upcoming Group of Eight (G–8) nations summit in Northern Ireland, the situation in Syria, and Italy-U.S. relations.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with senior advisers.

In the evening, in the Oval office, the President had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma, Rep. Thomas J. Cole, and Mayor Glenn Lewis of Moore, OK, to express his concern for those affected by the tornadoes and severe weather in Oklahoma and to discuss Federal assistance for recovery efforts.

The White House announced that the President will meet with President Xi Jinping of China at Sunnylands Estate in Rancho Mirage, CA, on June 7 and 8.

The White House announced that the President and First Lady will travel to Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania from June 26 through July 3.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and tornadoes beginning on May 18 and continuing.

May 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, Federal Emergency Management Agency Deputy Administrator Richard A. Serino, White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, White House Deputy

Chief of Staff Alyssa Mastromonaco, and other members of his homeland security team on the Federal Government's ongoing response to the tornadoes and severe weather that struck Oklahoma on May 19 and 20.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with young immigrants and the families of undocumented immigrants to discuss immigration reform.

In the afternoon, the President had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma and Mayor Glenn Lewis of Moore, OK, to express his concern for those affected by the tornadoes and severe weather in Oklahoma and to discuss Federal assistance for recovery efforts. Later, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Sen. James M. Inhofe to express his concern for those affected by the tornadoes and severe weather in Oklahoma and to discuss Federal assistance for recovery efforts.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert F. Bauer and Benjamin L. Ginsberg as Cochairs of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration:

Brian Britton;
Joe Echevarria;
Charles M. "Trey" Grayson III;
Harvard "Larry" Lomax;
Michele Coleman Mayes;
Ann McGeehan;
Tammy Patrick; and
Christopher M. Thomas.

May 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel M. Tangherlini to be Administrator of the General Services Administration.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians by authorizing an increase in Federal funding for public assistance projects undertaken as a result of severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from January 14 through 17.

May 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The President announced his intention to nominate Katherine Archuleta to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management.

The President announced his intention to nominate William I. Althen to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ann Marie Buerkle to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael S. Piwowar and Kara M. Stein to be Commissioners of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate James F. Entwistle to be Ambassador to Nigeria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Chai R. Feldblum to be a Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas E. Lute to be U.S. Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The President announced his intention to nominate Victoria J. Nuland to be Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel A. Sepulveda for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Communications and Information Policy at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark E. Schaefer to be Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate John H. Thompson to be Director of the Census at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to appoint Calvin L. Holmes as a member of the Community Development Advisory Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint John C. Padalino as Administrator of the Rural Utilities Service at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to appoint Clark W. Stevens as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced the nomination of Landya B. McCafferty to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of New Hampshire.

The President announced the nomination of Brian Morris and Susan P. Watters to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana.

The President announced the nomination of Zachary T. Fardon to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to New York by authorizing an increase in Federal funding for public assistance projects undertaken as a result of Hurricane Sandy from October 27 through November 8, 2012.

May 24

In the morning, the President traveled to Annapolis, MD.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Oklahoma City, OK, on May 26.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Asbury Park, NJ, on May 28.

May 26

In the morning, the President traveled to Tinker Air Force Base, OK, where he met with servicemembers whose off-base homes were affected by severe storms on May 20. Then, he traveled to Moore, OK.

In the afternoon, the President toured neighborhoods damaged by an F5 tornado with Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate, and local officials. Then, at Moore Fire Department Station No. 1, he met with first responders, Federal and local officials, and the families of Plaza Towers Elementary students who died in the tornado.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Tinker Air Force Base, where he greeted National Weather Service forecasters before boarding Air Force One. Then, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Chicago, IL, on May 29 and 30.

May 27

In the morning, in the State Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a breakfast in honor of Gold Star families. Later, they traveled to Arlington, VA, where, at Arlington National Cemetery, they participated in a Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In the afternoon, at Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery, the President and Mrs. Obama met with cemetery visitors. Then, they returned to Washington, DC.

May 28

In the morning, the President traveled to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ. Upon arrival, he and Gov. Christopher J. Christie of New Jersey traveled to Point Pleasant Beach, NJ. While en route aboard Marine One, they

toured areas damaged by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012.

In the afternoon, at the Point Pleasant Beach boardwalk, the President greeted sand sculptor Ed Jarrett and played an arcade game. Then, he traveled to Asbury Park, NJ, where he met with State and local officials.

Later, the President returned to Washington, DC, where, upon arrival on the South Lawn, he greeted students from Union Beach Memorial School in Union Beach, NJ, and Long Beach Island Grade School in Surf City, NJ. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the White House on May 31.

May 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Chicago, IL.

In the evening, the President traveled to his Hyde Park-Kenwood residence, where they remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will welcome President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil to the White House on October 23.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area affected by flooding from April 22 through May 16.

May 30

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President attended the annual hurricane preparedness briefing.

May 31

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President and Vice President Joe Biden will host the National Conference on Mental Health at the White House on June 3.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the Super Bowl XLVII champion Baltimore Ravens to the White House on June 5.

The President declared a major disaster in Iowa and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding from April 17 through 30.

June 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Mooresville, NC, on June 6.

June 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, he traveled to Bethesda, MD, where, at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, he met with wounded U.S. military personnel and their families. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to San Jose, CA, on June 6.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Los Angeles, CA, on June 7.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Rancho Mirage, CA, to meet with President Xi Jinping of China on June 7.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kenny Alameda as U.S. Commissioner on the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joye Frost as Director of the Office for Victims of Crime at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marlene Sallo as Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert Wolf as a member of the President's Export Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Steve Bennett and Angel Ruiz as members of the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

June 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Berlin, Germany, on June 19.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas C. Carper to be a Director on the Board of Directors of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (AMTRAK).

The President announced his intention to nominate Avi Garbow to be General Counsel of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Howard A. Husock to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

June 6

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Mooresville, NC, where, upon arrival, he toured Mooresville Middle School. Later, he traveled to Palo Alto, CA, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President traveled to Portola Valley, CA. Later, he traveled to San Jose, CA.

June 7

In the morning, the President traveled to Los Angeles, CA.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Rancho Mirage, CA. Later, at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage, he participated in a photographic opportunity with President Xi Jinping of China.

In the evening, at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, the President had a working dinner with President Xi.

The President announced the nomination of Jeffrey A. Meyer to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut.

The President announced the nomination of Timothy L. Brooks to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Arkansas.

June 8

In the morning, at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, the President met with President Xi Jinping of China. Later, he participated in a departure tea with President Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan.

June 9

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

June 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Boston, MA, on June 12.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Miami, FL, on June 12.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel B. Baer to be U.S. Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with the rank of Ambassador, at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael G. Carroll to be Inspector General at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Cole, Jr., to be General Counsel at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Keith M. Harper to be U.S. Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council, with the rank of Ambassador, at the Department of State

The President announced his intention to nominate Catherine E. Lhamon to be Assistant

Secretary for Civil Rights at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen W. Preston to be General Counsel at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark T. Nethery to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Anthony C. Funkhouser as a Commissioner for the Mississippi River Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Betsey Stevenson as a member of the Council of Economic Advisers.

June 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel. Later, in the Family Theater, he hosted a screening of the film "The Presidents' Gatekeepers."

The White House announced that the President will welcome the WNBA Champion Indiana Fever to the White House on June 14.

June 12

In the morning, the President traveled to Boston, MA. Upon arrival, accompanied by Rep. Edward J. Markey, he traveled to Charlie's Sandwich Shoppe, where he purchased lunch and visited with patrons.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center, where he met with family members of fallen Massachusetts Institute of Technology police officer Sean A. Collier, who was killed on April 19 in pursuit of the suspected bombers in the April 15 terrorist attack in Boston, MA. Later, he traveled to Miami, FL. Then, he traveled to Miami Beach, FL.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to discuss North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, President Obama's recent meetings with President Xi Jinping of China, peace and security efforts in the Asia-Pacific region, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephanie Sanders Sullivan to be Ambassador to the Republic of the Congo.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph Y. Yun to be Ambassador to Malaysia.

The President announced his intention to appoint Avril D. Haines as Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President announced his intention to appoint Michael J. Morell as a member of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board.

June 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Rep. John D. Dingell, Jr.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with families of victims of the December 14, 2012, shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sens. Patrick J. Leahy, Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, and Michael F. Bennet to discuss immigration reform legislation.

The President declared a major disaster in Vermont and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from May 22 through 26.

June 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the State Dining Room, the President hosted a Father's Day luncheon with members of the Becoming a Man program at Hyde Park Academy High School in Chicago, IL.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President participated in a videoconference with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, President François Hollande of France, Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy, and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany

to discuss the upcoming Group of Eight (G–8) nations summit in Northern Ireland, the situation in Syria, and democracy efforts in Libya.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado to discuss the recent wildfires in the Black Forest and Royal Gorge areas, express his condolences for the loss of life and extensive damage, and offer continued Federal assistance to State and local response efforts.

The President announced his intention to nominate Liliana Ayalde to be Ambassador to Brazil.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Costos to be Ambassador to Spain.

The President announced his intention to nominate John B. Emerson to be Ambassador to Germany.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rufus Gifford to be Ambassador to Denmark.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kenneth F. Hackett to be Ambassador to the Holy See.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia M. Haslach to be Ambassador to Ethiopia.

The President declared a disaster under the Compact of Free Association between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, as amended, due to the ongoing severe drought in the northern half of the country.

June 16

In the afternoon, in the Library, the President taped an interview with Charlie Rose of PBS's "Charlie Rose" program for later broadcast.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Belfast, Northern Ireland, arriving the following morning. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with President Park Geun-hye of South Korea to discuss regional security issues and the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

June 17

In the morning, upon arrival at Belfast International Airport, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to the Belfast Waterfront convention center. Later, he traveled to Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, where, at the Lough Erne Resort, he visited with staff members.

In the afternoon, at Enniskillen Integrated Primary School, the President and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom visited with teachers and students. Then, he returned to the Lough Erne Resort, where he met with Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy. Later, he participated in an official arrival ceremony for leaders attending the Group of Eight (G–8) nations summit. Then, he participated in the G–8 summit's first plenary session.

In the evening, the President participated in a G–8 summit working dinner. He remained overnight at the Lough Erne Resort.

June 18

In the morning, the President attended the second plenary session of the G–8 summit. Then, he participated in an official photograph with G–8 summit leaders. Later, he participated in a separate photographic opportunity with Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada. Then, he attended the third G–8 summit plenary session.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photographic opportunity with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom and Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland. Then, he participated in a photographic opportunity with President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico. Later, he had a working lunch with G–8 leaders followed by a meeting with Prime Minister Cameron, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, President François Hollande of France, Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy, and Prime Minister Ali Zaydan of Libya. Then, he participated in the concluding plenary session of the G–8 summit.

Later in the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha

traveled to Berlin, Germany, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to the Ritz-Carlton, Berlin hotel, where they remained overnight.

The President declared a major disaster in Michigan and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by flooding from April 16 through May 14.

June 19

In the morning, at the Ritz-Carlton, Berlin hotel, the President met with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Then, he traveled to the Schloss Bellevue, the residence of President Joachim Gauck of Germany, where he signed the guest book, participated in an arrival ceremony with military honors, and met with President Gauck. Later, he traveled to the German Chancellery, where he met with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

In the afternoon, at the German Chancellery, the President had a working lunch with Chancellor Merkel. Then, he traveled to the Lindencorso building, where he met with Mayor Klaus Wowereit of Berlin and signed the Golden Book of Berlin. Later, he met with Peer Steinbrueck, the Social Democratic Party candidate for Chancellor in the upcoming elections.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to the Ritz-Carlton, Berlin hotel.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Schloss Charlottenburg, where, in the Rotunda, they posed with Chancellor Merkel and her husband Joachim Sauer for an official photograph. Later, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

June 20

The President announced the nomination of James Donato and Beth L. Freeman to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

The President announced the nomination of Jennifer P. May-Parker to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

June 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Erik Spoelstra of the National Basketball Association's Miami Heat to congratulate him on his team's victory over the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA Finals.

During the day, in the Situation Room, the President met with the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lee E. Goodman and Ann Miller Ravel to be Commissioners of the Federal Election Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Denise Campbell Bauer to be Ambassador to Belgium.

The President announced his intention to nominate M. John Berry to be Ambassador to Australia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Reuben E. Brigety II to be U.S. Representative to the African Union with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Walter Brewster, Jr., to be Ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel A. Clune to be Ambassador to Laos.

The President announced his intention to nominate Linda Thomas-Greenfield to be Assistant Secretary for African Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Hale to be Ambassador to Lebanon.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael A. Hammer to be Ambassador to Chile.

The President announced his intention to nominate Terence P. McCulley to be Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire.

The President announced his intention to nominate Terrell McSweeny to be a Commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brian A. Nichols to be Ambassador to Peru.

The President announced his intention to nominate David D. Pearce to be Ambassador to Greece.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lori Gilbert to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jon T. Rymer to be Inspector General at the Department of Defense.

The President announced the appointment of Caroline M. Atkinson as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser for International and Economic Affairs.

June 22

The White House announced that the President will deliver remarks on climate change at Georgetown University on June 24.

June 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss the situations in Syria and Turkey and joint counterterrorism efforts. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing, followed by a meeting with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed by Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew on Acting Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Daniel I. Werfel's report on the Internal Revenue Service's process for approving tax-exempt status.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Robert L. Nabors II and Director of Legislative Affairs Miguel E. Rodriguez.

June 25

In the morning, in the Situation Room, the President had a video teleconference with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to discuss the transition of operational lead to Afghan security forces, Afghan-led peace and reconciliation efforts, preparations for Afghanistan's 2014 elections, and Afghanistan-U.S. relations. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with congressional leaders. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel.

The President declared a major disaster in Alaska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by flooding from May 17 through June 11.

The President declared a major disaster for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and ordered Federal aid to supplement tribal recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from May 25 through June 1.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from May 30 through June 3.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to New Jersey by authorizing an increase in Federal funding for public assistance projects undertaken as a result of Hurricane Sandy from October 26 through November 8, 2012.

June 26

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Dakar, Senegal, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with White House Counsel Kathryn H. Ruemmler to discuss the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings on the Defense of Marriage Act in *United States* v. *Windsor* and California's Proposition 8 in *Hollingsworth* v. *Perry*. Then, he had a telephone conversation with Edith Windsor, the plaintiff in *United States* v. *Windsor*, followed by a teleconfer-

ence call with Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, and Kristin Perry, Sandra Stier, Paul Katami, and Jeffrey Zarillo, the plaintiffs in *Hollingsworth* v. *Perry,* to congratulate them on their victories in the cases.

In the evening, upon arrival in Dakar, Senegal, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to the Radisson Blu Hotel, where they remained overnight.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the celebration of the accession of Croatia to the European Union in Zagreb, Croatia, on June 30: Kenneth H. Merten (head of delegation); and Philip T. Reeker.

The President announced the nomination of Pedro A. Delgado Hernández to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico.

The President announced the nomination of Bruce H. Hendricks and Alison R. Lee to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina.

June 27

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Presidential Palace in Dakar, Senegal, where, upon arrival, he had a restricted bilateral meeting followed by an expanded bilateral meeting with President Macky Sall of Senegal.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Goree Island, Senegal. They were accompanied by President Macky Sall of Senegal and his wife Marieme Faye Sall.

Later in the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters returned to the Radisson Blu Hotel in Dakar, where the President met with U.S. Embassy personnel.

In the evening, the President had separate telephone conversations with Sens. Lindsey O. Graham, John S. McCain III, Michael F. Bennet, and Charles E. Schumer to congratulate them on Senate passage of immigration reform legislation. He also had separate telephone conversations with Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to discuss immigration reform.

The President announced his intention to nominate Krysta L. Harden to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alejandro N. Mayorkas to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ronald J. Binz to be a Commissioner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and upon appointment, designate him as Chair.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert Bonnie to be Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ellen C. Herbst to be Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Katherine M. O'Regan to be Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan J. Rabern to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Financial Management and Comptroller at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steve A. Linick to be Inspector General at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick H. Gaspard to be Ambassador to South Africa.

The President announced his intention to nominate James C. Swan to be Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kirk W.B. Wagar to be Ambassador to Singapore.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alexa Lange Wesner to be Ambassador to Austria.

The President announced the nomination of Kenneth A. Polite, Jr., to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

June 28

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, upon arrival in Johannesburg, the President traveled to the U.S. consulate, where he met with U.S. Embassy personnel. Then, he traveled to the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg, in Johannesburg, where he remained overnight.

During the evening, at the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg, the President met with senior advisers and had a telephone conversation with President Muhammad Mursi of Egypt to discuss the situation in Egypt.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornado, and flooding from May 24 through 31.

June 29

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Pretoria, South Africa, where, at the Union Buildings, they were greeted in an official arrival ceremony by President Jacob Zuma of South Africa and his wife Thobeka S. Madiba-Zuma. Later, also at the Union Buildings, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa. Later, at the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, he met with family members of former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa and signed a copy of President Mandela's book "Conversations With Myself." Later, at the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg, he and Mrs. Obama had a telephone conversation with former President Mandela's wife Graça Machel to discuss former President Mandela's health and express their support.

In the evening, at the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg, the President met with Chairwoman Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of the African Union Commission. Then, he traveled to Pretoria, South Africa. Later, he and Mrs. Obama returned to Johannesburg, South Africa.

June 30

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Cape Town, South Africa.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha toured Robben Island, where former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa and other political prisoners were held during the apartheid era. Then, they returned to Cape Town.

Later in the afternoon, at the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation Youth Center, the President and Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town Desmond M. Tutu toured classrooms and met with students.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to the Table Bay hotel in Cape Town, where they remained overnight.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted January 4

Robert E. Bacharach,
of Oklahoma, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, vice Robert Harlan Henry, resigned.

Caitlin Joan Halligan,
of New York, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice John G. Roberts, Jr., elevated.

William J. Kayatta, Jr.,
of Maine, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the First Circuit, vice Kermit Lipez, retired.

Jill A. Pryor,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit, vice Stanley F. Birch, Jr., retired.

Patty Shwartz,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit, vice Maryanne Trump Barry, retired.

Srikanth Srinivasan,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice A. Raymond Randolph, retired.

Richard Gary Taranto,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Federal Circuit, vice Paul R. Michel, retired.

Elissa F. Cadish,
of Nevada, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Nevada, vice Philip M. Pro, retired.

Valerie E. Caproni,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York, vice Richard J. Holwell, resigned.

Sheri Polster Chappell,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, vice Gregory A. Presnell, retired.

Pamela Ki Mai Chen,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of New York, vice Raymond J. Dearie, retired.

Brian J. Davis,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, vice Richard A. Lazzara, retired.

Shelly Deckert Dick,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Louisiana, vice Ralph E. Tyson, deceased.

Jennifer A. Dorsey,
of Nevada, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Nevada, vice Larry R. Hicks, retired.

Katherine Polk Failla,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York, vice Denise Cote, retired.

Kenneth John Gonzales,
of New Mexico, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Mexico, vice Bruce D. Black, retired.

Andrew Patrick Gordon,
of Nevada, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Nevada, vice Kent J. Dawson, retired.

Ketanji Brown Jackson,
of Maryland, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice Henry Harold Kennedy, retired.

Rosemary Márquez,
of Arizona, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Arizona, vice Frank R. Zapata, retired.

Michael J. McShane,
of Oregon, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Oregon, vice Michael R. Hogan, retired.

Raymond P. Moore,
of Colorado, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Colorado, vice Wiley Y. Daniel, retired.

Troy L. Nunley,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of California, vice Garland E. Burrell, Jr., retired.

Beverly Reid O'Connell,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of California, vice Valerie L. Baker, retired.

William H. Orrick, III,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice Charles R. Breyer, retired.

Nitza I. Quiñones Alejandro,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Richard Barclay Surrick, retired.

Luis Felipe Restrepo,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Anita B. Brody, retired.

Nelson Stephen Román,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York, vice Richard M. Berman, retired.

Jeffrey L. Schmehl,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Thomas M. Golden, deceased.

William L. Thomas,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, vice Adalberto Jose Jordan, elevated.

Analisa Torres,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York, vice Naomi Reice Buchwald, retired.

Derrick Kahala Watson,
of Hawaii, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Hawaii, vice David A. Ezra, retired.

Mark A. Barnett,
of Virginia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of International Trade, vice Judith M. Barzilay, retired.

Claire R. Kelly,
of New York, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of International Trade, vice Evan J. Wallach, elevated.

Submitted January 22

John Owen Brennan,
of Virginia, to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, vice David H. Petraeus, resigned.

Charles Timothy Hagel,
of Nebraska, to be Secretary of Defense, vice Leon E. Panetta.

John Forbes Kerry,
of Massachusetts, to be Secretary of State, vice Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Jacob J. Lew,
of New York, to be Secretary of the Treasury, vice Timothy F. Geithner.

Jacob L. Lew,
of New York, to be U.S. Governor of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; to be U.S. Governor of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 5 years; U.S. Governor of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of 5 years; U.S. Governor of the Inter-American Development Bank for a term of 5 years, vice Timothy F. Geithner.

Sylvia M. Becker,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the U.S. for the term expiring September 30, 2013, vice Ralph E. Martinez, term expired.

Sylvia M. Becker,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the U.S. for the term expiring September 30, 2016 (reappointment).

Robert F. Cohen, Jr.,
of West Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2018 (reappointment).

Richard J. Engler,
of New Jersey, to be a member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for a term of 5 years, vice William E. Wright, term expired.

Alan F. Estevez,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, vice Frank Kendall III.

Christopher J. Meade,
of New York, to be General Counsel for the Department of the Treasury, vice George Wheeler Madison, resigned.

David Medine,
of Maryland, to be Chairman and member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a term expiring January 29, 2018 (new position).

Carol Waller Pope,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years expiring July 1, 2014 (reappointment).

William B. Schultz,
of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Health and Human Services, vice Daniel Meron.

Jeffrey Shell,
of California, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2015, vice Walter Isaacson, term expired.

Jeffrey Shell,
of California, to be Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, vice Walter Isaacson, resigned.

Frederick Vollrath,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense (new position).

Derek Anthony West,
of California, to be Associate Attorney General, vice Thomas John Perrelli, resigned.

Jenny R. Yang,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2017, vice Stuart Ishimaru, resigned.

Submitted January 24

Nicholas Christopher Geale,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2013, vice Elizabeth Dougherty, resigned.

Byron Todd Jones,
of Minnesota, to be Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (new position).

Marietta S. Robinson,
of Michigan, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2010, vice Thomas Hill Moore, term expired.

Submitted January 28

Gerald Lyn Early,
of Missouri, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Josiah Bunting, III, term expired.

Patricia Nelson Limerick,
of Colorado, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Robert S. Martin, term expired.

Shelly Colleen Lowe,
of Arizona, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Jane M. Doggett, term expired.

Daniel Iwao Okimoto,
of California, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Mary Habeck, term expired.

Katherine H. Tachau,
of Iowa, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2018, vice Jay Winik, term expired.

Submitted January 31

Jane Kelly,
of Iowa, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit, vice Michael J. Melloy, retiring.

Gregory Alan Phillips,
of Wyoming, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, vice Terrence L. O'Brien, retiring.

Submitted February 4

Eric K. Fanning,
of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of the Air Force, vice Erin C. Conaton, resigned.

Michael Wayne Hail,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation for a term expiring December 10, 2017, vice Sharon Tucker, term expired.

F. Scott Kieff,
of Illinois, to be a member of the United States International Trade Commission for the term expiring June 16, 2020, vice Daniel Pearson, term expired.

Janet Lorraine LaBreck,
of Massachusetts, to be Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Department of Education, vice Lynnae M. Ruttledge, resigned.

Submitted February 7

Raymond T. Chen,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Federal Circuit, vice Richard Linn, retired.

Todd M. Hughes,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Federal Circuit, vice William C. Bryson, retired.

Sarah Jewell,
of Washington, to be Secretary of the Interior, vice Kenneth Lee Salazar.

Marilyn B. Tavenner,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, vice Donald M. Berwick, resigned.

Mary Jo White,
of New York, to be a member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 5, 2014, vice Mary L. Schapiro, resigned.

Mary Jo White,
of New York, to be a member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for a term expiring June 5, 2019 (reappointment).

Submitted February 13

Sharon Block,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2014, vice Craig Becker.

Richard Cordray,
of Ohio, to be Director, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection for a term of 5 years (new position).

Richard F. Griffin, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2016, vice Wilma B. Liebman, term expired.

Karol Virginia Mason,
of Georgia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Laurie O. Robinson, resigned.

Submitted February 27

Jannette L. Dates,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2016, vice Ernest J. Wilson, III, term expired.

Stephen J. Hadley,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the U.S. Institute of Peace for a term of 4 years, vice Judy Van Rest, term expired.

Vincent G. Logan,
of New York, to be Special Trustee, Office of Special Trustee for American Indians, Department of the Interior, vice Ross Owen Swimmer, resigned.

Geoffrey R. Pyatt,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Ukraine.

Bruce M. Ramer,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2018 (reappointment).

Submitted March 7

Sylvia Mathews Burwell,
of West Virginia, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget, vice Jacob J. Lew, resigned.

Ernest W. Dubester,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years expiring July 29, 2017 (reappointment).

Timothy Hyungrock Haahs,
of Pennsylvania, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Institute of Building Sciences for a term expiring September 7, 2014, vice Morgan Edwards, term expired.

Regina McCarthy,
of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Lisa Perez Jackson, resigned.

Ernest J. Moniz,
of Massachusetts, to be Secretary of Energy, vice Steven Chu.

Submitted March 13

Deborah Kay Jones,
of New Mexico, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Libya.

James Knight,
of Alabama, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chad.

Stephen Crawford,
of Maryland, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for the remainder of the term expiring December 8, 2015, vice Alan C. Kessler, resigned.

James J. Jones,
of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Administrator for Toxic Substances of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Stephen Alan Owens, resigned.

Kenneth J. Kopocis,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Peter Silva Silva, resigned.

Olga Viso,
of Minnesota, to be a Member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2018, vice William Francis Price, Jr., term expired.

Withdrawn March 13

Elissa F. Cadish,
of Nevada, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Nevada, vice Philip M. Pro, retired, which was sent to the Senate on January 4, 2013.

Submitted March 19

Patricia E. Campbell-Smith,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims for a term of 15 years, vice Lawrence Baskir, retiring.

Elaine D. Kaplan,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims for a term of 15 years, vice Christine O.C. Miller, term expired.

Michael Kenny O'Keefe,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Joan Z. McAvoy, retired.

Robert D. Okun,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Linda Kay Davis, retired.

Thomas Edward Perez,
of Maryland, to be Secretary of Labor, vice Hilda L. Solis, resigned.

Catherine M. Russell,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues.

Submitted March 21

Cynthia L. Attwood,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission for a term expiring April 27, 2019 (reappointment).

Stuart F. Delery,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Tony West.

Fred P. Hochberg,
of New York, to be President of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. for a term expiring January 20, 2017 (reappointment).

Allison M. Macfarlane,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a term expiring June 30, 2018 (reappointment).

Patricia M. Wald,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a term expiring January 29, 2019 (reappointment).

Marilyn A. Brown,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2017 (reappointment).

Vicki Miles-LaGrange,
of Oklahoma, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation for a term expiring December 10, 2015, vice Roger L. Hunt, term expired.

Kevin A. Ohlson,
of Virginia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces for the term of 15 years to expire on the date prescribed by law, vice Andrew S. Effron, term expired.

Ranee Ramaswamy,
of Minnesota, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2018, vice Miguel Campaneria, term expired.

Constance B. Tobias,
of Maryland, to be Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals for a term of 6 years, vice James Philip Terry, term expired.

Withdrawn March 22

Caitlin Joan Halligan,
of New York, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia, vice John G. Roberts, Jr., elevated, which was sent to the Senate on January 4, 2013.

Submitted April 8

Brian C. Deese,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget, vice Heather A. Higginbottom, resigned.

Submitted April 9

Harry I. Johnson, III,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2015, vice Terence Francis Flynn, resigned.

Philip Andrew Miscimarra,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2017, vice Brian Hayes, term expired.

Mark Gaston Pearce,
of New York, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2018 (reappointment).

Submitted April 11

Matthew C. Armstrong,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2015, vice Dana M. Perino, resigned.

Rick Lowe,
of Texas, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2018, vice JoAnn Faletta, term expired.

Tulinabo Salama Mushingi,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Burkina Faso.

Harry R. Hoglander,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2014 (reappointment).

Dorothy Kosinski,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2016, vice Ricardo Quinones, term expired.

Linda A. Puchala,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2015 (reappointment).

Submitted April 15

Rachel Elise Barkow,
of New York, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2017, vice Beryl A. Howell, term expired.

Charles R. Breyer,
of California, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2015, vice Ruben Castillo, term expired.

Vernon S. Broderick,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York, vice Deborah A. Batts, retired.

William H. Pryor Jr.,
of Alabama, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2017, vice William B. Carr, Jr., term expired.

Submitted April 18

Henry J. Aaron,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Social Security Advisory Board for a term expiring September 30, 2014, vice Jeffrey Robert Brown, term expired.

Henry J. Aaron,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Social Security Advisory Board for a term expiring September 30, 2020 (reappointment).

Ben S. Bernanke,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Alternate Governor of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 5 years (reappointment).

Avril D. Haines,
of New York, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State, vice Harold Hongju Koh, resigned.

Andrea Levere,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Consumer Cooperative Bank for a term of 3 years, vice Nguyen Van Hanh, term expired.

Gloria Valencia-Weber,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2014 (reappointment).

Submitted April 23

David Michael Bennett,
of North Carolina, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2018, vice Thurgood Marshall, Jr., term expired.

Roberto R. Herencia,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2015 (reappointment).

Carlos Pascual,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Energy Resources), vice John Stern Wolf.

Yvette Roubideaux,
of Maryland, to be Director of the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, for the term of 4 years (reappointment).

Submitted April 25

William S. Jasien,
of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board for a term expiring October 11, 2015, vice Terrence A. Duffy, term expired.

Nanci E. Langley,
of Hawaii, to be a Commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission for a term expiring November 22, 2018 (reappointment).

Brent Franklin Nelsen,
of South Carolina, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Pub-

lic Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2016, vice Gay Hart Gaines, term expired.

Howard A. Shelanski,
of Pennsylvania, to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, vice Cass R. Sunstein, resigned.

Submitted May 6

Colin Stirling Bruce,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of Illinois, vice Michael P. McCuskey, retiring.

Sara Lee Ellis,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, vice Joan B. Gottschall, retired.

Andrea R. Wood,
of Illinois, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, vice William J. Hibbler, deceased.

Submitted May 7

Anthony Renard Foxx,
of North Carolina, to be Secretary of Transportation, vice Ray LaHood.

Michael Froman,
of New York, to be U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, vice Ronald Kirk, resigned.

Melvin L. Watt,
of North Carolina, to be Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency for a term of 5 years (new position).

Submitted May 9

Madeline Hughes Haikala,
of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama, vice Inge Prytz Johnson, retired.

Gregory Howard Woods,
of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York, vice Barbara S. Jones, retired.

Mark D. Gearan,
of New York, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring December 1, 2015 (reappointment).

Rose Eilene Gottemoeller,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, vice Ellen O. Tauscher, resigned.

Joseph W. Nega,
of Illinois, to be a judge of the U.S. Tax Court for a term of 15 years, vice Thomas B. Wells, retired.

Penny Pritzker,
of Illinois, to be Secretary of Commerce, vice John Edgar Bryson, resigned.

Michael B. Thornton,
of Virginia, to be a judge of the U.S. Tax Court for a term of 15 years (reappointment).

Davita Vance-Cooks,
of Virginia, to be Public Printer, vice William J. Boarman.

Thomas Edgar Wheeler,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2013, vice Julius Genachowski.

Thomas Edgar Wheeler,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of 5 years from July 1, 2013 (reappointment).

Submitted May 13

Ryan Clark Crocker,
of Washington, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2013, vice Victor H. Ashe, term expired.

Ryan Clark Crocker,
of Washington, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2016 (reappointment).

Submitted May 16

Robert James Grey, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2014 (reappointment).

Richard T. Metsger,
of Oregon, to be a member of the National Credit Union Administration Board for a term expiring August 2, 2017, vice Gigi Hyland, resigned.

Daniel R. Russel,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs), vice Kurt M. Campbell, resigned.

Debra M. Brown,
of Mississippi, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Mississippi, vice W. Allen Pepper, Jr., deceased.

Carolyn B. McHugh,
of Utah, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, vice Michael R. Murphy, retired.

Pamela L. Reeves,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee, vice Thomas W. Phillips, retiring.

Elizabeth A. Wolford,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of New York, vice Charles J. Siragusa, retired.

Submitted May 20

Jon M. Holladay,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Agriculture, vice Evan J. Segal.

Submitted May 23

William Ira Althen,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2018, vice Michael F. Duffy, term expired.

Katherine Archuleta,
of Colorado, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management for a term of 4 years, vice John Berry, term expired.

Ann Marie Buerkle,
of New York, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2011, vice Anne M. Northup, term expired.

James F. Entwistle,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Chai Rachel Feldblum,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2018 (reappointment).

Douglas Edward Lute,
of Indiana, to be U.S. Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Victoria Nuland,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European and Eurasian Affairs), vice Philip H. Gordon, resigned.

Michael Sean Piwowar,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for a term expiring June 5, 2018, vice Troy A. Paredes, term expiring.

Mark E. Schaefer,
of California, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, vice Larry Robinson.

Daniel A. Sepulveda,
of Florida, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Communications and Information Policy in the Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs and U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy.

Lafe E. Solomon,
of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board for a term of 4 years, vice Ronald E. Meisburg, resigned.

Kara Marlene Stein,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for a term expiring June 5, 2017, vice Elisse Walter, term expired.

Daniel M. Tangherlini,
of the District of Columbia, to be Administrator of General Services, vice Martha N. Johnson, resigned.

John H. Thompson,
of the District of Columbia, to be Director of the Census for the remainder of the term expiring December 31, 2016, vice Robert M. Groves, resigned.

Zachary Thomas Fardon,
of Illinois, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois for the term of 4 years, vice Patrick J. Fitzgerald, term expired.

Landya B. McCafferty,
of New Hampshire, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Hampshire, vice Steven J. McAuliffe, retired.

Brian Morris,
of Montana, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Montana, vice Sam E. Haddon, retired.

Susan P. Watters,
of Montana, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Montana, vice Richard F. Cebull, retired.

Submitted June 4

Patricia Ann Millett,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice John G. Roberts, Jr., elevated.

Cornelia T.L. Pillard,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice Douglas H. Ginsburg, retired.

Robert Leon Wilkins,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice David Bryan Sentelle, retired.

Submitted June 7

Timothy L. Brooks,
of Arkansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas, vice Jimm Larry Hendren, retired.

Jeffrey Alker Meyer,
of Connecticut, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Connecticut, vice Mark R. Kravitz, deceased.

Thomas C. Carper,
of Illinois, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of 5 years (reappointment).

Avi Garbow,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Colin Scott Cole Fulton, resigned.

Thomas Hicks,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission for a term expiring December 12, 2013, vice Gracia M. Hillman, term expired.

Thomas Hicks,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission for a term expiring December 12, 2017 (reappointment).

Howard Abel Husock,
of New York, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2018, vice Chris Boskin, term expired.

Laurie I. Mikva,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2013 (reappointment).

Laurie I. Mikva,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2016 (reappointment).

Myrna Perez,
of Texas, to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission for a term expiring December 12, 2015, vice Rosemary E. Rodriguez, term expired.

Submitted June 11

Daniel Brooks Baer,
of Colorado, to be U.S. Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with the rank of Ambassador.

Michael G. Carroll,
of New York, to be Inspector General, U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Donald A. Gambatesa, resigned.

James Cole, Jr.,
of New York, to be General Counsel, Department of Education, vice Charles P. Rose.

Jason Furman,
of New York, to be member and Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, vice Alan B. Krueger.

Keith Michael Harper,
of Maryland, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as U.S. Representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Catherine Elizabeth Lhamon,
of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education, vice Russlynn Ali.

Stephen Woolman Preston,
of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Defense, vice Jeh Charles Johnson, resigned.

Submitted June 13

John Gerson Levi,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2014 (reappointment).

Mark Thomas Nethery,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2018, vice Eric D. Eberhard, term expired.

Samantha Power,
of Massachusetts, to be the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the Representative of the United States of America in the Security Council of the United Nations.

Samantha Power,
of Massachusetts, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during her tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations.

Charles P. Rose,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring May 26, 2019, vice Robert Boldrey, term expired.

Stephanie Sanders Sullivan,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Congo.

Joseph Y. Yun,
of Oregon, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Malaysia.

Withdrawn June 13

Avril D. Haines,
of New York, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State, vice Harold Hongju Koh, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on April 18, 2013.

Submitted June 17

Liliana Ayalde,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federative Republic of Brazil.

James Costos,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Spain.

John B. Emerson,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Germany.

John Rufus Gifford,
of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Denmark.

Kenneth Francis Hackett,
of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Holy See.

Patricia Marie Haslach,
of Oregon, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Submitted June 20

James Donato,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice James Ware, retired.

Beth Labson Freeman,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice an additional position in accordance with 28 U.S.C. 133(b)(1).

Jennifer Prescod May-Parker,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina, vice Malcolm J. Howard, retired.

Submitted June 21

James B. Comey, Jr.,
of Connecticut, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of 10 years, vice Robert S. Mueller, III, term expiring.

James C. Miller, III,
of Virginia, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for the term expiring December 8, 2017 (reappointment).

Anne J. Udall,
of Oregon, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2016 (reappointment).

Submitted June 24

Denise Campbell Bauer,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Belgium.

Morrell John Berry,
of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Australia.

James Walter Brewster, Jr.,
of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Dominican Republic.

Reuben Earl Brigety, II,
of Florida, to be Representative of the United States of America to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Daniel A. Clune,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Lee E. Goodman,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2015, vice Donald F. McGahn, term expired.

David Hale,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Lebanon.

Michael A. Hammer,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chile.

Terence Patrick McCulley,
of Washington, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire.

Terrell McSweeny,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the unexpired term of 7 years from September 26, 2010, vice Jon D. Leibowitz, resigned.

Brian A. Nichols,
of Rhode Island, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Peru.

David D. Pearce,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Greece.

Ann Miller Ravel,
of California, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2017, vice Cynthia L. Bauerly, resigned.

Jon T. Rymer,
of Tennessee, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense, vice Gordon S. Heddell, resigned.

Loretta Cheryl Sutliff,
of Nevada, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2018 (reappointment).

Linda Thomas-Greenfield,
of Louisiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), vice Johnnie Carson.

Submitted June 26

Pedro A. Delgado Hernández,
of Puerto Rico, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico, vice Daniel R. Dominguez, retired.

Bruce Howe Hendricks,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Carolina, vice Margaret B. Seymour, retired.

Alison Renee Lee,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Carolina, vice Cameron M. Currie, retiring.

Submitted June 27

Kenneth Allen Polite, Jr.,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana for the term of 4 years, vice James B. Letten, resigned.

James Costos,
of California, to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Andorra.

Ronald J. Binz,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2018, vice Jon Wellinghoff, term expiring.

Robert Bonnie,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, vice Harris D. Sherman, resigned.

Patrick Hubert Gaspard,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of South Africa.

Krysta L. Harden,
of Georgia, to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, vice Kathleen A. Merrigan, resigned.

Ellen C. Herbst,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Scott Boyer Quehl, resigned.

Ellen C. Herbst,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Commerce, vice Scott Boyer Quehl, resigned.

Steve A. Linick,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Department of State, vice Howard J. Krongard, resigned.

Alejandro Nicholas Mayorkas,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Jane Holl Lute, resigned.

Katherine M. O'Regan,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Raphael William Bostic.

Susan J. Rabern,
of Kansas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, vice Gladys Commons, resigned.

James C. Swan,
of California, a career nember of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Kirk W.B. Wagar,
of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Singapore.

Alexa Lange Wesner,
of Texas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Austria.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released January 1

Fact sheet: The Tax Agreement: A Victory for Middle-Class Families and the Economy

Released January 2

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4310

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 8

Released January 4

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in December 2012

Released January 6

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 41

Released January 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes and Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for South Asia Douglas E. Lute on the upcoming visit of President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to the White House

Released January 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 10

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1339, H.R. 1845, H.R. 2338, H.R. 3263, H.R. 3641, H.R. 3869, H.R. 3892, H.R. 4053, H.R. 4057, H.R. 4073, H.R. 4389, H.R. 5859, H.R. 6014, H.R. 6260, H.R. 6379, H.R. 6587, H.R. 6620, H.R. 6671, S. 925, S. 3202, S. 3666, and S.J. Res. 49

Released January 14

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 443, H.R. 1464, H.R. 2076, H.R. 4212, H.R. 4365, H.R. 4606, H.R. 6029, H.R. 6060, H.R. 6328, H.R. 6364, H.R. 6586, H.R. 6621, H.R. 6655, S.J. Res. 44, S. 3331, S. 3454, S. 3472, S. 3630, S. 3662, and S. 3677

Released January 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2318

Released January 16

Text: Now Is the Time: The President's Plan To Protect Our Children and Our Communities by Reducing Gun Violence

Released January 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 18

Statement by the Press Secretary on House Republican debt limit proposals

Released January 21

Advance text of the President's Inaugural Address

Released January 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released January 29

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 152

Fact sheet: Fixing Our Broken Immigration System So Everyone Plays by the Rules

Excerpts from the President's remarks on immigration reform

Released January 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the advance estimate of GDP for the fourth quarter of 2012

Released January 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released February 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the explosion in Mexico City

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in January

Released February 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 325

Released February 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan on Bulgaria's announcement of Hizballah's role in the 2012 Burgas terrorist attack

Released February 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Readout of White House and Department of Homeland Security officials' meetings with law enforcement on comprehensive immigration reform

Released February 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released February 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney, Controller of the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Federal Financing Management Daniel I. Werfel, and National Economic Council Principal Deputy Director Jason L. Furman

Fact sheet: Examples of How the Sequester Would Impact Middle Class Families, Jobs, and Economic Security

Released February 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released February 12

Statement by the Press Secretary: Executive Order on Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity

Fact sheet: Presidential Policy Directive on Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience

Fact sheet: Afghanistan

Text: Guest List for the First Lady's Box at the State of the Union Address

Text: The President's Plan for a Strong Middle Class and a Strong America

Excerpts of the President's State of the Union Address

Advance text of the President's State of the Union Address

Released February 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and National Economic Council Principal Deputy Director Jason L. Furman

Statement by the Press Secretary: The President's Plan To Make America a Magnet for Jobs by Investing in Manufacturing

Fact sheet: The President's Plan To Make America a Magnet for Jobs by Investing in Manufacturing

Fact sheet: President Obama's Plan for Early Education for All Americans (embargoed until February 14)

Released February 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on congressional action on the Federal budget

Statement by the Press Secretary on the filibuster of the nomination of Charles T. Hagel to be Secretary of Defense

Released February 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: The President's Plan To Ensure Hard Work Leads to a Decent Living

Released February 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released February 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: The President's Plan To Make America a Magnet for Jobs by Investing in Infrastructure

Released February 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Transcript of a conference call press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael B. Froman, and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Daniel R. Russel on the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan

Text: White House Blog Post: A Balanced Plan To Avert the Sequester and Reduce the Deficit

Released February 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood

Released February 24

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Releases New State-by-State Reports on the Impacts of the Sequester

Released February 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano

Released February 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: White House Policy for Countering Improvised Explosive Devices

Released February 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Released February 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released March 1

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Grants Pardons

Released March 2

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces New Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region

Released March 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released March 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: One-Year Update on the Implementation of the National Strategy for Global Supply Chain Security

Released March 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 47

Released March 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the 2007 disappearance of retired Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Robert Levinson in Iran

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in February

Fact sheet: Implementation of Export Control Reform

Released March 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon at the Asia Society in New York City

Released March 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the House Republican budget proposal

Released March 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 307

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Senate Democratic budget proposal

Released March 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes and U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel B. Shapiro

Released March 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: President Obama's Blueprint for a Clean and Secure Energy Future

Text: White House Blog Post: A Preview of the 2013 Economic Report of the President

Released March 16

Statement by the Press Secretary on the formation of Israel's new government

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the 25th anniversary of the Halabja massacre in southern Kurdistan

Released March 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released March 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces New Coordinator for Defense Policy, Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Arms Control

Released March 20

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the visit of Cuban human rights advocate Yoani Sanchez to the United States

Released March 21

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on passage of the U.N. Human Rights Council's resolution on Sri Lanka

Advance text of the President's remarks at the Jerusalem Convention Center in Jerusalem

Released March 22

Transcript of a press briefing by senior administration officials on the telephone conversation between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the surrender of Congolese warlord Bosco Ntaganda to the International Criminal Court

Released March 23

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of Federal budget legislation

Released March 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Designates Five New National Monuments

Released March 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 933

Released March 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released March 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released March 29

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: The "Rebuild America Partnership": The President's Plan To Encourage Private Investment in America's Infrastructure

Released March 30

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Presidential election in Kenya

Released April 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released April 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: BRAIN Initiative

Released April 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Excerpts of the President's remarks on reducing gun violence

Released April 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released April 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S. security sector assistance policy

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the removal

of highly enriched uranium from the Czech Republic

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in March

Fact sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy

Released April 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine's pardon of former Minister of Internal Affairs Yuriy Lutsenko and former Minister of Environmental Protection Heorhiy Fylypchuk

Excerpts from the President's remarks on gun control

Released April 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: The Obama Administration's Record on Human Trafficking Issues

Released April 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney, Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget Jeffrey D. Zients, National Economic Council Director Eugene B. Sperling, and Director of Domestic Policy Cecilia Muñoz

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the earthquake in Iran

Released April 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released April 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Transcript of a weekly address by Francine Wheeler, mother of Ben Wheeler, who was killed in the December 14, 2012, shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut

Released April 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 716

Released April 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in Venezuela

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on the meeting between National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saud al-Faysal bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia

Fact sheet: States Answer the First Lady's Call To Put America's Heroes Back to Work

Released April 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released April 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released April 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released April 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Advance text of remarks by National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy in New York City

Released April 25

Transcript of a background conference call by a White House official on the situation in Syria

Released April 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the advance estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2013

Released April 28

Statement by the Press Secretary on the swearing-in of Prime Minister Enrico Letta of Italy

Released April 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: Administration Partners With Industry To Get Service Members for High-Demand Jobs

Released May 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1246 and H.R. 1765

Released May 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in April

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Partnership

Released May 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released May 4

Fact sheet: United States Support for Central American Citizen Security

Fact sheet: United States Support for Economic Growth and Development in Central America

Released May 5

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Advance text of the President's commencement address at the Ohio State University

Released May 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released May 7

Text: Op-ed by President Obama for the Miami Herald: Improving Our Partnership With Latin America (a Spanish language version was also released)

Released May 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Assistant to the President and Chief Technology Officer Todd Park

Statement by the Press Secretary on the elections in Malaysia

Released May 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Assistant to the President and Chief Technology Officer Todd Park

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Releases Historic Open Data Rules To Enhance Government Efficiency and Fuel Economic Growth

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Launches Competition for Three New Manufacturing Innovation Institutes

Released May 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the National Strategy for the Arctic Region

Released May 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released May 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released May 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: The President and Vice President's 2012 Financial Disclosure Forms

Released May 16

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Calls on Congress To Fully Fund Embassy Security

Text: Op-ed by President Obama for the Turkish daily Sabah: A Partnership That Delivers

Fact sheet: U.S.-Turkey Economic Partnership

Fact sheet: U.S.-Turkey Partnership

Released May 17

Statement by the Press Secretary: Creating Jobs Faster by Cutting Timelines in Half for Major Infrastructure Projects

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1071

Released May 19

Advance text of the President's commencement address at Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA

Released May 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Sally Ride as a Recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Released May 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released May 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released May 23

Transcript of a teleconference background briefing by senior administration officials on the President's remarks at National Defense University

Fact sheet: The President's May 23 Speech on Counterterrorism

Fact sheet: U.S. Policy Standards and Procedures for the Use of Force in Counterterrorism Operations Outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities

Advance text of the President's Remarks at National Defense University

Released May 24

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 360

Released May 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released May 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: Alan Krueger, Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, To Return to Princeton University

Fact sheet: United States Support for Economic Growth and Development in the Caribbean

Fact sheet: United States Support for the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative

Released May 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary: Readout on the First-Ever White House Hispanic Business Leaders' Forum

Released May 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Released May 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text: White House Blog Post: Medicare Trustees: Medicare is Growing Stronger, With Help From the Affordable Care Act

Fact sheet: President Obama Fights To Keep Interest Rates From Doubling

Released June 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's approval of an Executive order regarding sanctions related to Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 258 and S. 982

Fact sheet: President Obama Applauds Commitments To Raise Awareness and Increase Understanding of Mental Health at White House Conference

Released June 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Transcript of a background conference call by senior administration officials on the President's meetings with President Xi Jinping of China

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on Egyptian court verdicts against representatives of international nongovernmental organizations

Fact sheet: White House Task Force on High-Tech Patent Issues: Legislative Priorities and Executive Actions

Fact sheet: U.S.-Chile Economic Relations

Fact sheet: U.S.-Chile Partnership

Released June 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Presidential determination pursuant to section 1245(d)(4)(B) and (C) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in Qusayr, Syria

Released June 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Unveils ConnectED Initiative To Bring America's Students Into Digital Age

Statement by the Press Secretary on House passage of an amendment to remove protections for young undocumented immigrants

Released June 7

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger on the employment situation in May

Released June 8

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon

Statement by the Press Secretary: United States and China Agree To Work Together on Phase Down of HFCs

Released June 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Text: Fifty Years After the Equal Pay Act: Assessing the Past, Taking Stock of the Future

Released June 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Fact sheet: U.S.-Peru Economic Relations

Released June 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Advance text of remarks by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Alan B. Krueger at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, OH

Released June 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes on Syria

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 622

Text: Statement by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes on Syria's use of chemical weapons

Released June 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, and Senior Director for International Economic Issues Caroline Atkinson

Fact sheet: Administration Provides Another Boost to Wireless Broadband and Technological Innovation

Released June 15

Statement by the Press Secretary on the first anniversary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals process

Statement by the Press Secretary on the election in Iran

Released June 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Fact sheet: U.S. Support for Northern Ireland Peace and Prosperity

Fact sheet: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T–TIP)

Fact sheet: U.S.-Russian Cooperation on Information and Communications Technology Security

Fact sheet: United States and the Russian Federation Sign New Bilateral Framework on Threat Reduction

Fact sheet: President Obama Increases Humanitarian Assistance to Syrians

Released June 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Transcript of a teleconference background briefing by senior administration officials on Afghanistan

Statement by the Press Secretary: United States G–8 Action Plan for Transparency of Company Ownership and Control

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Congressional Budget Office's evaluation of immigration reform legislation

Fact sheet: The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition

Fact sheet: U.S. National Action Plan on Preventing the Misuse of Companies and Legal Arrangements

Released June 19

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Caitlin Hayden on al-Shabaab's attack on the United Nations in Somalia

Fact sheet: Nuclear Weapons Employment Strategy of the United States

Released June 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Senior Director for African Affairs Grant Harris, and Senior Director for Development and Democracy Gayle Smith on the President's upcoming visit to Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania

Released June 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Statement by the Press Secretary on the report released by Acting Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service Daniel I. Werfel

Released June 25

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 475

Fact sheet: President Obama's Plan To Cut Carbon Pollution

Text: The President's Climate Action Plan

Released June 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney on the President's statement on the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney

Released June 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, and U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv J. Shah

Fact sheet: U.S. Support for Strengthening Democratic Institutions, Rule of Law, and Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa

Released June 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Fact sheet: Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa

Released June 29

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders

Fact sheet: The President's Young African Leaders Initiative

Released June 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Fact sheet: Global Health Investments and Partnership in Africa

Fact sheet: Power Africa

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register*

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. *The texts of the documents are printed in the* Federal Register (F.R.) *at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the* Code of Federal Regulations *and in the Compilation of Presidential Documents.*

PROCLAMATIONS

Proc. No.	*Date 2013*	*Subject*	*78 F.R. Page*
8926	Jan. 16	Religious Freedom Day, 2013	4293
8927	Jan. 18	Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 2013	5249
8928	Jan. 21	National Day of Hope and Resolve, 2013	5251
8929	Jan. 31	American Heart Month, 2013	8345
8930	Jan. 31	National African American History Month, 2013	8347
8931	Jan. 31	National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, 2013	8349
8932	Feb. 1	100th Anniversary of the Birth of Rosa Parks	8951
8933	Feb. 28	American Red Cross Month, 2013	14429
8934	Feb. 28	Irish-American Heritage Month, 2013	14431
8935	Feb. 28	Women's History Month, 2013	14433
8936	Feb. 28	Read Across America Day, 2013	14435
8937	Mar. 1	National Consumer Protection Week, 2013	14627
8938	Mar. 1	10th Anniversary of the United States Department of Homeland Security	14629
8939	Mar. 1	100th Anniversary of the United States Department of Labor	14631
8940	Mar. 15	National Poison Prevention Week, 2013	17069
8941	Mar. 21	Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 2013	18453
8942	Mar. 22	Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2013	18455
8943	Mar. 25	Establishment of the Harriet Tubman–Underground Railroad National Monument	18763
8944	Mar. 25	Establishment of the First State National Monument	18769
8945	Mar. 25	Establishment of the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument	18777
8946	Mar. 25	Establishment of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument	18783
8947	Mar. 25	Establishment of the San Juan Islands National Monument	18789
8948	Mar. 29	National Cancer Control Month, 2013	20213

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2013*	*Subject*	*78 F.R. Page*
8949	Mar. 29	National Child Abuse Prevention Month, 2013	20215
8950	Mar. 29	National Donate Life Month, 2013	20217
8951	Mar. 29	National Financial Capability Month, 2013	20219
8952	Mar. 29	National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, 2013	20221
8953	Mar. 29	Cesar Chavez Day, 2013	20223
8954	Apr. 1	World Autism Awareness Day, 2013	20409
8955	Apr. 8	National Equal Pay Day, 2013	21813
8956	Apr. 8	National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 2013	21815
8957	Apr. 12	Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 2013	23103
8958	Apr. 16	Honoring the Victims of the Tragedy in Boston, Massachusetts	23669
8959	Apr. 19	National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2013	24319
8960	Apr. 19	National Volunteer Week, 2013	24321
8961	Apr. 19	National Park Week, 2013	24323
8962	Apr. 19	Earth Day, 2013	24325
8963	Apr. 24	Honoring the Victims of the Explosion in West, Texas	25179
8964	Apr. 26	Workers Memorial Day, 2013	25563
8965	Apr. 30	Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2013	26213
8966	Apr. 30	Jewish American Heritage Month, 2013	26215
8967	Apr. 30	National Building Safety Month, 2013	26217
8968	Apr. 30	National Foster Care Month, 2013	26219
8969	Apr. 30	National Mental Health Awareness Month, 2013	26221
8970	Apr. 30	National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2013	26223
8971	Apr. 30	Older Americans Month, 2013	26225
8972	Apr. 30	Law Day, U.S.A., 2013	26227
8973	Apr. 30	Loyalty Day, 2013	26229
8974	May 1	National Day of Prayer, 2013	26483
8975	May 3	National Charter Schools Week, 2013	26997
8976	May 9	Military Spouse Appreciation Day, 2013	28463
8977	May 10	National Defense Transportation Day and National Transportation Week, 2013	28709
8978	May 10	National Women's Health Week, 2013	28711
8979	May 10	Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, 2013	28713
8980	May 10	Mother's Day, 2013	28715
8981	May 17	National Safe Boating Week, 2013	30725
8982	May 17	Emergency Medical Services Week, 2013	30727
8983	May 17	World Trade Week, 2013	30729
8984	May 17	Armed Forces Day, 2013	30731
8985	May 21	National Maritime Day, 2013	31811

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2013*	*Subject*	*78 F.R. Page*
8986	May 24	National Hurricane Preparedness Week, 2013	32537
8987	May 24	Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 2013	32539
8988	May 31	Great Outdoors Month, 2013	33955
8989	May 31	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, 2013	33957
8990	May 31	National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, 2013	33959
8991	May 31	National Oceans Month, 2013	33961
8992	May 31	African-American Music Appreciation Month, 2013	34243
8993	June 7	Flag Day and National Flag Week, 2013	35101
8994	June 14	National Small Business Week, 2013	37425
8995	June 14	World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 2013	37427
8996	June 14	Father's Day, 2013	37429
8997	June 27	To Modify Duty-Free Treatment Under the Generalized System of Preferences and for Other Purposes	39949

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

E.O. No.	*Date 2013*	*Subject*	*78 F.R. Page*
13636	Feb. 12	Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity	11739
13637	Mar. 8	Administration of Reformed Export Controls	16129
13638	Mar. 15	Amendments to Executive Order 12777	17589
13639	Mar. 28	Establishment of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration	19979
13640	Apr. 5	Continuance of Advisory Council	21211
13641	Apr. 5	Adjustments of Certain Rates of Pay	21503
13642	May 9	Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information	28111
13643	May 15	2013 Amendments to the Manual for Courts-Martial, United States	29559
13644	May 21	Amendment to Executive Order 13639	31813
13645	June 3	Authorizing the Implementation of Certain Sanctions Set Forth in the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 and Additional Sanctions With Respect to Iran	33945
13646	June 25	Establishing the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans	39159
13647	June 26	Establishing the White House Council on Native American Affairs	39539

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Doc No.	*Date 2013*	*Subject*	*78 F.R. Page*
	Jan. 15	Memorandum: Delegation of Certain Functions Under Section 6 of Public Law 112–150	5705
	Jan. 16	Memorandum: Engaging in Public Health Research on the Causes and Prevention of Gun Violence	4295
	Jan. 16	Memorandum: Improving Availability of Relevant Executive Branch Records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System	4297
	Jan. 16	Memorandum: Tracing of Firearms in Connection With Criminal Investigations	4301
	Jan. 17	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process	4303
	Jan. 25	Memorandum: Rulemaking Concerning the Standards for Designating Positions in the Competitive Service as National Security Sensitive and Related Matters	7253
2013–04	Jan. 29	Presidential Determination: Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Relating to Syria	9571
	Jan. 30	Memorandum: Coordination of Policies and Programs To Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls Globally	7989
	Jan. 31	Memorandum: Delegation of a Reporting Authority	8351
	Jan. 31	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority To Suspend the Provisions of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996	9573
	Feb. 1	Memorandum: Designation of Officers of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation To Act as Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	8953
	Feb. 4	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire	8955
2013–05	Feb. 8	Presidential Determination: Waiver of Restriction on Providing Funds to the Palestinian Authority	12587
2013–06	Feb. 11	Presidential Determination: Drawdown Under Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, for Chad and France To Support Their Efforts in Mali	12589
	Feb. 13	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya	11549
	Feb. 20	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority To Submit to the Congress Certain Certifications, Reports, and Notifications	13997

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	Feb. 22	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels	13209
	Mar. 1	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in Zimbabwe	14427
	Mar. 1	Order: Sequestration Order for Fiscal Year 2013 Pursuant To Section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, as Amended	14633
	Mar. 12	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran	16397
	Mar. 29	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority To Appoint Commissioned Officers of the Ready Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service	20225
	Apr. 4	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Somalia	21013
	Apr. 5	Memorandum: Federal Employee Pay Schedules and Rates That Are Set by Administrative Discretion	21213
	Apr. 5	Memorandum: Delegation of Functions Under Sections 404 and 406 of Public Law 112–208	22763
2013–07	Apr. 8	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on Eligibility of the Federal Republic of Somalia To Receive Defense Articles and Defense Services Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, and the Arms Export Control Act, as Amended	22765
	Apr. 10	Order: Sequestration Order for Fiscal Year 2014 Pursuant to Section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, as Amended	22409
2013–08	Apr. 11	Presidential Determination: Drawdown Pursuant to Section 552(c)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 of up to $10 Million in Commodities and Services From Any Agency of the United States Government to the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) and the Syrian Opposition's Supreme Military Council (SMC)	24317, 55169
	May 2	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma	26231, 26999
	May 7	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria	27301
	May 10	Memorandum: Advancing Pay Equality in the Federal Government and Learning From Successful Practices.	28717
	May 13	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Yemem	28465

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	May 17	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq	30195
	May 17	Memorandum: Modernizing Federal Infrastructure Review and Permitting Regulations, Policies, and Procedures	30733
	May 31	Memorandum: Delegation of Functions Under Subsection 804(h)(2)(A) of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act	33943
	June 3	Memorandum: Delegation of Certain Functions and Authorities Under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012	35545
2013–09	June 4	Presidential Determination: Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act	35535
2013–10	June 5	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination Pursuant to Section 1245(d)(4)(B) and (C) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012	35537
	June 7	Memorandum: Transforminig Our Nation's Electric Grid Through Improved Siting, Permitting, and Review	35539
	June 13	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons To Undermine Belarus's Democratic Processes or Institutions	36081
	June 14	Memorandum: Expanding America's Leadership in Wireless Innovation	37431
	June 17	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans	37099
	June 19	Memorandum: Delegation of Reporting Functions Specified in Section 491 of Title 10, United States Code	37923
	June 20	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Disposition of Russian Highly Enriched Uranium	37925
	June 21	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea	38193
	June 25	Memorandum: Power Sector Carbon Pollution Standards	39535

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