

great sign of the excellent sportsmen that we have in our countries, and the World Cup, I think, signifies also the bonds that all people have. So we're very excited to see how that event goes in Brazil, and we congratulate Brazil on hosting the World Cup.

So, Mr. President, welcome. And thank you again for your great hospitality. More importantly, thank you for your friendship and your leadership.

President Santos. Thank you so much, President Obama, for your welcome, and thank you again for this invitation. As you well said, this is not the first time that I've been in the White House, and this time my visit comes under very special circumstances.

The relations of our two countries are—find themselves at their best moment ever. And as a result, the agenda that we have discussed this morning is much broader than it's ever been. We have gone well beyond the usual items that we used to discuss, like security, like drug trafficking, and we are now expanding it to topics like education, energy, and mutual cooperation: what we can do regionally.

And I want to thank you especially, President Obama, for all the support that you have shown us in the process towards peace in Colombia. It's a process that is doing very well, and it is my hope that this is a conflict that will come to an end. We have been shedding blood for over 50 years, and the support of the United States and the entire world is decisive in reaching that peace we all want.

And I was telling President Obama that just as 50 years ago President Kennedy visited Colombia and launched the Alliance for Progress, we should think of something similar that we

could do today, work together to launch a new alliance: an alliance for progress and peace, one that will help the entire region.

Circumstances are very different today, opportunities are different, and the technology we have at our disposal is very different, and therefore, there are many fronts in which we can work together. There are many synergies that we can generate as a result that will lead to positive results.

And we also talked about the cooperation that we have been carrying out together to benefit third countries, in particular, countries of Central America and the Caribbean. We will be tripling the joint operations we're going to be carrying out jointly. For example, just one case, we have 17,000 officers who have been trained in Colombia, officers who come from these countries. And this is the kind of thing we will continue doing together.

And finally, I also want to wish the United States all success in the World Cup. It is my hope, however, that our teams are not going to play—be playing each other very soon. I certainly hope they won't meet in the first round. But we can maybe eliminate the U.S. team later on. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. All right, we'll have to make a wager on that. [*Laughter*] We'll see if that—the actual game comes up. Thank you.

Thank you so much everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgent group. President Santos spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act December 3, 2013

All right. Thank you, Monica. Well, thanks to Monica, thanks to everybody standing behind me, and thanks for everybody out there who cares deeply about this issue. Monica's story is important, because for all the day-to-day fights here in Washington around the Affordable Care Act, it's stories like hers that

should remind us why we took on this reform in the first place.

And for too long, few things left working families more vulnerable to the anxieties and insecurities of today's economy than a broken health care system. So we took up the fight because we believe that in America, nobody

should have to worry about going broke just because somebody in their family or they got sick. We believe that nobody should have to choose between putting food on their kids' table or taking them to see a doctor. We believe we're a better country than a country where we allow, every day, 14,000 Americans to lose their health care coverage; or where every year, tens of thousands of Americans died because they didn't have health care; or where out-of-pocket costs drove millions of citizens into poverty in the wealthiest nation on Earth. We thought we were better than that, and that's why we took this on.

And that's what's gotten lost a little bit over the last couple of months. And our focus, rightly, had to shift towards working 24/7 to fix the website, healthcare.gov, for the new marketplaces where people can buy affordable insurance plans. And today, the website is working well for the vast majority of users. More problems may pop up, as they always do when you're launching something new. And when they do, we'll fix those too. But what we also know is that after just the first month, despite all the problems in the rollout, about half a million people across the country are poised to gain health care coverage through marketplaces and Medicaid beginning on January 1, some for the very first time. We know that: half a million people. And that number is increasing every day, and it is going to keep growing and growing and growing because we know that there are 41 million people out there without health insurance. And we know there are a whole bunch of folks out there who are underinsured or don't have a good deal. And we know the demand is there, and we know that the product on these marketplaces is good and it provides choice and competition for people that allow them, in some cases for the very first time, to have the security that health insurance can provide.

The bottom line is, this law is working and will work into the future. People want the financial stability of health insurance. And we're going to keep on working to fix whatever problems come up. In any startup, any launch of a project this big that has an impact on one-sixth

of our economy, whatever comes up we're going to just fix it because we know that the ultimate goal, the ultimate aim, is to make sure that people have basic security and the foundation for the good health that they need.

Now, we may never satisfy the law's opponents. I think that's fair to say. Some of them are rooting for this law to fail. That's not my opinion, by the way; they say it pretty explicitly. [*Laughter*] Some have already convinced themselves that the law has failed, regardless of the evidence. But I would advise them to check with the people who are here today and the people that they represent all across the country whose lives have been changed for the better by the Affordable Care Act.

The other day I got a letter from Julia Walsh in California. Earlier this year, Julia was diagnosed with leukemia and lymphoma. "I have a lot of things to worry about," she wrote. "But thanks to the [Affordable Care Act], there are lots of things I do not have to worry about, like . . . whether there will be a lifetime cap on benefits [or] whether my treatment will bankrupt my family. . . . I can't begin to tell you how much that peace of mind means. . . ." That's what the Affordable Care Act means to Julia. She already had insurance, by the way, but because this law banned lifetime limits on the care you or your family can receive, she's never going to have to choose between providing for her kids or getting herself well; she can do both.

Sam Weir, a doctor in North Carolina, emailed me the other day. "The coming years will be challenging for all of us in family medicine," he wrote. "But my colleagues and I draw strength from knowing that beginning with the new year, the preventive care many of our current patients have been putting off will be covered and the patients we have not yet seen will finally be able to get the care that they have long needed." That's the difference that the Affordable Care Act will make for many of Dr. Weir's patients. Because more than a hundred million Americans with insurance have gained access to recommended preventive care like mammograms or colonoscopies or flu shots or contraception to help them stay healthy, at no out-of-pocket cost.

At the young age of 23, Justine Ula is battling cancer for the second time. And the other day, her mom Joann e-mailed me from Cleveland University Hospital where Justine is undergoing treatment. She told me she stopped by the pharmacy to pick up Justine's medicine. If Justine were uninsured, it would have cost her \$4,500. But she is insured because the Affordable Care Act has let her and 3 million other young people like Monica gain coverage by staying on their parent's plan until they're 26. And that means Justine's mom, all she had to cover was the \$25 copay.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, more than 7 million seniors and Americans with disabilities have saved an average of \$1,200 on their prescription medicine. This year alone, 8.5 million families have actually gotten an average of a hundred dollars back from their insurance company—you don't hear that very often—[laughter]—because it spent too much on things like overhead and not enough on their care. And by the way, health care costs are rising at the slowest rate in 50 years. So we're actually bending the cost of health care overall, which benefits everybody.

So that's what this law means to millions of Americans. And my main message today is, we're not going back. We're not going to betray Monica or Julia or Sam or Justine or Joann. I mean, that seems to be the only alternative that Obamacare's critics have is, well, let's just go back to the status quo. Because they sure haven't presented an alternative. If you ask many of the opponents of this law what exactly they'd do differently, their answer seems to be, well, let's go back to the way things used to be.

Just the other day, the Republican leader in the Senate was asked what benefits people without health care might see from this law. And he refused to answer, even though there are dozens in this room and tens of thousands in his own State who are already on track to benefit from it. He just repeated "repeal" over and over and over again. And obviously, we've heard that from a lot of folks on that side of the aisle.

Look, I've always said I will work with anybody to implement and improve this law effectively. I mean, if you've got good ideas, bring them to me. Let's go. But we're not repealing it as long as I'm President, and I want everybody to be clear about that.

We will make it work for all Americans. If you don't like this law—[applause]. So, if despite all the millions of people who are benefiting from it, you still think this law is a bad idea, then you've got to tell us specifically what you'd do differently to cut costs, cover more people, make insurance more secure. You can't just say that the system was working with 41 million people without health insurance. You can't just say that the system's working when you've got a whole bunch of folks who thought they had decent insurance and then when they got sick, it turned out, it wasn't there for them or they were left with tens of thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs that were impossible for them to pay.

Right now what that law is doing—

[At this point, a baby in the audience made a noise.]

Yes, you agree with me. [Laughter] Right now what this law is doing is helping folks, and we're just getting started with the exchanges, just getting started with the marketplaces. So we're not going to walk away from it. If I've got to fight another 3 years to make sure this law works, then that's what I'll do. [Applause] That's what we'll do.

But what's important for everybody to remember is not only that the law has already helped millions of people, but that there are millions more who stand to be helped. And we've got to make sure they know that. And I've said very clearly that our poor execution in the first couple months on the website clouded the fact that there are a whole bunch of people who stand to benefit. Now that the website is working for the vast majority of people, we need to make sure that folks refocus on what's at stake here, which is the capacity for you or your families to be able to have the security of decent health insurance at a reasonable cost through choice and competition on this mar-

ketplace and tax credits that you may be eligible for that can save you hundreds of dollars in premium costs every month, potentially.

So we just need people to—now that we are getting the technology fixed, we need you to go back, take a look at what’s actually going on, because it can make a difference in your lives and the lives of your families. And maybe it won’t make a difference right now if you’re feeling healthy, but I promise you, if somebody in your family, heaven forbid, gets sick, you’ll see the difference. And it will make all the difference for you and your families.

So I’m going to need some help in spreading the word. I’m going to need some help in spreading the word. I need you to spread the word about the law, about its benefits, about its protections, about how folks can sign up. Tell your friends. Tell your family. Do not let the initial problems with the website discourage you because it’s working better now and it’s just going to keep on working better over time. Every day, I check to make sure that it’s working better. [*Laughter*] And we’ve learned not to make wild promises about how perfectly smooth it’s going to be at all times, but if you really want health insurance through the mar-

ketplaces, you’re going to be able to get on and find the information that you need for your families at healthcare.gov.

So if you’ve already got health insurance or you’ve already taken advantage of the Affordable Care Act, you’ve got to tell your friends, you’ve got to tell your family. Tell your coworkers. Tell your neighbors. Let’s help our fellow Americans get covered. Let’s give every American a fighting chance in today’s economy. All right?

Thank you so much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Monica S. Weeks, project coordinator, World Resources Institute, who introduced the President; Julia Richards Walsh, instructor, University of Southern California–Davis School of Gerontology; Samuel S. Weir, associate professor of family medicine, University of North Carolina School of Medicine; Poland, OH, residents Justine Ula and her mother Joann Russo; and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell.

Statement on the Resignation of Nancy H. Sutley as Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality

December 3, 2013

I want to thank Nancy Sutley for her counsel and for her service to the American people over the past 5 years. As one of my top advisers, Nancy has played a central role in overseeing many of our biggest environmental accomplishments, including establishing historic new fuel economy standards that will save consumers money, new national monuments that permanently protect sites unique to our country’s rich history and natural heritage, our first comprehensive national ocean policy,

and our climate action plan that will help leave our children a safer, healthier planet. Under her leadership, Federal agencies are meeting the goals I set for them at the beginning of the administration by using less energy, reducing pollution, and saving taxpayer dollars. Her efforts have made it clear that a healthy environment and a strong economy aren’t mutually exclusive; they can go hand in hand. I wish her all the best in her future endeavors.