

been trying to get him in here for quite some time. He ran my transition office. I asked him when he was running the transition office if he would be willing to join us, and at that time, I think he was still feeling that he wanted to develop CAP and other organizations. But John is a great strategist, as good as anybody on domestic policy. And I think he'll be a huge boost to us and give us more bandwidth to deal with more issues.

I suspect that we may have additional announcements in the new year. There's a natural turnover that takes place. People get tired. People get worn out. Sometimes, you need fresh legs.

But what I can tell you is that the team I have now is tireless and shares my values, and believes the thing that I think I've repeated probably four or five times in this press conference, which is, we get this incredible privilege for a pretty short period of time to do as much as we can for as many people as we can to help them live better lives. And that's what drives them. That's the sacrifice they make being away from families and soccer games and birthdays, and some of them will end up work-

ing over Christmas on issues like Iran. And the fact that they make those kinds of sacrifices I'm always grateful for. And if they then say to me after making those sacrifices for 3, 4, 5 years, I need a break, then I completely understand.

All right? Have a great holiday, everybody. Appreciate you.

Q. Merry Christmas.

The President. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:18 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to White House Press Secretary James F. "Jay" Carney; Richard J. Leon, judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia; former National Security Agency contractor Edward J. Snowden, who is accused of leaking classified documents to members of the news media; former President George W. Bush; and incoming Counselor to the President John D. Podesta. He also referred to H.J. Res. 59; and the Center for American Progress (CAP) policy think tank.

Statement on the Prevention of Sexual Assault in the United States Armed Forces

December 20, 2013

Earlier this year, I directed Secretary Hagel, Chairman Dempsey, and our entire defense leadership team to step up their game exponentially in preventing and responding to the serious crime of sexual assault in our military. As Commander in Chief, I've made it clear that these crimes have no place in the greatest military on Earth. Since then, our Armed Forces have moved ahead with a broad range of initiatives, including reforms to the military justice system, improving and expanding prevention programs, and enhancing support for victims. I commend the Pentagon leadership for their hard work on this critical issue of vital importance to our Nation.

Yet, so long as our women and men in uniform face the insider threat of sexual assault,

we have an urgent obligation to do more to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes, as appropriate under the military justice system. Members of Congress, especially Senators Gillibrand and McCaskill, have rightly called attention to the urgency of eradicating this scourge from our Armed Forces. As a result, there were a broad range of reforms proposed in this year's National Defense Authorization Act. The White House and the Department of Defense and other relevant agencies in my administration will continue to work with Congress to address this corrosive problem, which is a violation of the values our Armed Forces stand for, destroys trust among our troops, and undermines our readiness.

Today I instructed Secretary Hagel and Chairman Dempsey to continue their efforts to make substantial improvements with respect to sexual assault prevention and response, including to the military justice system. I have also directed that they report back to me, with a full-scale review of their prog-

ress, by December 1, 2014. If I do not see the kind of progress I expect, then we will consider additional reforms that may be required to eliminate this crime from our military ranks and protect our brave servicemembers who stand guard for us every day at home and around the world.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John A. Koskinen as Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service

December 20, 2013

I applaud the bipartisan majority of Senators who today confirmed John Koskinen as the next Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service. John has decades of private and public sector experience, and he has led institutions in challenging times. Throughout his career, John has always acted with the absolute integrity Ameri-

cans demand from those in public service, and his strong leadership and unquestioned expertise make him the right person to lead the IRS. I want to thank Daniel Werfel for his outstanding service as Principal Deputy Commissioner of the IRS, and I look forward to working with John as he takes on this new role.

The President's Weekly Address

December 21, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, Congress finished up some important work before heading home for the holidays.

For the first time in years, both parties came together in the spirit of compromise to pass a budget, one that helps chart our economic course for the next 2 years. This budget will unwind some of the damaging cuts that have threatened students and seniors and held back our businesses. It clears the path for critical investments in the things that grow our economy and strengthen our middle class, like education and research. And it will keep reducing our deficits, at a time when we've seen 4 years of the fastest deficit reduction since the end of World War II.

Members of Congress also voted to finally allow several dedicated and well-qualified public servants to do their jobs for the American people, many of whom waited months for a simple yes-or-no vote. These are judges, Cabinet Secretaries, and military leaders. They're men and women charged with growing our economy, keeping our homeland secure, and

making sure our housing system and financial system work for ordinary Americans.

So after a year of showdowns and obstruction that only held back our economy, we've been able to break the logjam a bit over the last few weeks. It's a hopeful sign that we can end the cycle of shortsighted, crisis-driven decisionmaking and actually work together to get things done. And that's important because there's plenty of work to do.

Right now, because Congress failed to act before leaving on vacation, more than 1 million Americans are poised to lose a vital source of income just a few days after Christmas. For many people who are still looking for work, unemployment insurance is a lifeline that can make the difference between temporary hardship or lasting catastrophe. Instead of punishing these families who can least afford it—especially now—Congress should first restore that lifeline immediately, then put our entire focus on creating more good jobs that pay good wages.

That's what I'll be focused on next year and every day I have the privilege of being your President: growing the economy, expanding