

Statement on Signing the National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2014

March 6, 2014

Today I signed the National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act into law. This bipartisan legislation ensures that the Federal Government can continue to provide timely, effective drought warning forecasts and vital support to communities that are vulnerable to drought. States, cities, towns, farmers, and businesses rely on tools and data from the National Integrated Drought Information System to make informed decisions about water use, crop planting, wildfire response, and other critical areas. As climate change increases the intensity of weather-related disasters such as droughts, wildfires, storms, and floods, providing access to updated drought-related science and tools is growing even more important.

Currently, a number of Western States are facing drought conditions, including a severe

drought in California, and my administration is pursuing every measure to provide relief and support in partnership with States. To complement the National Integrated Drought Information System, as part of my Climate Action Plan, Federal agencies have also formed a National Drought Resilience Partnership to help communities better prepare for droughts in the long term and prevent the worst impacts on families and businesses. I commend Congress for passing this bipartisan bill to continue to build our national resilience to drought and help communities, farmers, businesses, and individuals better prepare and recover when disaster strikes.

NOTE: H.R. 2431, approved March 6, was assigned Public Law No. 113–86.

Remarks at PBS’s “In Performance at the White House: Women of Soul”

March 6, 2014

Hello, everybody! Welcome to the White House for the latest in our series celebrating the music that has shaped our American story. And as someone who always shares this house with brilliant, creative, talented, somewhat stubborn women—[laughter]—I think Women’s History Month is the perfect time to honor a few more: the Women of Soul.

This is a really good lineup. And I want to thank our performers for this evening. They are fantastic. We’ve got Tessanne Chin here. We’ve got Melissa Etheridge. We’ve got Aretha Franklin. We’ve got Ariana Grande. Miss Patti LaBelle. Janelle Monae. And Miss Jill Scott. That is a lineup. I can’t wait. [Laughter]

Finally, I want to make a quick public service announcement. When Aretha Franklin first walked into Fame Studio in 1967, most of the other musicians had never heard her sing live before. When they did, one of them said: “The floors rumbled and the walls shook. My

brain shook. It was magic.” So my advice to everyone tonight is simple: Hang on. [Laughter] The Queen of Soul is in the building. If she blows your mind, it will be okay. [Laughter]

But that’s what soul music does. It makes us move, and it makes us feel. To quote Jill Scott, “Soul music is about reaching and touching people on a human level.”

For many of the performers here tonight, it all began on Sunday morning. Growing up in Detroit, Aretha sang at her father’s church and recorded her first album at that church when she was just 14 years old. Patti LaBelle was painfully shy—I cannot believe that, but this is what I have been told—[laughter]—until she sang a solo in front of the congregation and got a standing ovation. That’s when she realized she could do something special.

Eventually, artists like Aretha and Patti began mixing gospel with R&B and rock and pop. Instead of singing about love and pain, forgive-

ness and acceptance to a church audience, they sang about them to the world. And the world had never heard anything like it.

When Aretha first told us what “R-S-P-E-C-T”—[*laughter*—]meant to her, she had no idea it would become a rallying cry for African Americans and women and then everyone who felt marginalized because of what they looked like or who they loved. They wanted some respect. Later, when somebody asked her why it had such an impact, she said, “I guess everybody just wants a little respect.” [*Laughter*]

Today, they still do. Aretha had already won 11 Grammys by the time Janelle Monae was born. But as a teenager struggling to make it in New York, Janelle worked as a maid, singing for the other women as they cleaned houses together. And she says the experience inspired

her to write music for people like them, “because they need it the most.”

And when Melissa Etheridge was growing up, she fell in love with artists who had something to say. She remembers thinking, “I can’t wait until I get up there and sing the truth.”

And ultimately, that’s what soul is all about: telling some truth. And tonight we’re in for a healthy dose of truth—[*laughter*—]from some of the finest voices there are.

So without further ado, I’d like to introduce a true American treasure, the one and only Miss Patti LaBelle.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musician Spooner Oldham, who played the organ on Aretha Franklin’s original recording of “Respect.”

Remarks to the White House Press Pool in Miami, Florida

March 7, 2014

One of the reasons we’re down here, Michelle and I are both working on encouraging school districts to adopt some terrific stuff that’s being done down here in order for young people to know if they’ve done the work, if they’re being responsible, they’re outstanding students, then financing should not be a barrier for them being able to go to college. And we just don’t have enough information that’s getting out there about how easy it is now to fill

out the FAFSA form and other scholarships that are available. But this school district is doing some great work on it. So this is an example of where we want all our young people to be.

So great job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. in a classroom at Coral Reef Senior High School. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Coral Reef Senior High School in Miami

March 7, 2014

The President. Hey! Hello, Miami! Hello, ‘Cuda Nation! Thank you. Hello! It is good to be here at Coral Reef Senior High. You guys are just happy because it’s warm down here all the time. [*Laughter*] I don’t know if you’re aware of this, but the rest of the country is cold. [*Laughter*] Ha! Listen, the—Michelle and I are so grateful for the warm welcome. It is great to be here. I want to thank some people who are doing outstanding work.

First of all, your superintendent, Superintendent Carvalho, is doing great work. We’re really proud of him. Your principal, Principal Leal, is doing great work. All the Coral Reef teachers and staff, you guys are all doing a great job. And you’re doing what is necessary to help young people get ready for college and careers. So that’s why we’re here. We are proud of what’s being done at this school.

I want to mention a few other folks who are here who are fighting on behalf of the people