

spirited and positive debate among candidates and their supporters in the runup to the election. These elections are critical to securing Afghanistan's democratic future, as well as continued international support, and we look to the Afghan electoral bodies to carry out their duties in the coming weeks to adjudicate the results, knowing that the most critical voices on the outcome are those of Afghans themselves.

Today we also pay tribute to the many Americans—military and civilian—who have sacrificed so much to support the Afghan people as they take responsibility for their own future. The United States continues to support a sovereign, stable, unified, and democratic Afghanistan, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the new Government chosen by the Afghan people on the basis of mutual respect and mutual accountability.

Statement on the 20th Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda *April 6, 2014*

We join with the people of Rwanda in marking 20 years since the beginning of the genocide that took the lives of so many innocents and which shook the conscience of the world. We honor the memory of the more than 800,000 men, women, and children who were senselessly slaughtered simply because of who they were or what they believed. We stand in awe of their families who have summoned the courage to carry on, and the survivors who have worked through their wounds to rebuild their lives. And we salute the determination of the Rwandans who have made important progress toward healing old wounds, unleashing the economic growth that lifts people from poverty, and contributing to peacekeeping missions around the world to spare others the pain they have known.

At this moment of reflection, we also remember that the Rwandan genocide was nei-

ther an accident nor unavoidable. It was a deliberate and systematic effort by human beings to destroy other human beings. The horrific events of those 100 days—when friend turned against friend, and neighbor against neighbor—compel us to resist our worst instincts, just as the courage of those who risked their lives to save others reminds us of our obligations to our fellow man. The genocide we remember today—and the world's failure to respond more quickly—reminds us that we always have a choice. In the face of hatred, we must remember the humanity we share. In the face of cruelty, we must choose compassion. In the face of intolerance and suffering, we must never be indifferent. Embracing this spirit, as nations and as individuals, is how we can honor all those who were lost two decades ago and build a future worthy of their lives.

Remarks at Bladensburg High School in Bladensburg, Maryland *April 7, 2014*

Hello, Mustangs! [*Applause*] Fantastic. Well, everybody have a seat. Have a seat. Thank you, Leah, for the great introduction. Give Leah a big round of applause. Yay! [*Applause*] Yes. Meeting young people like Leah just makes me inspired. It's a good way to start the week. And all of the students here who are discovering and exploring new ideas is one of the reasons I love visiting schools like Bladensburg High. And so I just want to

congratulate all of you for the great work that you're doing.

I brought a couple of folks here who are helping to facilitate some of the programs here. My new Deputy Secretary of Labor, Chris Lu, is here. Give him a big round of applause. And some of the biggest champions for education in Prince George's County are here, including your Governor, Martin O'Malley; County Executive Rushern Baker; Mayor

Walter James; Superintendent Kevin Maxwell. Your biggest fans in Congress, Donna Edwards and Steny Hoyer. Well, we are proud of all of them, and we're proud of you.

All of you remind me, all these young people here, that young people today are working on cooler stuff than they were when I was in high school. In classrooms all across the country, students just like the students here, they're working hard, they're setting their sights high. And we've got to do everything we can to make sure that all of you have a chance to succeed. And that's why your outstanding principal, Aisha Mahoney, is working so hard at this school. That's why Governor O'Malley has been working so hard to repair old schools and build new ones across the State of Maryland. And that's why I'm here today. Because last year, we launched a national competition to redesign America's high schools for the 21st-century economy. And I'm proud to say that your hard work here has paid off, because one of the winners is Prince George's County. *[Applause]* Good job. That's right, you guys have done great.

Now, let me tell you why this is so important. Many of the young people here, you've grown up in the midst of one of the worst economic crises of our lifetimes. And it's been hard, and it's been painful. There are a lot of families that lost their homes, lost jobs; a lot of families that are still hurting out there. But the work that we've done, the groundwork that we've laid, has created a situation where we're moving in the right direction. Our businesses have created almost 9 million new jobs over the last 4 years. Our high school graduation rate is the highest on record. Dropout rates are going down. Among Latinos, the dropout rate has been cut in half since 2000. More young people are earning college degrees than ever before. We've been bringing troops home from two wars. More than 7 million Americans have now signed up for health coverage through the Affordable Care Act.

So we've been making progress, but we've got more work to do to make sure that every one of these young people, that everybody who is willing to work hard, has the chance to get

ahead. We've got to make sure that our economy works for everybody, not just a few. We've got to make sure opportunity exists for all people. No matter who you are, no matter where you started out, you've got to have confidence that if you work hard and take responsibility, you can make it.

And that's the chance that this country gave me. It's the chance that this country gave Michelle. And that's why we're working so hard for what we call an opportunity agenda, one that gives everybody a shot. And there are four simple goals: We want to create new jobs; we want to make sure that people have the skills to fill those jobs; we want to make sure every young person has a world-class education; and we want to make sure that we reward hard work with things like health care you can count on and wages you can live on.

And Maryland and Governor O'Malley have been working alongside us on these issues, and I want to give a special shout-out to the Maryland Legislature because, because of Governor O'Malley's leadership, you are helping to make sure that we are raising more people's wages with your push to raise your minimum wage right here in Maryland. And we're very proud to see that happen. And I hope Governor O'Malley is going to sign it into law soon. Give Maryland a raise. *[Applause]* That's good work.

But the main focus here is guaranteeing every young person has access to a world-class education—every single student. Now, that starts before high school. We've got to start at the youngest ages by making sure we've got high-quality preschool and other early learning programs for every young child in America. It makes a difference.

We've got to make sure that every student has access to the world's information and the world's best technology. And that's why we're moving forward with an initiative we call ConnectED, to finally connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet in the next few years. It means that we've got to rein in college costs, because I want to make sure that Leah, when she goes to school, she's not burdened with too much debt. And we've got to make it easier to repay student loans, be-

cause none of the young people here should be denied a higher education just because your family has trouble affording it. And a world-class education means preparing every young person with the skills they need for college, for a career, and for a lifetime of citizenship.

So what we did was, we launched a new competition, backed by America's Departments of Education and Labor, to start redesigning some of our high schools. We call it Youth CareerConnect. And we're offering a hundred million dollars in new grants to help schools and local partners develop and test new curricula and models for success. We want to invest in your future.

You guys are all coming up in an age where you're not going to be able to compete with people across town for good jobs, you're going to be competing with the rest of the world. Every—young people in India and China, they're all interested in trying to figure out how they get a foothold in this world economy. That's who you're competing against. Now, I'm confident you can match or exceed anything they do, but we don't do it by just resting on what we've done before. We've got to outwork and outinnovate and out hustle everybody else. We've got to think about new ways of doing things.

And part of our concern has been, our high schools, a lot of them were designed with curriculums based on the 1940s and fifties and sixties and haven't been updated. So the idea behind this competition is how do we start making high school, in particular, more interesting, more exciting, more relevant to young people.

Last year, for example, I visited a school called P-TECH—this is in Brooklyn—a high school that partnered with IBM and the City University of New York to offer its students not only a high school diploma, but also an associate's degree in computer systems or electro-mechanical engineering. IBM said that P-TECH graduates would be the first in line for jobs.

Then I visited a high school in Nashville that offers academies where students focus on a specific subject area, but they're also getting hands-on experience running their own credit

union, working in their own TV studios, learning 3-D printing, tinkering with their own airplane—which was pretty cool. [Laughter] I never got to do that. I did get my own airplane later in life. [Laughter] But—although I've got to give it back. [Laughter] I don't get to keep it.

But this is stuff I didn't get to do when I was in high school, and I wish I had. But it's stuff you have to know how to do today, in today's economy. Things are moving faster; they're more sophisticated.

So we challenged America's high schools to look at what's happening in a place like P-TECH, look at what's happening in cities like Nashville, and then say, what can you do to make sure your students learn the skills that businesses are looking for in high-demand fields? And we asked high schools to develop partnerships with colleges and employers and create classes that focus on real-life applications for the fields of the future, fields like science and technology and engineering and math. And part of the reason we have to do this now is because other countries, they've got a little bit of a lead on us on some of these areas.

A country like Germany right now focuses on graduating their high school students with a technical degree equivalent that gives them a head start. So we're asking schools to look into what places like Germany are doing.

Now, not every school that enters into this competition for the hundred million dollars is going to win, because we don't have enough money for everybody, and we want to force schools to think hard and redesign them, and we want to reward the schools that are being most innovative and are actually proving some of the concepts that they're trying out. But the great thing is that through this competition, schools across the country that entered have changed the way they prepare their students and have already made enormous improvements, even when—before they get the grant. And ultimately, we had to choose the top Youth CareerConnect initiatives. Today I'm proud to say that schools across America are putting up some pretty impressive proposals.

The winners across the board are doing the kinds of stuff that will allow other schools to

start duplicating what they're doing. The winners in Indianapolis are expanding their career prep programs to encourage more young women and kids from diverse backgrounds to join our science and technology workforce. New York City likes that Brooklyn high school model, P-TECH, so much that they're using their grant to fund two more just like it so that students can gain two degrees at once and get the edge they need in today's high-tech, high-speed economy. And as I mentioned earlier, one of our 24 winners is a three-school team including your high school. Mustangs, you guys are part of the team that won! [Applause] That's good.

Now, in part, the reason you won is because you guys were ahead of the curve. You were already winning. For a couple years now, your career academies have been integrating classroom learning with ready-to-work skills, and you're preparing students to move directly into the in-demand jobs of the future: jobs in IT and biosciences and hospitality. And now you're stepping it up. You're taking it to another level. So in the classroom I just visited, you had 10th graders—although there was also a freshman—who are studying epidemiology, the study of disease patterns and outbreaks. And they're getting potentially college-level credit for it, which is good because there—they may be the young people who discover a cure for some disease down the line that we don't even know about yet.

I know our brilliant scientists at the National Institute for Health and the Center for Disease Control, they'd be proud of you. They like looking at bacteria. [Laughter] And I got a little worried when I went into the classroom. Everybody was wearing goggles and vests, and I didn't have my goggles. So—[laughter]. But they assured me it was safe. But some of you Mustangs are pushing yourselves to get industry-recognized certifications in nursing, while other students on this winning team are studying cutting-edge technology and getting hands-on internship experience at local businesses. And we know these are skills that will be in demand. Companies will come looking to hire

you because of the experiences you've gotten here.

If you're focused, if you're working hard, you now have a platform so that by the time you get out of high school you're already ahead of the game; you're already in a position where you've got some skills that make you employable. And then you can just take it further, whether it's a 2-year college or a 4-year college or graduate school. Or there are a couple of young ladies in there who said they want to be neurosurgeons and psychiatrists. So you can build on these careers, but the point is, you have a baseline where you know if you're focused here at this school, doing your work, you're going to be able to find a job.

And the grants that you've won in this Youth CareerConnect competition mean that the programs you've started are going to expand and you're going to get more college and career counseling to help get you a jump on your post-high school plans. So a little over 4 years from now, Bladensburg and your partner schools will graduate hundreds more students with the knowledge and skills that you'll need to succeed.

And that's what we want for all the young people here. We want an education that engages you; we want an education that equips you with the rigorous and relevant skills for college and for a career.

And I'm confident—meeting these young people, they were incredible. And a couple of them giggled a little bit when I walked in, but after they kind of settled down—[laughter]—they were—they knew their stuff, and they were enjoying it. And that's part of the message I've got for all the young people here today, is, your potential for success is so high as long as you stay focused. As long as you're clear about your goals, you're going to succeed.

And my message to the older people here like me is, we've got a collective responsibility to make sure that you're getting those opportunities. And there are resources out there that we've got to pull into the school setting. Businesses, foundations around the country, they want to fund more CareerConnect programs,

because it's in their interest. They want good employees. They're looking for folks with skills.

When you can say, "Hey, the math that I'm doing here could change the way the business operates," or, "I see how this biology experiment could help develop a drug that cures a disease," that's a door opening in your imagination. It's also good for our economy. It's good for our businesses. That's a new career path you're thinking about that allows you to pursue higher education in that field or the very training you need to get a good job or create a new business that changes the world. That's good for our economy, it's good for business; it's good for you, it's good for America.

As a country, we've got to do everything we can to make sure that every single young person here can have that "aha" moment. That light bulb goes off, and suddenly, you're not just studying because your parents tell you to or your teacher tells you to, you're studying because you know you've got something to offer.

And I want to make sure every student in America has a chance to get that moment, that realization that your education can not just unlock your future and take you places you never imagined, but you're also going to be leading

this country. That's the chance that this country gave to me and Michelle. And that's the chance I want for every single one of you. From preschool for every 4-year-old in America to higher education for everybody who wants to go, every young person deserves a fair shot. And I'm going to keep on doing everything I can to make sure you get that shot and to keep America a place where you can make it if you try.

I'm proud of your principal. I'm proud of your superintendent. I'm proud of everybody who got involved in making sure that you guys were already doing the right thing before you won this new grant. And I know it's going to be well spent. Most of all, I'm proud of the students.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Go Mustangs! All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Leah Woody, student, Bladensburg High School; Kevin M. Maxwell, superintendent, Prince George's County Public Schools; and Rushern L. Baker III, county executive, Prince George's County, MD.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Maria Contreras-Sweet as Administrator of the Small Business Administration *April 7, 2014*

All right, everybody, please have a seat.

I just wanted to stop by and congratulate Maria on officially being sworn in as the head of the SBA.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here today, as well as the terrific staff at the SBA for helping America's small businesses succeed, and who have been holding down the fort until we got this confirmation through.

I nominated Maria because she knows first hand the challenges that small businesses go through, and she has a proven track record of helping them succeed. She was California's secretary of business, transportation, and housing, and in that role she was the driving force

behind major public investments in job-creating industries. As the founder of the ProAmérica Bank, she supported Latino entrepreneurs throughout Los Angeles.

So Maria understands that small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy. They represent the promise that if you work hard in this country, you can succeed, and you can help your children do even better.

And that's why this administration has been so focused on helping small businesses succeed from day one. We cut taxes 18 times for small businesses in my first term. We've helped more than 200,000 small businesses get loans supported by the SBA. Today, our economy is growing and our businesses have created