

dialogues to bring together opinion leaders from both nations.

Symbolizing the grassroots friendship uniting our nations, the U.S. government and a range of private sector partners have created the Friendship Blossoms Initiative, which is currently planting 3,000 American dogwood trees throughout Japan on behalf of the people of the United States, to reciprocate the City of Tokyo's gift of 3,000 flowering cherry trees to Washington, DC in 1912. The 1912 gift from Japan is celebrated each year during the National Cherry Blossom Festival, an iconic spring event in Washington, D.C.

The President and Prime Minister welcomed the invigoration of exchanges between the U.S. Congress and the Diet of Japan, praising the work of the U.S.-Japan Caucus and the Congressional Study Group on Japan in the United States Congress, the Japan-U.S. Parliamentary Friendship League in the Diet of Japan, as well as the U.S.-Japan Legislative Exchange Program and the Japan-U.S. Senate Inter-parliamentary Conference. Nearly 200 Diet Members visited the United States in fiscal year 2013, and the number of Members of Congress visiting Japan in 2013 more than

doubled over the previous year and continues to increase in 2014.

Finally, the United States and Japan note that millions of Japanese and U.S. citizens visit each other's country every year to visit family and friends, enjoy tourist sites and cultural experiences, and conduct the business transactions that underpin the tight economic relationship between two of the world's largest economies. To facilitate this travel, the United States and Japan plan to expedite work to establish a reciprocal arrangement, including through Japan's participation in the U.S. Global Entry program, to streamline border formalities for trusted travelers from both our countries, and to make travel between the United States and Japan easier, faster and more secure.

NOTE: This joint statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 24, but due to the 12-hour time difference between Washington, DC, and Tokyo, Japan, the joint statement carries a release date of April 25. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a Naturalization Ceremony in Seoul, South Korea April 25, 2014

Well, good afternoon. *Annyeonghaseyo*. It is an honor to be here at the War Memorial of Korea. In a few moments, I'll lay a wreath to pay tribute to our servicemembers who've given their lives in defense of our freedom. And tomorrow I'll address our troops and civilians at Yongsan Garrison.

I have said before, I have no higher honor than serving as your Commander in Chief. And today I can think of no higher privilege than being here with all of you and your families for this special moment: becoming the newest citizens of the world's oldest constitutional democracy.

I know that each of you have traveled your own path to this moment. You come from 14 different countries. Some of you have called Seoul home. But a day came when each one of

you did something extraordinary: Thirteen of you made the profound decision to put on the uniform of a country that was not yet fully your own; seven of you married an American soldier, and as a military spouse, that means you've been serving our country too.

If there's anything that this should teach us, it's that Americans is strengthened by our immigrants. I had the chance to talk to our Ambassador and our commander here, and I said to them that there's no greater strength, no greater essence of America, than the fact that we attract people from all around the world who want to be part of our democracy. We are a nation of immigrants, people from every corner, every walk of life, who picked up tools to help build our country, who started up busi-

nesses to advance our country, who took up arms to defend our country.

What makes us Americans is something more than just the circumstances of birth, what we look like, what God we worship; rather, it is a joyful spirit of citizenship. And citizenship demands participation and responsibility and service to our country and to one another. And few embody that more than our men and women in uniform.

If we want to keep attracting the best and the brightest, the smartest and most selfless the world has to offer, then we have to keep this in mind: the value of our immigrants to our way of life. It is central to who we are; it's in our DNA. It's part of our creed. And that means moving forward we've got to fix our broken immigration system and pass common-sense immigration reform.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Park Geun-hye of South Korea in Seoul

April 25, 2014

President Obama. I would like to thank President Park for welcoming me here today. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to come back to the Republic of Korea. But I am very mindful that my visit comes at a time of deep mourning for the people of this nation, and I know that President Park and the South Korean Government are focused on responding to the tragedy of the ferry *Sewol*.

In our press conference later, President Park and I will have the opportunity to address a range of issues that we'll be discussing here today. But for now, I just wanted to express, on behalf of the American people, our deepest sympathies for the incredible and tragic loss that's taken place. As allies, but also as friends, we join you in mourning the lost and the missing and especially so many young people, students who represented the vitality and the future of this nation.

So, President Park, I thought that it would be appropriate and fitting for us to begin today by honoring the lost and the missing. And our delegation, out of respect, would appreciate

This is a huge advantage to us, the talent that we attract. We don't want to make it harder, we want to make it more sensible, more efficient. That's why I'm going to keep on pushing to get this done this year so that others like the young men and women here have the opportunity to join our American family and serve our great Nation.

Today I'm thrilled that, in a few moments, I'll get to call each of you my fellow Americans. I am so proud to be sharing this stage with you today. Congratulations. But I don't want to talk too long, because I'm not the main event. Thank you very much for your service.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. at the War Memorial of Korea. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Kim Y. Sung; and Gen. C. Michael Scaparrotti, commander, U.S. Forces Korea.

the opportunity to join together in a moment of silence.

[*At this point, a moment of silence was observed.*]

President Park. Mr. President, thank you so much for making this proposal to hold a moment of silence for the victims of the ferry *Sewol*. Right after the tragic accident, you personally expressed your condolences and your sympathies, and you were unsparing in providing active U.S. assistance, including the dispatch of salvage vessels. The Korean people draw great strength and courage from your kindness.

Just as the American people were able to rally together in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks and were able to prevail over difficult times, so too, I am sure that Korean people will, in fact, pull through this moment of crisis and be able to achieve the renewal of the Republic of Korea.