

do the work, but need that extra push to reach their full potential. Among the last two graduating classes in the AVID program, 98 percent were admitted to a 4-year college. And they earned more merit scholarship money than the rest of the graduating class combined.

It's a tribute to Sean that one of his students asked him, "What do you think about me becoming a teacher?" Sean asked him what subject he'd want to teach, and his student said: "It doesn't matter. I just want to have as much fun as you do every day." [Laughter]

And Sean tries to instill in his students a sense of respect and obligation to each other. As one of his students said, "I feel like I'm not learning on my own here, I learn from everyone." And I think it speaks volumes about the kind of example Sean sets for his students that, as part of his application for this award, the parents of one of his students wrote a letter on his behalf. And they wrote: "[Our daughter] had the typical teenage drama in school that at times really got her depressed about school and life in general. We reached out to Sean for help with getting her back on track. No matter his schedule load, if he knew one of his students was in need, whether [for] a shoulder to cry on or a calming word of encouragement, he'd be there to help."

And there's an image from Sean's application essay that captures what he and all the teachers here are trying to accomplish. Every child has an invisible chalkboard attached to their hearts and minds that they carry with them through their lives. Some people they meet write messages of love and support. Some leave messages of negativity and doubt. It's a teacher's job to erase the negative messages and fill those boards with caring words and inspire confidence and strengthen values. Now, some of today's students might not even know what a chalkboard is anymore—[laugh-

ter]—but they do know that what a teacher gives them stays with them for a lifetime, because teachers matter.

When Michelle and I talk to students, we often tell them education is a two-way street. It's our job to provide students with great schools and great teachers, and it's their job to do their homework and work hard and do their best. The people you elect have to make sure that teachers and school districts have the resources they need to do their jobs well. And investing in education has been a top priority of mine since the day I took office. And it falls on all of us to make sure that we're encouraging our kids and reading to them and teaching them healthy, successful habits that set them on a path to college and a career and a lifetime of citizenship.

Teachers who work hard to inspire their kids every day, they too deserve our support, because these are our kids that we're grooming for all the challenges that they're going to face throughout the next generation.

So I could not be prouder of Sean and all the teachers who are here today. Sean, I'm pretty sure Mr. Schurtz would be proud of you too. And to all the teachers who are out there, and the millions who are working hard in classrooms all across our Nation, we want to thank you as well. You're doing the Lord's work. And with that, I'm going to present Sean with his apple. [Laughter]

Thank you, and God bless you. God bless America. That's a good-looking apple.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:18 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Silas McComb, son of 2014 National Teacher of the Year Sean M. McComb; and Tom Schurtz, English teacher, Upper Merion Area High School in King of Prussia, PA.

Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Iraq May 1, 2014

On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the Iraqi people on the completion of yesterday's parliamentary elections. Millions of

Iraqis embraced their democratic right to vote. The people of Iraq know better than anyone else the enormous challenges that they face,

and yesterday's turnout demonstrated to the world that they seek to pursue a more stable and peaceful future through the political process. Once results are finalized, a new Parliament will convene and debate the makeup of a new Government to serve the Iraqi people. Whatever the outcome of this process, it should serve to unite the country through the

formation of a new Government that is supported by all Iraqi communities and that is prepared to advance tangible and implementable programs. There will be more difficult days ahead, but the United States will continue to stand with the Iraqi people as partners in their pursuit of a peaceful, unified, and prosperous future.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2015 *May 1, 2014*

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, Homeland Security, the Interior, and State, as well as the National Science Foundation and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia. These amendments do not affect the proposed FY 2015 Budget totals.

These amendments are necessary to reflect correctly policies assumed in the FY 2015 Budget. The details of these amendments are set forth in the enclosure from the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany *May 2, 2014*

President Obama. Well, good morning, everybody. It is always a great pleasure to welcome my friend Chancellor Merkel to the White House. Germany is one of our strongest allies, and Angela is one of my closest partners. And with her indulgence, I want to start by making two brief comments.

First, as President, my top priority is doing everything that we can to create more jobs and opportunity for hard-working families, for our economic strength is a source of strength in the world. And this morning we learned that our businesses created 273,000 new jobs last month. All told, our businesses have now created 9.2 million new jobs over 50 consecutive months of job growth.

The grit and determination of the American people are moving us forward, but we have to keep a relentless focus on job creation and creating more opportunities for working families.

There's plenty more that Congress should be doing, from raising the minimum wage to creating good construction jobs rebuilding America. And I want to work with them wherever I can, but I keep acting on my own whenever I must to make sure every American who works hard has the chance to get ahead.

Second point: I also want to say on behalf of the American people that our thoughts are with the people of Afghanistan, who have experienced an awful tragedy. We are seeing reports of a devastating landslide, on top of recent floods. Many people are reported missing; rescue efforts are underway. Just as the United States has stood with the people of Afghanistan through a difficult decade, we stand ready to help our Afghan partners as they respond to this disaster. For even as our war there comes to an end this year, our commitment to Afghanistan and its people will endure.