

mentation or praise to a doctor or a nurse or a facility that couldn't have given them better treatment.

And so this is a big system with a lot of really good people in it who care about our veterans deeply. We have seen the improvements on a whole range of issues like homelessness, like starting to clear the backlog up, like making sure that folks who previously weren't even eligible for disability because it was a mental health issue or because it was an agent orange issue are finally able to get those services. I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that there are a lot of folks in the VA who are doing a really good job and working really hard at it. That does not, on the other hand, excuse the possibility that, number one, we weren't just—we were not doing a good enough job in terms of providing access to folks who need an appointment for chronic conditions. Number two, it never excuses the possibility that somebody was trying to manipulate the data in order to look better or make their facility look better.

It is critical to make sure that we have good information in order to make good decisions. I want people on the frontlines, if there's a problem, to tell me or tell Ric Shinseki or tell whoever is their superior that this is a problem. Don't cover up a problem. Do not pretend the problem doesn't exist. If you can't get wait times down to 14 days right now, I want you to let folks up the chain know so that we can solve the problem. Do we need more doctors? Do we need a new system in order to make sure that the scheduling and coordination is more effective and more smooth? Is there more follow-up?

And that's the thing that right now most disturbs me about the report: the possibility that folks intentionally withheld information that

would have helped us fix a problem, because there's not a problem out there that's not fixable. It can't always be fixed as quickly as everybody would like, but typically, we can chip away at these problems. We've seen this with the backlog. We've seen it with veterans homelessness. We've seen it with 9/11—the post-9/11 GI bill. Initially, there were problems with it. They got fixed, and now it's operating fairly smoothly. So problems can be fixed, but folks have to let the people that they're reporting to know that there is a problem in order for us to fix it.

Veterans Health Administration System Leadership

Q. What about bonuses for those implicated in mismanagement, Mr. President?

The President. We're going to find out. My attitude is—

Q. Does that upset you?

The President. Listen, if somebody has mismanaged or engaged in misconduct, not only do I not want them getting bonuses, I want them punished. So that's what we're going to, hopefully, find out from the IG report, as well as the audits that are taking place.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Acting Inspector General Richard J. Griffin of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Sharon Helman, Director, and Lance Robinson, Associate Director, Veterans Health Administration facility in Phoenix, AZ; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks Honoring the 2014 Super Bowl Champion Seattle Seahawks May 21, 2014

The President. All right, everybody have a seat. Welcome to the White House. Let's give it up for this quiet, reserved bunch called the Seattle Seahawks. World champions. Best football team in America. I considered letting

Sherman up here to the podium today—[laughter]—giving him the mike, but we've got to go in a little bit so—[laughter].

Obviously, we've got some big Seahawks fans here today. That includes—I know there

are some Members of Congress here who are huge Seahawks fans. We've also got the Secretary of Interior, Sally Jewell, who is a big Seahawks fan. We've got Seattle Mayor Ed Murray in the house, a big Seahawks fan. I want to congratulate Coach Pete Carroll for his outstanding leadership. I think those of us who are in leadership positions across disciplines, we're always looking at folks who do things the right way. I think it's pretty clear that Coach Carroll does things the right way, and we're very proud of him. Seahawks owner Paul Allen, who has done a great job, congratulations to him. We've got General Manager John Schneider, who put together this outstanding organization, but I'm curious where the championship belt is today, John. [Laughter]

We are here to celebrate the first Super Bowl victory for the city of Seattle. During the regular season, the Seahawks tied for the best record. Suffocating defense led to—led the league in points allowed, yards allowed, interceptions, takeaways, turnover margin. They beat the rival 49ers—[applause]—I knew you guys would clap on that one—[laughter]—in the NFC Championship game and then dominated one of the best offenses in the NFL, beating the Broncos by 35 points.

Of course, I don't need to tell you how outstanding the Seahawks are because they did a pretty good job of describing themselves as outstanding during the year. You may have heard about the Legion of Boom—[laughter]—Richard Sherman and Earl Thomas and Kam Chancellor and Byron Maxwell, who combined to form the best secondary in football. You had a dominating defensive line with guys like Michael Bennett and Red Bryant, Brandon Mebane—and Brandon Mebane's belly roll dance—[laughter]—all combining to—we can't do that here in the White House. [Laughter]

There's Super Bowl MVP Malcom Smith. You've got breakout star Percy Harvin. He's not here today, but we've got to give props to "Beast Mode" Marshawn Lynch. I am sorry that Marshawn is not here, because I just wanted to say how much I admire his approach to the press. [Laughter] I wanted to get some tips from him. [Laughter]

Audience member. It's about the action.

The President. It's about the action. [Laughter]

And then there's Russell Wilson, who you may not recognize because his locks are shorn—he has cut his hair. [Laughter] Where is Russell?

Quarterback Russell C. Wilson. Right here.

The President. There he is. I was telling him he looks okay this way too. He doesn't have a peanut head or anything, but—[laughter].

So Russell has won more games through his first two seasons than any quarterback in history—in history. He also became only the second African American quarterback ever to win a Super Bowl. And the best part about it is, nobody commented on it, which tells you the progress that we've made, although we've got more progress to make.

And part of the reason that I think Russell inspired a lot of folks is, he's been proving the doubters wrong for a very long time. For years, folks said he'd be too short to succeed as a quarterback in the NFL. Five quarterbacks were drafted ahead of him, which is a familiar story for a lot of these Seahawks. You got three starters in the secondary who were taken fifth round or lower. Nineteen players on the roster weren't drafted at all. Last year, a pundit had the gall to call the receiving corps "pedestrian," which I heard made "Angry" Doug Baldwin even angrier. [Laughter]

So let me just say as a guy who was elected President named Barack Obama, I root for the underdogs. And so seeing folks overcome the odds excites me. But it also excites me when you see the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. And that's what team is all about. And this is a team.

And it's not just about football. These guys have been overcoming adversity off the field as well. They've got fullback Derrick Coleman, who has been legally deaf since he was 3 years old. I joke about Richard Sherman, but he grew up in Compton amid some wonderful people, but also gangs and drugs and guns. His dad had to wake up before 4 a.m. every day to drive a garbage truck. But because of his dad's hard work and his family and his mom and—Richard ended up earning a 4.2 GPA in high

school, won a scholarship to Stanford. He showed kids from his neighborhood that they could make it. And if he seems a little brash, it's because you've got to have attitude sometimes if you are going to overcome some of this adversity. And the fact that he still goes back to inspire high schoolers for higher goals and making better choices, that's all-star behavior.

And he's not the only one giving back. Russell spends every Tuesday—even during the season—visiting sick kids at the Seattle Children's Hospital. Coach Carroll's A Better Seattle and A Better LA organization works to keep at-risk youth away from drugs and violence. Paul Allen's Family Foundation has given millions of dollars for medical research into traumatic brain injuries, which obviously is a concern in the NFL, but also is a concern to our troops and people all across the country. As a team, the Seahawks raised more than \$700,000 this year for causes like supporting our troops and strengthening our schools.

And that spirit of working hard and giving back has endeared this team to its fans in a way that most cities can't replicate. Now, part of it is you all have that stadium that is kind of cheating, because it's so loud. [Laughter] You hired some physicist to make it so. [Laughter] You know, it was—there are a lot of really smart people at Microsoft and up in those places that can design these things. [Laughter]

So we can't talk about the Seahawks without talking about the 12th Man. And—[applause]. Last season, "the 12s" set a record not once,

but twice, for the loudest crowd noise in history. [Laughter] Now, history is a long time, so that's really loud. [Laughter] So loud on multiple occasion, they've actually created minor earthquakes, which is disturbing. And you should think about that. [Laughter] After the Super Bowl, when they had the chance to celebrate, they let loose in true Seattle style. And while some got a little carried away, there's actually video of a huge group of Seahawks fans interrupting their celebration to wait for the walk sign before crossing an intersection. [Laughter] So that's Seattle for you. [Laughter]

So congratulations to the 12s, congratulations to the players, the coaches, the staff, the owners. Congratulations to the Seattle Seahawks and the whole city for an outstanding season. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Richard K. Sherman and Byron S. Maxwell, cornerbacks, Earl V. Thomas, free safety, Kameron D. Chancellor, strong safety, Michael Bennett, Jr., and Joseph A. "Red" Bryant, defensive ends, Brandon J. Mebane, defensive tackle, Malcolm X. Smith, linebacker, William P. "Percy" Harvin and Douglas D. Baldwin, wide receivers, and Marshawn T. Lynch, running back, Seattle Seahawks; sports broadcaster and former NFL wide receiver Graduel "Cris" Carter; and Kevin and Beverly Sherman, parents of Mr. Sherman.

Remarks on Signing a Proclamation Establishing the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

May 21, 2014

Thank you. Well, good afternoon, everybody. As somebody who lives in the neighborhood, I thought I might just drop by and see what all the fuss is about. [Laughter] I want to thank Sally for hosting me here today.

And I am thrilled to be with all of you because of your work, not to mention some of the art on the walls reminds me that one of the great blessings of being an American is that we

are blessed with some of the most beautiful landscapes and real estate on Earth. I think about the awe that I felt as a little boy the first time I saw the Grand Canyon. I think about the pride that I felt when I took my daughters to see Yellowstone. I think about the memories of what it's like to go on a hike without a security detail behind me. [Laughter] It's a wistful feeling. [Laughter]