

Remarks at the Congressional Picnic September 17, 2014

Hello, everybody! It is a perfect night for a picnic. I'm thrilled that everybody is here. I took off my tie; I noticed some of you didn't get the memo. [*Laughter*] But I know that a lot of you are coming straight from work. I'm not going to make a long speech. I want to shake as many hands as possible. I hope you guys are having a wonderful time.

I want to start off by saying thank you to House Members—Republican and Democrat—who came together today to pass an important component on our strategy for dealing with this terrible terrorist organization known as ISIL. And I want to in particular thank Speaker Boehner and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi for showing us that when it comes to America's national security, America is united. So I very much appreciate all of you in the efforts that you made there.

And that brings up this more general point. Look, we've gone through, just in the last decade and a half, the worst attack on our homeland in our history, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. We continue to face significant challenges. But I came from Tampa, where we have the Central Command and talked to our troops this morning. And in talking to them and seeing the dedication and the effort and professionalism that they make, I was reminded once again, as I'm reminded every time I travel around the country, that the American people are good and they are strong and they are resilient. And because of them, we bounce back from anything.

And America is now positioned better than we could have ever imagined if we continue to act in the interests of all of us and if every once in a while we're willing to set aside politics and try to get something done. There's no doubt that we can make sure our schools work better. There's no doubt that we can make sure that our roads and our bridges and our infrastructure works the way it should. There's no doubt that, since we still have the most innovative companies in the world, that we can succeed and that we can continue to put money into re-

search and development and cure diseases and continue to lead the world when it comes to not just security, but also dealing with issues like Ebola and making sure that more people are safe and well housed and well fed and children and girls are getting the kind of education they deserve.

All these things we can do. And so, hopefully, a picnic like this just reminds us of the fact that there are a lot of people all across the country counting on us to be able to work together. That doesn't mean we don't have strong passions and strong arguments, but it also means that every once in a while we've got to set those aside, embrace compromise, and try to get some stuff done. That's what people are looking for, and today, I think, on national security at least, we showed that we could.

The only other thing I want to say is thank you to the families. It is—Michelle was traveling to St. Jude's today to be with the amazing kids there and the doctors and staff who help families going through really tough diseases, but she would be the first one to testify that being married to a politician is not easy. [*Laughter*] And being the partner of a politician, being the child of a politician, it's hard. And sometimes, you see your loved one attacked, and sometimes, you see them not appreciated, and they're away too much, and you're having to shoulder some of the burdens of family. And so to all the spouses, all the children, everybody who helps support our public servants and our Members of Congress, I just want to say thank you to you as well for the great job that you do. We really, really appreciate it.

And finally, please try to eat more, because we always have leftovers after this thing. [*Laughter*] All right? I am going to swing down the rope line. I want to shake as many hands as I can. I will tell you in advance that selfies are a little tough just because if I'm doing 2,000 selfies, then we won't be done until, like, 10 in the evening. I will make exceptions for little people, but you have to actually be little. [*Laugh-*

ter] And I mean young, I don't mean short. [Laughter] All right?

So thank you very much, everybody. Have a great time. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.J. Res. 124; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine *September 18, 2014*

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome President Poroshenko to the Oval Office. He and I have been working together a lot over the last several months. And as I told him personally, and I want to repeat publicly, I think his leadership has been absolutely critical at a very, very important time in Ukraine's history.

Obviously, we have watched over the last several months as the people of Ukraine have declared their desire for a sovereign, independent economic and foreign policy that promises them freedom and prosperity and self-determination. And President Poroshenko's election, I think, represented those aspirations of the Ukrainian people.

Unfortunately, what we've also seen is Russian aggression—first in Crimea and most recently in portions of eastern Ukraine—that have not only violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, but have also been designed to undermine these critical reform efforts that have been taking place in Ukraine.

I am very proud that the United States has led the international community and our European partners in making sure that there is a cost to Russia for its aggression in Ukraine. We have applied some of the toughest coordinated sanctions that we've ever seen between the transatlantic community, which are having a significant impact on the Russian economy. And we have consistently said that not only do we support Ukraine's sovereignty and independence in words, but we've also been supporting it in deeds.

And at the Wales Summit, you saw all 28 NATO countries recommit themselves to the NATO-Ukraine partnership and commit to assisting Ukraine in its security concerns. We

have provided significant financial assistance to help Ukraine bridge this period of transition from the old ways of doing things to a new and more modern economy, and that includes a billion-dollar loan guarantee from the United States, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars that we've provided in assistance.

I'm pleased that during this meeting, we reaffirmed that commitment to Ukraine, and we are providing additional assistance, both economic and security assistance, to Ukraine to make sure that not only are they able to weather this storm economically, but they're also going to be able to continue to build up an effective security force to defend themselves from aggression.

And we are going to continue to seek to mobilize the international community to say to Russia that Ukraine desires to have a good relationship with all its neighbors, both east and west, and that there should be a way in which Ukraine is able to negotiate and then trade and continue the people-to-people links between Ukraine and Russia, but that Russia cannot dictate to them their ability to work effectively with other partners in order to better the situation for the Ukrainian people.

I want to commend President Poroshenko for having helped to not only broker a ceasefire, but also to push through some very difficult legislation that can improve the perception in eastern Ukraine that they are fully represented and that they are able to determine many of their local affairs in a way that gives them confidence.

And that those were not easy laws that President Poroshenko passed, but I think they indicated his commitment to an inclusive Ukraine, his commitment to a Ukraine that has decentralization and empowers local communities.