

quired to come back, all the work that's left to be done, a new foundation is laid. A new future is yet to be written. And I am as confident as ever that that future will be led by the United States of America.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:11 p.m. in the Cahn Auditorium at the Kellogg School of Management. In his remarks, he referred to Toni R. Preckwinkle, board president, Cook County, IL; Larry Levitt, senior vice president for special initiatives, Kaiser Family Foundation; and Rep. Paul D. Ryan. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

## Remarks at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Annual Awards Gala

October 2, 2014

*The President.* Good evening, everybody! Thank you to Senator Menendez, Congressman Hinojosa, and the entire CHC for inviting me. Everybody, take—you can have a seat, take a load off. [Laughter] I want to congratulate tonight's outstanding honorees: José Díaz-Balart, Eliseo Medina, and Juliet García. I want to thank all the other Members of Congress who are here tonight, including the outstanding Nancy Pelosi. Although I have to say, Nancy Pelosi was really talking mostly about the San Francisco Giants—in a Nationals town. So that just shows her courage. [Laughter]

I want to give a special thanks to two young men who rode over with me from the White House tonight. Luis and Víctor are CHCI interns and fellows. They are also DREAMers, living and working in the country they call home and making it a better place for all of us. Their stories are inspiring. And along with the other CHCI fellows, they give me great hope for the future. They make me optimistic about what America is all about.

Now, 6 years ago, I came here as a candidate for this office, and I said if we worked together, we could do more than just win an election. We could rebuild America so that everybody—no matter what you look like, no matter what your last name is, no matter what God you worship, no matter who you love—everybody is free to pursue their dreams.

And that's exactly what we've set out to do. And today, there is progress that we should be proud of. I gave a long speech this afternoon

about it because sometimes, we don't focus on what has happened over these last 6 years. Over the past 4½ years, our businesses have created 10 million new jobs, the longest uninterrupted stretch of job creation in our history. In the spring, our economy grew faster than any time since 2006, and there are more job openings today than at any time since 2001. And we are going to keep working as hard as we can to help create good, middle class jobs even faster.

Six years ago, I told you we would confront the crisis of overcrowded classrooms and underfunded schools and help more families afford higher education. And since 2000, we have cut the Latino dropout rate by more than half. Because dropouts are down, today, our high school graduation rate is the highest on record. And since 2008, the rate of college enrollment among young Latinos has risen by 45 percent.

Six years ago, I said we'd take on a broken health care system that left one out of three Hispanics uninsured. Today, millions more Americans have quality, affordable health insurance that they can count on. Over the last year alone, about 10 million Americans gained health insurance, and that includes millions of Latinos.

Six years ago, I told you we'd restore the idea at the heart of America that we're in this together, that I am my brother's keeper and my sister's keeper. Last year, poverty among Latinos fell and incomes rose. And this week, I

launched the “My Brother’s Keeper” Community Challenge, asking every community in our country to publicly commit to strategies that will help put our young people on the path to success, from cradle to career.

So the point I want to make is, the progress we’ve made has been hard. Sometimes, it’s been slower than we want, but that progress has been steady, and it has been real. We have done big things together, and we’re going to do more. And tonight I want to make something clear: Fixing our broken immigration system is one more big thing that we have to do and that we will do.

Now, I know there’s deep frustration in many communities around the country right now. And I understand that frustration because I share it. I know the pain of families torn apart because we live with a system that’s broken. But if anybody wants to know where my heart is or whether I want to have this fight, let me put those questions to rest right now. I am not going to give up this fight until it gets done.

As Bob mentioned, I’ve taken so far actions—

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* I’m about to get to that. About to get to it. [Applause] The actions that we’ve taken so far—

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* You’re going to want to hear it. You want to hear what I say, rather than just—

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* The actions that we’ve taken so far are why more than 600,000 young people can live and work without fear of deportation. That’s because of the actions I took and the administration took.

[At this point, the audience disruption continued, and the President continued speaking.]

Because of the coalition that we built together—business and labor, faith and law enforcement, Democrats and Republican created a bipartisan bill and got it through the Senate last year. When States like Alabama and Arizona passed some of the harshest immigration

laws in history, my Attorney General took them on in court, and we won.

So you know what we’ve done together. You know that we’ve done it despite what is possibly the most uncooperative House of Representatives in history. If House Republicans brought the Senate bill up for a vote today, I would pass it—it would pass today. I would sign it today. And they know it. But instead, they’ve been sitting on it for more than a year. They voted to strip DREAMers of new protections and make them eligible for deportation. Not once, but twice they voted that way.

And this summer, when a wave of unaccompanied minors crossed part of our southwest border, my administration matched compassion for kids with a firm message to families. Today, fewer parents are sending their children on that perilous journey than they were at this time last year, and we’re working to give more kids the chance to apply for asylum in their home countries and avoid that journey altogether.

But while we worked to deal with an urgent humanitarian problem, while we actually did something about the problem, Republicans exploited the situation for political gain. And in June, as all this was going on, Speaker Boehner told me he would continue to block a vote on immigration reform for at least the remainder of this year.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Now, don’t boo, vote. I—[applause]. [Laughter]

I’ve said before that if Congress failed to live up to its responsibilities to solve this problem, I would act to fix as much of our immigration system as I can on my own, and I meant what I said. So this is not a question of if, but when. Because the moment I act—and it will be taking place between the November elections and the end of the year—opponents of reform will roll out the same old scare tactics. They’ll use whatever excuse they have to try to block any attempt at immigration reform at all. And we have to be realistic. For any action to last, for it to be effective and extend beyond my administration—because I’m only here 2 more years—we’re going to have to build more support of

the American people so that it is sustainable and lasting.

And so I am going to be spending the next month, month and a half, 6 weeks, 8 weeks, I'm going to be spending that time not just talking about what we've done for the economy, but explaining why immigration reform is good for our economy and why it's good for everybody. And when opponents are out there saying who knows what, I'm going to need you to have my back. I'm going to need you to have my back. I need you to keep putting pressure on Congress, because the fact of the matter is no matter how bold I am, nothing I can do will be as comprehensive or lasting as the Senate bill. Anything I can do can be reversed by the next President.

To move beyond what I can do in a limited way, we are going to need legislation. And if we want that legislation to happen sooner rather than later, then there's one more thing I need you to do. And I've got to have you talk to your constituents and your communities, and you've got to get them out to vote.

You already know how powerful the Latino vote can be. In 2012, Latinos voted in record numbers. The next day, even Sean Hannity changed his mind and decided immigration reform was a good idea. [Laughter] But despite that record-breaking turnout, only 48 percent of Hispanic voters turned out—fewer than half. Fewer than half. So the clearest path to change is to change that number. *Sí, se puede, si votamos*—Yes, we can, if we vote!

Earlier this year, I had the chance to host a screening of the film “Cesar Chavez” at the White House, and I was reminded that Cesar organized for nearly 20 years before his first major victory. He never saw that time as a failure. Looking back, he said: “I remember . . . the families who joined our movement and paid dues long before there was any hope of winning contracts. . . . I remember thinking then that with spirit like that . . . no force on Earth could stop us.”

That's the promise of America then, and that's the promise of America now. People who love this country can change it. America isn't Congress; America isn't Washington. America is the striving immigrant who starts a business or the mom who works two low-wage jobs to give her kid a better life. America is the union leader and the CEO who put aside their differences to make the economy stronger. America is the student who defies the odds to become the first in a family to go to college, the citizen who defies the cynics and goes out there and votes, the young person who comes out of the shadows to demand the right to dream. That's what America is about.

And 6 years ago, I asked you to believe. And tonight I ask you to keep believing, not just in my ability to bring about change, but in your ability to bring about change. Because in the end, DREAMer is more than just a title, it's a pretty good description of what it means to be an American. Each of us is called on to stand proudly for the values we believe in and the future we seek. All of us have the chance to reach out and pull this country that we call home a little closer to its founding ideals.

That's the spirit that's alive in this room. That's the spirit I saw in Luis and Víctor and all the young people here tonight. That spirit is alive in America today. And with that spirit, no force on Earth can stop us.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:54 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to MSNBC host and Telemundo news anchor José Díaz-Balart; Eliseo V. Medina, international secretary-treasurer, Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Juliet V. García, executive director, University of Texas Institute of the Americas; Luis Alcauter and Víctor Mena, interns, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute; and Sean Hannity, host, Fox News's “Hannity” program. He also referred to S. 744.