

The President's Weekly Address November 22, 2014

Hi, everybody. Today I'm at Del Sol High School in Las Vegas to talk with students and families about immigration.

We're a nation of immigrants. It has always given America a big advantage over other nations. It keeps our country young, dynamic, and entrepreneurial. But today, our immigration system is broken, and everybody knows it.

That's why, nearly 2 years ago, I came to this school and laid out principles for immigration reform. And 5 months later, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents in the Senate came together to pass a commonsense compromise bill. That bill would have secured our border, while giving undocumented immigrants who already live here a pathway to citizenship if they paid a fine, started paying their taxes, and went to the back of the line. Independent experts said it would grow our economy and shrink our deficits.

Now, had the House of Representatives allowed a yes-or-no vote on that kind of bill, it would have passed with support from both parties. Today it would be the law. But, for a year and a half, Republican leaders in the House have refused to allow that simple vote. Now, I still believe that the best way to solve this problem is by working together—both parties—to pass that kind of bipartisan law. But until that happens, there are actions I have a legal authority to take as President—the same kinds of actions taken by Democratic and Republican Presidents before me—that will help make our immigration system more fair and more just.

I took those actions this week. We're providing more resources at the border to help law enforcement personnel stop illegal crossings and send home those who do cross over. We'll focus enforcement resources on people who are threats to our security: felons, not families; criminals, not children. And we'll bring more undocumented immigrants out of the shadows so they can play by the rules, pay their fair share of taxes, pass a criminal background check, and get right with the law.

Nothing about this action will benefit anyone who has come to this country recently or who might try and come to America illegally in the future. It does not grant citizenship or the right to stay here permanently, or offer the same benefits that citizens receive. And it's certainly not amnesty, no matter how often the critics say it. Amnesty is the immigration system we have today: millions of people living here without paying their taxes or playing by the rules. And the actions I took this week will finally start fixing that.

As you might have heard, there are Members of Congress who question my authority to make our immigration system work better. Well, I have one answer for that: Pass a bill. The day I sign it into law, the actions I've taken to help solve this problem will no longer be necessary.

In the meantime, we can't allow a disagreement over a single issue to be a deal breaker on every issue. That's not how our democracy works. This debate deserves more than politics as usual. It's important for our future. It's about who we are and the future we want to build.

We are only here because this country welcomed our forebears and taught them that being American is about more than what we look like or where we come from. What makes us Americans is our shared commitment to an ideal that all of us are created equal and all of us have the chance to make of our lives what we will. That's the country we inherited, and it's the one we have to leave for future generations.

Thank you, God bless you, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:30 p.m. on November 21 in the auxiliary gymnasium at Del Sol High School in Las Vegas, NV, for broadcast on November 22. In the address, the President referred to S. 744. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 21,

but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 22. The related memorandums of November 21 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Death of Marion S. Barry, Jr. *November 23, 2014*

Michelle and I were saddened to hear of the passing of Marion Barry. Marion was born a sharecropper's son, came of age during the civil rights movement, and became a fixture in DC politics for decades. As a leader with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Marion helped advance the cause of civil rights for all. During his decades in elected office in

DC, he put in place historic programs to lift working people out of poverty, expand opportunity, and begin to make real the promise of home rule. Through a storied, at times tumultuous life and career, he earned the love and respect of countless Washingtonians, and Michelle and I extend our deepest sympathies to Marion's family, friends, and constituents today.

Remarks on the Resignation of Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel *November 24, 2014*

The President. About a year ago, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was visiting our troops in the Republic of Korea thanking them for their service and answering their questions, and they asked about the usual topics, about our national security, the future of our military. And then one soldier, a sergeant from Ohio, asked him what was the most pertinent question of the day, which was, what was your favorite college football team? To which Chuck replied: "Born and raised in Nebraska, I don't have a choice. I am a strong Cornhuskers fan."

Now, there was a time when an enlisted soldier might have been reluctant to ask that kind of question of the Secretary of Defense. But Chuck Hagel has been no ordinary Secretary of Defense. As the first enlisted combat veteran to serve in that position, he understands our men and women like few others, because he's stood where they stood, he's been in the dirt, and he's been in the mud, and that's established a special bond. He sees himself in them, and they see themselves in him. And their safety, their lives, have always been at the center of Chuck's service.

When I asked Chuck to serve as Secretary of Defense, we were entering a significant period of transition: the drawdown in Afghanistan, the need to prepare our forces for future missions, and tough fiscal choices to keep our military

strong and ready. Over nearly 2 years, Chuck has been an exemplary Defense Secretary, providing a steady hand as we modernized our strategy and budget to meet long-term threats, while still responding to immediate challenges like ISIL and Ebola. Thanks to Chuck, our military is on a firmer footing, engaged in these missions and looking ahead to the future.

Now last month, Chuck came to me to discuss the final quarter of my Presidency and determined that having guided the Department through this transition, it was an appropriate time for him to complete his service. Let me just say that Chuck is and has been a great friend of mine. I've known him, admired him, and trusted him for nearly a decade since I was a green-behind-the-ears freshman Senator and we were both on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. If there's one thing I know about Chuck, it's that he does not make this or any decision lightly. This decision does not come easily to him, but I consider myself extraordinarily lucky to have had him by my side for 2 years, and I am grateful that Chuck has agreed to stay on until I nominate a successor and that successor is confirmed by the Senate, which means that he'll continue to guide our troops at this challenging time.

I'll have more opportunity to pay tribute to Chuck's life of service in the days ahead. For