

away and go home. [Laughter] And Congress certainly should not shut down the Government again over this. Americans are tired of gridlock. We're ready to move forward.

As you can imagine, I've gotten a lot of letters and a lot of e-mails about immigration over the past few days. And some have said it was a mistake for me to act. But then, others remind me why I had to. One letter I got last week came from Brett Duncan of Dawsonville, Georgia. And Brett is a Republican, and so he doesn't really agree with me about anything. [Laughter] Well, maybe everything. His ancestors came over from Scotland before the Civil War, so his immigration status is pretty much settled. [Laughter] But he's done missionary work overseas. He knows what it's like to be a stranger. And over the years, he's gotten to know a lot of the new immigrants in his community. And here's what he said. He said: "Their children are as American as I am. It would be senseless to deport their parents. It would be bad for America." "I believe," Brett wrote, "that a human being, created in the very image of Almighty God, is the greatest resource we have in this country."

So we're not a nation that kicks out strivers and dreamers who want to earn their piece of the American Dream. We are a nation that fundamentally is strong, is special, is exceptional, because we find ways to welcome people, fellow human beings, children of God, into the fold, and harness their talents to make the future brighter for everybody.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony

November 26, 2014

The President. Good afternoon, everybody.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. Please have a seat. Normally, we do this outside. The weather is not cooperating today. But I want to, first of all, on behalf of Malia and Sasha, wish everybody an early happy Thanksgiving. I am here to announce what I'm sure will be the most talked about executive action this month. Today I'm taking an

We didn't raise the Statue of Liberty with her back to the world. We did it facing the world, her light, her beacon shining. And whether we are—whether we crossed the Atlantic or the Pacific or the Rio Grande, we all shared one thing, and that's the hope that America would be the place where we could believe as we choose and pray as we choose and start a business without paying a bribe or—and that we could vote in an election without fearing reprisal and that the law would be enforced equally for everybody, regardless of what you looked like and what your last name was.

That's the ideal that binds us all together. That's what's at stake when we have conversations about immigration. That's what's at stake when we have conversations about Ferguson: Are we going to live up to those ideals of who we are as a people? And it falls on all of us to hand down to our kids a country that lives up to that promise, where America is the place where we can make it if we try.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. at the Copernicus Center. In his remarks, he referred to restaurateur Billy Lawless, cofounder, Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform and Illinois Business Immigration Coalition, and vice president, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, who introduced the President; and Anne Lawless, wife of Mr. Lawless. He also referred to S. 744. The related memorandums of November 21 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

action, fully within my legal authority—[laughter]—the same kind of action taken by Democrats and Republican Presidents before me—to spare the lives of two turkeys, Mac and Cheese, from a terrible and delicious fate. [Laughter]

I want to thank Joel Brandenberger, the president of the National Turkey Federation; Gary Cooper, its chairman; and his son Cole Cooper, who personally raised Mac and

Cheese. Give them a big round of applause for—[*applause*]. Cole is keeping a pretty careful eye there on Cheese. [*Laughter*] Uh-oh, he's not—he's getting pretty excited about this.

Thanks to all those who voted online to pick the official National Thanksgiving Turkey. Cheese wants you to know that he won. [*Laughter*] Mac, the alternate, is not so badly off either. Let's face it, if you're a turkey, and you're named after a side dish—[*laughter*]—your chances of escaping Thanksgiving dinner are pretty low. So these guys are well ahead of the curve. They really beat the odds.

It is important to know that turkeys have always had powerful allies. Many of you know that Benjamin Franklin once wrote: "I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character. . . . The turkey is, in comparison, a much more respectable bird." [*Laughter*] I think these two turkeys would agree with Mr. Franklin. And they'll get to live out the rest of their days, respectably, at a Virginia estate with 10,000 [1,000]^o acres of roaming space.

I know some will call this amnesty—[*laughter*]—but don't worry, there's plenty of turkey to go around. [*Laughter*] In fact, later this afternoon Michelle, Malia, and Sasha and I will take two turkeys that didn't make the cut to a local food pantry that works hard year round to make sure that folks in our Nation's Capital have food and clothes—food to eat and clothes to wear. I want to thank Jaiindl Turkey Farm in Pennsylvania for donating, once again, those birds for—it's, in fact, been 6 years in a row that they've made these contributions—and for making Thanksgiving dinner possible for some of our fellow Americans.

Finally, the Washington Post recently questioned the wisdom of the whole turkey pardon tradition. "Typically, on the day before Thanksgiving," the story went, "the man who makes decisions about wars, virus outbreaks, terrorism cells, and other dire matters of state, chooses to pardon a single turkey, plus an alternate."

Tell me about it. It is a little puzzling that I do this every day—every year. [*Laughter*] But I will say that I enjoy it because, with all the

tough stuff that swirls around in this office, it's nice, once in a while, just to say: Happy Thanksgiving. And this is a great excuse to do it.

Tomorrow is a pretty special moment when we give thanks for the people we love, and where we're mindful of the incredible blessings that we have received. We remember the folks who can't spend their holiday at home, especially the brave men and women in uniform who help keep our country secure. And we celebrate a holiday that, at its best, is about what makes this Nation great, and that's its generosity and its openness and, as President Franklin Roosevelt once said, our commitment to make a country in which no one is left out.

Now, because I know everyone wants to get out of town, Mac and Cheese included—[*laughter*]—it is time for me to engage in the official act. So let's see what we can do here with Cheese.

Careful there! Careful, Cole.

Come on, girls. [*Laughter*] Don't, don't. Come on. They always keep a little bit of a distance. You've got to be right next to him. All right, are we ready? All right? Cheese, you are hereby pardoned from the Thanksgiving dinner table. [*Laughter*] Congratulations. Gobble, gobble.

He looks pretty happy about it. [*Laughter*] All right, if you want to take Cheese down, that's okay. [*Laughter*] He—I will tell you, though, turkeys don't have the best looking heads. [*Laughter*] You know what I'm saying?

Cole Cooper. They're beautiful.

The President. You think they're beautiful?

Cole Cooper. I think they're beautiful.

Gary Cooper. And if you think about it, they're red, white, and blue, so they're American and patriotic too.

The President. There's a patriotism element to it. [*Laughter*] Absolutely. You guys want to pet him?

Malia Obama. No. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you. How you doing? Good to see you. Appreciate you. Thank you, everybody. Happy Thanksgiving.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House.

^o White House correction.