

shot from the earliest age is a priority that crosses party lines. So I hope that the new Congress next year will work with me to make pre-K available for all of our kids. It will not just grow the economy for everybody, it will change young lives forever.

Just ask Chuck Mills. Where is Chuck? Chuck is here. There's Chuck, right there. Chuck was born in 1962, youngest of six children, raised by a single mom. A lot of the kids in the neighborhoods where Chuck grew up did not finish school, and a lot of those young people ended up in prison. But in 1966, Chuck's mom saw a flier at a church for a new program called Project Head Start. Chuck became part of just the second class of Head Start students, and 2 years later, he had learned so much that he skipped kindergarten and went straight to first grade. And Chuck's been overachieving ever since. [Laughter] Graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, Captain Mills piloted Marine One for two different Presidents. That is something that you want the best people for. [Laughter] Today, Chuck is the founder and CEO of not one, but two companies in Northern Virginia. "My life," Chuck said, "can be summed up in the words, 'Wasn't supposed to.'"

"Wasn't supposed to." Well, that's not just Chuck's story; that's America's story. America is a nation that "wasn't supposed to." Our entire story is improbable. All of us are here be-

cause this country gave someone in our family a chance to beat the odds. None of us were supposed to. Those of us lucky enough to share in this country's promise now have a responsibility to ensure that for all the young people coming behind us who aren't supposed to, that they have those same opportunities.

There are a whole bunch of Chucks out there, all across the country. We have to invest in them. We have to invest in our communities. We have to invest in us. And if we do that, if we give every child the same chance that we got, then America will remain the greatest nation on Earth. And I thank all of you for the extraordinary efforts you are making in fulfilling that promise. All right?

Thank you, and God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Richard D. Snyder of Michigan; Susan A. Buffett, chairman, Sherwood Foundation; J.B. Pritzker, cofounder and managing partner, Pritzker Group, in his capacity as president of the Pritzker Family Foundation, and his wife Mary Kathryn "M.K." Pritzker; Potomac Falls, VA, resident Charlie H. Mills III; and former Presidents George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton.

Remarks at the Toys for Tots Distribution Center at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling

December 10, 2014

The President. Ho, ho, ho!

The First Lady. [Laughter] That's a pretty serious ho, ho, ho.

The President. Ho, ho, ho.

The First Lady. How is everybody doing?

The President. She's doing good.

The First Lady. Happy holidays, merry Christmas.

The President. Merry Christmas.

The First Lady. How are all the kids? Yay. Well, we're happy to be back. As you can see, I

brought a little help this year. So I'm excited—welcome to Toys for Tots. Your first year. We're going to break you in slowly, okay?

But let me start—we're not going to talk long because we're here to actually do some work. But I want to just thank everybody who has been involved in this effort. Of course, Lieutenant General Osman, who has just been a tremendous partner for so many years. His leadership is really at the heart of what makes this drive possible.

But also Lieutenant General Richard Mills, Lieutenant Colonel David Johnson, and First Sergeant Lowery as well. Let's give them all a round of applause—

The President. Yay!

The First Lady. —for their tremendous leadership.

Thank you all for all the hours that you spend picking up the donations, sorting in warehouses all throughout the area. This wouldn't be possible without you and, of course, your wonderful families here who help to make this possible.

We have a couple of other folks here. We've got White House Communications Agency folks and their families. Let's give you guys a round of applause. Thank you all so much for your work.

The President. Yay! WHCA!

The First Lady. And of course, to all of the marines from Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, plus their spouses and all of our military kids. Yay, you guys.

The President. Yay!

The First Lady. As General Osman said, this is the sixth year that I've been involved in Toys for Tots. And every year it's just a tremendous privilege to be able to be a part of making Christmas just a little brighter for a few kids across the country.

And we try to make it a big deal at the White House. We create competitions. I think this year the office that collected the most toys got a Bo and Sonny visit. [*Laughter*] So we did a good job this year. I think this year we're bringing in about a thousand toys from the White House. And so we're proud of our team at the White House for participating.

But we still have a lot of time. And one of the things that I just want to remind the public is that there's still time to donate. And we really want to urge folks out there to do everything in their power to donate to Toys for Tots.

And if you need to find out where to go, all you have to go—do is go to the Toys for Tot website. People can donate online. They can go by one of the dropoff centers. And each year, I kind of remind people that at times, one of the challenges is making sure we have

enough toys for the older kids. It's always fun to buy the Barbie dolls and the coloring books, but we have to remember that there are teenagers out there too that need those gifts. And we try to make it a point to make sure that we're buying cool clothes for kids and electronic products and educational materials for teenagers as well.

So, if you haven't already donated, don't forget our teenagers. They are looking for a merry Christmas as well.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to my new helper, who I brought along with me. He is—he doesn't need any introductions. I don't know how good he'll be with sorting—[*laughter*]—because he doesn't usually deal in shopping in any kind of way. But we'll watch him closely to see if he can figure out which ones are girls, zero to 2, or unisex. It gets really complicated. So watch him, because he could really make your work harder.

So with that, it's my pleasure to introduce my husband, the President of the United States.

The President. Hey! Thank you. Thank you. I'm the big elf. [*Laughter*] I'm like Will Ferrell. [*Laughter*] It is great to be here. I'm not going to talk long. I just want to say thanks to all of you for participating. I want to say thank you to Toys for Tots. Quick statistic: Since it started in the 1940s, Toys for Tots has distributed more than 469 million toys to more than 216 million children. I mean, that's a lot of dollhouses, that's a lot of Ninja Turtles.

But really what Toys for Tots is about is generosity and giving back. All of us are so blessed. Look at these beautiful kids here and wonderful families. And we are lucky. We're lucky, first and foremost, to live in the United States of America, and we're lucky to be able to look after our kids, and there are parents out there who love their kids just as much, but are going through a tough time. And for us to be able to make sure that that holiday spirit extends a little bit beyond just our family, but to people all around the country, it is a wonderful contribution.

While I'm here, I just want to say thank you to our Marine Corps for their extraordinary

work. Our men and women in uniform and our military families don't just work to keep us safe, they're also strengthening our country here at home. They're volunteering at schools, congregations, our communities. With our combat mission coming to a close in Afghanistan, it means more of our extraordinary military members are going to be home for the holidays, back where they belong. And that is the most important blessing of all.

But what's also great is that we're now seeing our incredible military—some who may be leaving the military—able to provide that same dedication, that same sense of service to organizations throughout the country, sometimes in a volunteer capacity, sometimes in a professional capacity. And we are very proud of that. Lieutenant General Osman is just a great example of the ongoing spirit of duty and service that is instilled in our Armed Forces. So we are so grateful to all of you.

Statement on the Death of Judy Baar Topinka December 10, 2014

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Illinois State Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka. Judy was an institution in Illinois politics. Her public service spanned more than 30 years, including her tenure in the State legislature and as chair of the Illinois Republican Party. Judy was a fierce advocate for her constituents, which I got to see firsthand when she was

With that, I want to wish everybody a merry Christmas, a happy New Year, and let's get sorting. I am positive that girls, zero to 2, that's perfect for the "Call of Duty" video game. [Laughter] Isn't that right?

The First Lady. The what video game?

The President. See, she didn't even get the joke. [Laughter]

The First Lady. I wasn't listening.

The President. She wasn't listening to me. [Laughter] Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:42 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to actor J. William Ferrell in his role as Buddy the Elf in the movie "Elf"; and Lt. Gen. Henry P. Osman, USMC (Ret.), in his capacity as president and chief executive officer of Toys for Tots. The First Lady referred to Lt. Gen. Richard P. Mills, USMC, commander, Marine Forces Reserve; Lt. Col. David A. Johnson, USMC, Second Civil Affairs Group; and First Sgt. Ocie L. Lowery, USMC.

Remarks at a Meeting of the President's Export Council and an Exchange With Reporters December 11, 2014

[*The President joined the meeting in progress.*]

The President. I'm so sorry I'm late, people. Usually, I've been on—I'm a pretty timely guy. [Laughter] But it seems like there's quite a few things on my agenda today. [Laughter] But I think we're going to bring in the pool. And I'm just going to make some quick remarks at the

State treasurer, the first woman to hold that office. She was blunt, pragmatic, unfailingly cheerful and energetic, and always willing to put politics aside to find commonsense solutions that made a difference for the people of Illinois. She will be greatly missed. Michelle and I extend our deepest sympathies to Judy's family, friends, and constituents today.

top, and then everybody can fill me in on the great work that the Council's been doing. Tell me when you're ready, everybody. All good?

White House aide. We're all set.

The President. Well, good morning, everybody. I just want to offer a few thoughts before you return to the meeting. Obviously, we've seen some significant economic progress here