

Jan. 27 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

with due consideration of the critical importance of certain areas within the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas to subsistence use by Alaska Natives as well as for marine mammals, other wildlife, and wildlife habitat, and to ensure that the unique resources of these areas remain available for future generations, I hereby direct as follows:

Under the authority granted to me in section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1341(a), I hereby withdraw from disposition by leasing for a time period without specific expiration (1) the areas of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) currently designated by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management as leasing deferral areas within the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the Beau-

fort Sea Planning Area in the 5-year oil and gas leasing program for 2012–2017; and (2) the Hanna Shoal region of the Chukchi Sea Planning Area lying within the contours of the 40-meter isobath. The boundaries of the withdrawn areas are more specifically delineated in the attached maps and accompanying table of OCS blocks. Both the maps and table form a part of this memorandum. This withdrawal prevents consideration of these areas for any future oil or gas leasing for purposes of exploration, development, or production.

Nothing in this withdrawal affects the rights under existing leases in the withdrawn areas.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks During a Radio Address With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and a Question-and-Answer Session in New Delhi, India January 27, 2015

[Prime Minister Modi began his remarks in Hindi, and no transcript was provided. He continued in English as follows.]

Prime Minister Modi. I request President Barack Obama to say a few words.

President Obama. *Namaste.* Thank you, Prime Minister Modi, for your kind words and for the incredible hospitality you've shown me and my wife Michelle on this visit.

And let me say to the people of India how honored I am to be the first American President to join you for Republic Day. I'm told this is also the first-ever radio address by an Indian Prime Minister and an American President together, so we're making a lot of history in a short time.

To the people of India listening all across this great nation, it's wonderful to be able to speak to you directly. We just came from discussions in which we affirmed that India and the United States are natural partners, because we have so much in common. We're two great democracies, two innovative economies, two diverse societies dedicated to empowering individuals. We are linked together by millions of

proud Indian Americans who still have family and carry on traditions from India. And I want to say to the Prime Minister how much I appreciate your strong personal commitment to strengthening the relationship between these two countries.

People are very excited in the United States about the energy that Prime Minister Modi is bringing to efforts in this country to reduce extreme poverty and lift people up, to empower women, to provide access to electricity and clean energy, and invest in infrastructure and the education system.

And on all these issues, we want to be partners. Because many of the efforts that I am promoting inside the United States to make sure that young people get the best education possible, to make sure that ordinary people are properly compensated for their labor and paid fair wages and have job security and health care—these are the same kinds of issues that Prime Minister Modi, I know, cares so deeply about here.

And I think there's a common theme in these issues. It gives us a chance to reaffirm what Gandhiji reminded us should be a central

aim of our lives, and that is, we should endeavor to see God through service of humanity because God is in everyone. So these shared values, these convictions are a large part of why I'm so committed to this relationship. I believe that if the United States and India join together on the world stage around these values, then not only will our peoples be better off, but I think the world will be more prosperous and more peaceful and more secure for the future.

So thank you so much, Mr. Prime Minister, for giving me this opportunity to be with you here today.

Prime Minister Modi. Barack, the first question comes from Raj from Mumbai.

President Obama's Daughters

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

A young doctor: "The whole world was about your affectionate love for your daughters. What do you plan to tell your daughters about your experiences in India? And do you plan to go shopping and buy things for them?"

President Obama. Well, first of all, they very much wanted to come. They are fascinated by India. Unfortunately, each time that I've taken a trip here they had school and they couldn't leave school. And in fact, Malia, my older daughter, had exams just recently.

So they are fascinated by the culture and the history of India, in part because of my influence, I think. They are deeply moved by India's movement to independence and the role that Gandhi played in not only the nonviolent strategies here in India, but how those ended up influencing the nonviolent civil rights movement in the United States.

So when I go back, I'm going to tell them that India is as magnificent as they imagined. And I am quite sure they're going to have to—going to insist that I bring them back the next time I visit. It may not be during my Presidency, but afterwards, they'll definitely want to come and visit.

And I will definitely do some shopping for them, although, I can't go to the stores myself,

so I have to have my team do the shopping for me. And I'll get some advice from Michelle, because she probably has a better sense of what they would like.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. Barack said that he would bring his daughters, and I do believe you can bring them when you're the President or even after, but definitely, India looks forward to welcoming you and your daughters.

[*Inaudible*—question: "You have started the 'Educate the Girl Child' mission. Have you spoken to the President of the United States about this? Have you asked him for help about this?"

I think this is a very good question you've asked. The poor sex ratio in India is a cause of great concern. We have a sex ratio of a thousand boys, and in comparison to that the number of girls is very low. And even our way of looking at, or our perspective of viewing women and men, girls and boys, is something that needs to be rectified.

I think when we look at President Obama and the way in which he has brought up his two daughters, I think this is an inspiration for us. In our country, we have so many people, and we have so many families where there are no sons and they only have daughters, and they do bring up their daughters very proudly. And I think that is an inspiration. And I think this kind of inspiration can be a strength for us.

And since you've asked this question, I would like to say that "Save the Girl Child," "Educate the Girl Child" is a social responsibility that we have. It's a responsibility that we have towards our culture, it's a responsibility towards humanity.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.*]

The second question for President Obama comes through e-mail: Dr. Kamlesh Upadhyay, a doctor based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

India-U.S. Public Health Cooperation/Childhood Obesity/Global Health Improvement Efforts

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

And I have another question which is also being addressed to Barack, and it's been addressed to me as well: "Your wife has been working on diseases like obesity and diabetes. She's been doing a lot of work in this field. These challenges are growing at a rapid pace in India, as well. So after leaving office, do you and the First Lady plan to or intend to come to India. For instance, as Bill Gates and Melinda Gates have taken up cleanliness as an issue in India, so do you think that you would work on obesity and diabetes?"

President Obama. Well, we very much look forward to partnering with organizations and the Government and nongovernmental organizations here in India around broader public health issues, including the issue of obesity.

I'm very proud of the work that Michelle has done on this issue. We're seeing a worldwide epidemic of obesity, in many cases starting at a very young age. Part of it has to do with the increase in processed foods, not naturally prepared. Part of it is the lack of activity for too many children. And once they're on this path, it can lead to a lifetime of health challenges.

And so this is an issue that we'd like to work on internationally, including here in India. And it is part of a broader set of issues around global health that we need to address. The Prime Minister and I have discussed, for example, how we can do a better job in dealing with issues like pandemic and making sure that we have good alert systems so that if a disease like Ebola or a deadly flu virus or Polio appears, that it's detected quickly and then treated quickly so that it doesn't spread.

And the public health infrastructure around the world needs to be improved. I think the Prime Minister is doing a great job in focusing on these issues here in India, and India has a lot to teach many other countries who may not be advancing as rapidly in improving this public health sector.

But it has an impact on everything because if children are sick, they can't concentrate in school and they fall behind. It has a huge economic impact on the countries involved. And so we think that there's a lot of progress to be made here, and I'm very excited about the possibilities of continuing this work even after I leave office.

[*Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Modi. [*Inaudible*]*—has asked a question, and it's quite an interesting question. House has asked me: "There's an old photograph of you as a tourist in front of the White House. So when you went back to America last September, what aspect really touched your heart?"*

Well, it's true that when I went to America for the first time I couldn't actually get into the White House, of course. There was a big iron fence outside the White House. And we had a photograph of ourselves clicked standing in front of that fence. And when I became Prime Minister, of course, that photograph has also become quite popular.

But at that time, of course, I never thought that I would have the opportunity of actually going into the White House. But one thing really did touch my heart, and I can never forget it. Barack gifted me a book, and I think he took a lot of trouble to actually find that book. In 1894, that book became famous. It had to do with Swami Vivekananda, who is one of the people I really deeply regard. There was a world religion conference in Chicago in 1894, and this was a compilation of the proceedings of that conference.

And his gifting me that book was something that really deeply touched me. And it wasn't just that. He had actually opened that book, read through that book, and actually put notes on the pages for me. And very proudly, he said that, I am from Chicago, and that is a city to which Swami Vivekananda had gone. And as I said, that deeply touched me, and I do consider that is something that is my heritage. I never did think that standing in front of the White

House, having a photograph taken, and actually going into the White House and being gifted a book of somebody I deeply respect—I mean, you can imagine how deeply that must have touched me.

Barack, there's a question for you now.

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.]

Himani from Ludhiana, Punjab. The question is for you.

President Obama's Expectations for Success as a Young Man/Social Mobility in the U.S. and India/Education/Equality of Opportunity

President Obama. Well, the question is, did you both imagine you would reach the positions that you've reached today? And it's interesting, Mr. Prime Minister, you talking about the first time you visited the White House and being outside that iron fence. The same is true for me. When I first went to the White House, I stood outside that same fence and looked in. And I certainly did not imagine that I would ever be visiting there, much less living there.

I think both of us have been blessed with extraordinary opportunity, coming from relatively humble beginnings. And when I think about what's best in America and what's best in India, the notion that a tea seller or somebody who is born to a single mother, like me, could end up leading our countries is an extraordinary example of the opportunities that exist within our countries.

Now, I think part of what motivates both you and I is the belief that there are millions of children out there who have the same potential, but may not have the same education, may not be getting exposed to opportunities in the same way. And so part of our job, part of government's job, is that young people who have talent and who have drive and are willing to work for it are able to succeed.

And that's why emphasizing school, higher education, making sure that children are healthy, and making sure those opportunities are available to children of all backgrounds,

girls and boys, people of all religious faiths and all races in the United States is so important, because you never know who might be the next Prime Minister of India or who might be the next President of the United States. They might not always look the part right off the bat, and they might just surprise you if you give them a chance.

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.]

Prime Minister Modi. Thank you, Barack.

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

This was also addressed to me: "Did you ever think that you would reach the position you have today?"

No, I never imagined that, because, as Barack said, I came from a very humble background. But for a very long time, I remember that I told people that don't ever imagine you're going to become somebody, don't ever dream of becoming somebody. If you have to dream something, then dream of doing something. Because when you do something, you also get satisfaction, and you're inspired to do more. If you only want to become something and then you don't become what you wanted to become, you are disappointed. And that is why I never, ever dreamt of becoming someone.

And even today, I don't dream of becoming somebody, but certainly, I do dream of doing things. I do want to serve my country. I want to serve the 1.25 billion people in my country. And I think that there can't be anything more ambitious than that.

There is also a question for Barack.

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.]

From Om Prakash. Om Prakash is studying Sanskrit at JNU. He belongs to Jhunjunu, Rajasthan. Om Prakash is a convener of Special Centre for Sanskrit Studies in JNU.

Democracy/Transparency in Government

President Obama. Well, this is a very interesting question. His question is: “The youth of the new generation is a global citizen. He’s not limited by time or boundaries. In such a situation, what should be the approach by our leadership, governments, as well as societies at large?” And I think this is a very important question.

When I look at this generation that’s coming up, they’re exposed to the world in ways that you and I could hardly imagine. They have the world at their fingertips, literally. They can, using their mobile phone, get information and images from all around the world. And that’s extraordinarily powerful. And what that means, I think is, is that governments and leaders cannot simply try to govern or rule by a top-down strategy, but rather, have to reach out to people in an inclusive way and an open way and a transparent way and engage in a dialogue with citizens about the direction of their country.

And one of the great things about India and the United States is, we’re both open societies, and we have confidence and faith that when citizens have information and there’s a vigorous debate, that over time, even though sometimes, democracy is frustrating, the best decisions and the most stable societies emerge, and the most prosperous societies emerge, and new ideas are constantly being exchanged. And technology today, I think, facilitates that not just within countries, but across countries.

And so I have much greater faith in India and the United States, countries that are open-information societies, in being able to succeed and thrive in this new Information Age than closed societies that try to control the information that citizens receive. Because ultimately, that’s not—no longer possible. Information will flow inevitably one way or the other. And we want to make sure that we’re fostering a healthy debate and a good conversation between all peoples.

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

Prime Minister Modi. That was addressed to Barack. It is a question that is also addressed to me. And I think that the answer that Barack has given is very good, is very inspirational. What I would like to say is that people influenced by a communist viewpoint used to call for communism across the world. They used to say, “Workers of the world unite,” the workers of the world should become one. That was a slogan that we’ve heard for decades.

I do believe that the youth today have strength. They are able to reach out and looking at that strength, I think we should say that the youth unite the world. We need to change our slogan. The youth of today must bring the world together. I do believe that youth today have the strength and they can do it.

The next question is from a chartered accountant from Bombay. He’s asked me this question. He’s asked me: “Which American leader has inspired you?”

When we were small, we used to look at Kennedy’s photographs in the newspapers, and we thought his personality was really impressive. But the question is, who inspired me?

I had a great interest for reading when I was young, and I did read Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography. He lived to a ripe old age, and he never did become President of the United States. But his life is really inspirational: how one person can manage to change his life; how he can make those attempts intelligently; how he can deliberately seek to reduce the number of hours that he needs to sleep, how to reduce the amount of food, the kind of hunger, that he feels; and how to influence people who are angry with him, how to find solutions to that.

There are very, very small issues that he has addressed in his biography. And I always tell everyone that we need to read about Benjamin Franklin’s life. He’s an inspiration to me, even today. He was a multifaceted personality. He was a political scientist. He was a thinker. He was a social worker. And he came from a very humble background. He wasn’t able to complete his schooling, but he has had a profound influence on American life and thought, even today. And I really found his life to be truly in-

spirational, and I would like to motivate you to read about his life.

And if you want to learn how to transform your life, you would be able to learn it from there. There are small examples that he gives that can serve as an example to you. And I do believe that you would find this an inspiration as well.

There is a question from Monika to Barack. Barack, this question is addressed to you.

President Obama's Sources of Inspiration/Importance of Public Service

President Obama. Well, the question is: "As leaders of two major economies, what inspires you and makes you smile after a bad day at work?" And that's a very good question.

I say sometimes that the only problems that come to my desk are the ones that nobody else solves. If they were easy questions, then somebody else would have solved them before they reached me. So there are days when it's tough and frustrating. And that's true in foreign affairs, that's true in domestic affairs.

But I tell you what inspires me—and I don't know, Mr. Prime Minister, if you share this view. Almost every day, I meet somebody who tells me, you made a difference in my life. So they'll say, the health care law that you passed saved my child who didn't have health insurance, and they were able to get an examination from a physician, and they caught an early tumor, and now he's doing fine. Or they'll say, you helped me save my home during the economic crisis. Or they'll say, I couldn't afford college, and the program you set has allowed me to go to the university.

And sometimes, they're thanking you for things that you did 4 or 5 years ago. Sometimes, they're thanking you for things you don't even remember or you're not thinking about that day. But it's a reminder of what you said earlier, which is, if you focus on getting things done as opposed to just occupying an office or maintaining power, then the satisfaction that you get is unmatched.

And the good thing about service is, is that anybody can do it. If you're helping somebody else, the satisfaction that you can get from that,

I think, exceeds anything else that you can do. And that's usually what makes me inspired to do more and helps get through the challenges and difficulties that we all have, because obviously, we're not the only people with bad days at work. I think everybody knows what it's like to have a bad day at work. You just have to keep on working through it. Eventually, you'll make a difference.

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

Prime Minister Modi. Barack has really spoken from the heart. Because no matter what office we hold, we are all individuals, we are all human beings first. And listening to this, I also feel like recounting an episode from my life.

For many years, I was working, I was single, and I was occupied with my work. And a lot of people at that time used to give me food to eat. And there was one family that used to invite me very often, but I never went to their house because I felt they were very poor, and I thought if I go to their house and have dinner, then it will be a burden on them. But one day, because they were so affectionate and kept inviting me, I did bow to their wishes and visited them.

They had a very small hut. There was a very small place to sit there. They gave me something to eat, which was a piece of bread and some milk. And they had a small child who was looking at that milk, was just staring at it. And it looked as if the child had never even seen milk. So I quickly gave that glass of milk to the child, and immediately, within seconds, he just drank up that milk. His own parents were quite angry with him because he had had my milk, but I experienced at that point that perhaps that child had never had any milk besides his mother's milk. And they had wanted to feed me well, and that's why they had gone and got milk.

And it really touched me that somebody living in a poor hut, a poor family would go through that kind of trouble to feed me. And you need to actually dedicate your life to

serving these people, and that is something that inspires me.

As Barack has said, what common people feel is something that we've experienced. And I'm very grateful that Barack has taken the time out today to join us, to speak to us. I'm also very grateful to the people of this country, because I know that people in every town, in every city, in every street are listening to this program. And we hope that this program, that the voice that we are spreading will be with you always.

And I do have an appeal. I have a suggestion. We are going to take out an e-book of this conversation between Barack and me today. We want to bring out an e-book of this conversation. And I would like to ask those listeners who have been listening in on this program today to participate. The best hundred suggestions that we get will be included in this e-book that we plan to bring out. So whether it's on Twitter, Facebook, or any other online medium, use hashtag #YesWeCan. Write to us using this hashtag #YesWeCan. The issue——

[Prime Minister Modi spoke in English as follows.]

Eliminate poverty, hashtag #YesWeCan. Quality health care to all, hashtag #YesWeCan. Youth empowered with education, hashtag #YesWeCan. Jobs for all, hashtag #YesWeCan. Global peace and progress, hashtag #YesWeCan.

[Prime Minister Modi continued in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

I want that you join this movement, that you write in with this hashtag. Give us your thoughts, give us your ideas. We will select the best hundred ideas. And the conversation that we've had today, Barack and me, we will be taking up these ideas, including them in that e-book. And we hope that this will become everyone's thoughts, the heart-to-heart thoughts of everyone.

I'm, again, very grateful to Barack for being here. And on the auspicious occasion of Republic Day on the 26th of January, I am very happy, and I'm very proud that he's with us today. Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:37 p.m. on January 25 in the Billiard Room at Hyderabad House. It was broadcast at 8 p.m. on January 27 as a special episode of Prime Minister Modi's monthly radio program, "Mann Ki Baat." In the address, Prime Minister Modi referred to William H. Gates III and Melinda French Gates, coauthors, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 27. Audio of the translation of the Hindi portions of Prime Minister Modi's remarks was not available for verification of the content of the remarks.

Remarks at an Armed Forces Farewell Tribute in Honor of Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia January 28, 2015

Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. Michelle and I, as some of you know, just spent the past few days in India. I returned about 3 o'clock this morning. So I don't know exactly what time it is—*[laughter]*—or what day it is. But I was determined to be here with you this afternoon to honor and celebrate a great friend, to me and to all of us.

In October of 1967, President Lyndon Johnson traveled to a military base in New Mexico

to review a top-secret weapons program. And he went down to the White Sands Missile Range and out to the testing grounds. There, out in the desert, the President watched as soldiers demonstrated what would later become the famed Stinger missile. And one of those soldiers was a 21-year-old private from Nebraska named Charles Timothy Hagel.

Now, the Secret Service does not usually let me get too close to an active weapons system.

It makes them nervous. But clearly, they did things a little differently back in LBJ's days. And, Chuck, I can only assume that you were careful not to point the missile at the President, because what followed was a life of dedicated service to our Nation spanning nearly 50 years.

With Vice President Biden, Members of Congress, General Dempsey, leaders from across this department, members of the Joint Chiefs, and service Secretaries; to the men and women of the greatest military in the world: We gather to pay tribute to a true American patriot. And let me assure you that I checked with the Secret Service, and Chuck will not be demonstrating any missile launchers today. [Laughter]

As we all know, and we've heard again, Chuck loves Nebraska. The Cornhuskers. Red beer. Runzas—I don't know what those are, but I hear they taste pretty good. [Laughter] But above all, what Chuck loves most about his home State is the people, his fellow midwesterners. There are just under 2 million people in Nebraska; there are more than 7 billion people on the planet. But as so many of our troops have found out themselves, no matter where Chuck goes in the world, if you are from Nebraska, he will find you. [Laughter] And he'll talk with you and listen to you and ask you about your family back home. And chances are, he knows them too.

So today is a celebration of a quintessentially American life, a man from the heartland who devoted his life to America. Just imagine, in your mind's eye, the defining moments of his life. The kid from Nebraska who, as Marty said, volunteered to go to Vietnam. The soldier outside Saigon, rushing to pull his own brother from a burning APC. The deputy at the VA who stood up for his fellow Vietnam vets who were exposed to agent orange. The Senator who helped lead the fight for the post-9/11 GI bill, to give this generation of heroes the same opportunities that he had.

I asked Chuck to lead this Department at a moment of profound transition. And today we express our gratitude for the progress under his watch. After more than 13 years, our com-

bat mission in Afghanistan is over, and America's longest war has come to a responsible and honorable end. Because of Chuck's direction, a strategic review has made difficult choices in a time of tight budgets, while still making sure that our forces are ready to be called on for any contingency.

Today, our troops are supporting Afghan forces. They continue to face risks, and they remain relentless in their pursuit of Al Qaida networks. They're leading the coalition to destroy ISIL, a coalition that includes Arab nations, in no small measure because Chuck strengthened key partnerships in the Middle East. And under his leadership, our forces in West Africa are helping to lead the global fight against Ebola, saving lives and showing American leadership at its very, very best.

Even as we've met these pressing challenges, Chuck has helped us to prepare for the century ahead. In Europe, a stronger NATO is reassuring our allies. In the Asia-Pacific, one of my foreign policy priorities, Chuck helped modernize our alliances, strengthen partnerships, bolster defense posture, improve communications between the United States and Chinese militaries, all of which helps to ensure that the United States remains a strong Pacific power.

Because Chuck helped build new trust, we'll expand our defense cooperation with India. I just demonstrated during my visit there the degree to which that partnership is moving in a new direction. That's partly attributable to work that Chuck did.

And the reforms he launched will help make this Department more efficient and innovative for years to come. Thanks to Secretary Hagel's guiding hand, this institution is better positioned for the future.

But, Chuck, I want to suggest today that perhaps your greatest impact—a legacy that will be felt for decades to come—has been your own example. It's not simply that you've been the first enlisted combat veteran and the first Vietnam veteran to serve as Secretary of Defense. It's how your life experience—being down in the mud, feeling the bullets fly

overhead—has allowed you to connect with our troops like no other Secretary before you.

You've welcomed our junior enlisted personnel to lunch in your office and made them feel at home, and they told you what was really on their minds. When you spoke to our newest sergeant majors about the true meaning of leadership and responsibility, they knew they were learning from one of their own. And in those quiet moments, when you've pinned a Purple Heart on a wounded warrior, you were there not just as Secretary of Defense, but as an old Army sergeant who knows the wages of war and still carries the shrapnel in your chest.

And these aren't fleeting moments, they reflect the driving force of Chuck Hagel's service: his love of our troops and his determination to take care of them after more than 13 years of war. Today, our military hospitals are getting stronger, our women are more integrated into the force than ever before. We're making progress in combating sexual assault. We'll bring home the remains of fallen heroes faster, and more Vietnam veterans will finally be eligible for the disability pay they deserved all along. And, Chuck, that's because of you. That's part of your legacy.

Of course, I'm grateful to Chuck on a very personal level. Exactly 10 years ago this month, I joined you in the United States Senate, along with the Vice President. I was new and green; you were a veteran legislator. I was the student, and you shared some of the lessons of your service. I was young, and you were—well. [Laughter] And though we came from different parties, we often saw the world the same way, including our conviction that even as we must never hesitate to defend our Nation, we must never rush into war. We both believed that America should only send her sons and daughters into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary. And when we do, we make sure they've got everything that they need to succeed; they've got a mission that is worthy of their sacrifice.

In an era of politics that too often descends into spectacle, you've always served with decency and dignity. And in a town of outsized egos, you've never lost your midwestern humil-

ity. You've always been frank and honest and said what you thought. And I have so profoundly benefited from that candor. You represent a tradition of bipartisanship in national security that we need more of today. And Joe Biden reflects that. I see Dick Lugar in the stands; he reflects that. That's when we're at our best. And from sergeant to Secretary, you've always been guided by one interest: what you believe is best for America. And I thank you for your friendship and your counsel, and all of us thank you for your character and your integrity.

Of course, nobody serves alone. Lilibet, Allyn, Ziller, thank you for sharing your husband and father with us and for the sacrifices that your family has made for all of ours. And, Chuck, since our lives are so often the reflection of those closest to us, today I also want to acknowledge the service of your brother Tom; the World War II service of your father Charles; the sacrifices of your late mom Betty, who worked day and night to raise her four sons. We salute this American family.

Our men and women in uniform here today, those who stand where Chuck once stood, they don't ask for much. They volunteered; they accept the risks that come with military service. But they do ask this: that this Nation take care of them as well as they've taken care of us, that we provide them with the resources to do their jobs and meet the missions that we ask of them. After all that they've given for us, after all that they've sacrificed, they have the right to expect that we will meet our obligations as well. And that's my duty as Commander in Chief. And this will be the work of my nominee to be the next Secretary of Defense, Mr. Ash Carter. But this must be the work of us all, as Americans grateful to those who serve in our name. And that's the story of Chuck Hagel's life.

I'll close with a story that came about last year. I was going to tell the story about when we were traveling in Iraq, and Chuck wore these pair of sort of Hush Puppy bedroom slipper shoes out into the desert, and the flaps started opening up and his toes were sticking out. But I'm going to skip that story. [Laughter]

He then ended up buying me a pair, which I have never worn, I'm proud to say. [*Laughter*]

This is a different story. One day last year, I was in the Oval Office, and Chuck came in for what I thought would be our regular weekly meeting. But he had a guest, and he introduced us. And his name was Jerome "Skip" Johnson, a friendly guy, a grandfather, and he was from my hometown of Chicago. And Chuck explained that Skip—Lieutenant Johnson—had been his platoon commander in Vietnam. But they had lost touch, until Chuck tracked him down. This was the first time they had reunited in nearly 50 years. And Chuck just wanted to bring Skip to the Oval Office to say hello to the President—to meet his family, including his young grandsons.

And Chuck told me about how it had been 1968, with protests and race riots back home causing tensions among our troops in Vietnam. And Chuck's unit was mostly White, but Skip is African American, and as the platoon commander, he was not going to tolerate division or distrust. And he went to his men and made himself clear: We are all Americans. We're going to live together. We're going to take care of each other. We're fighting together. We're going to get each other's backs. Let's get it done.

And at that moment in the Oval Office, as these two soldiers stood before me—with Skip's grandsons looking on—it wasn't lost on any of us how far our Nation has come. And I want to thank Chuck for that moment, because part of the reason we've traveled that distance is, we've had men like Chuck Hagel serving and representing what's best in America.

In moments when we are tested—as a military, as a nation—sometimes, we get distracted by what divides us and lose sight of what unites us. And at those moments, we can draw strength from the example of a sergeant from Nebraska and a lieutenant from Chicago. We are all Americans. We live together. We sacrifice together. We take care of each other. Sometimes, we have to fight together.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to introduce to you my friend, our 24th Secretary of Defense, and an outstanding American, Mr. Chuck Hagel.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:37 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas and Michael Hagel, brothers, Lilibet Hagel, wife, and Allyn and C. Ziller Hagel, children, of Secretary Hagel; and former Sen. Richard G. Lugar. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Final Report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission

January 29, 2015

I want to thank the members of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission for their comprehensive and thorough review of the military compensation and retirement systems and their considered recommendations. In September 2013, I asked the Commission to focus on protecting the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, improving quality of life for servicemembers and their families, and ensuring the fiscal sus-

tainability of the compensation and retirement systems. Our men and women in uniform and their families deserve nothing less.

The Commission's report includes a number of specific proposals that I will review closely over the coming weeks, in consultation with our senior civilian and military leadership. I look forward to hearing their views and working with Congress to strengthen and modernize our military compensation and retirement systems.

Remarks at the House Democratic Issues Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania January 29, 2015

The President. Hey! Hello, hello, hello! Hello, Democrats! Hey! Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, sit down, sit down. It's good to be with you, Democrats. It's good to be in Philadelphia. My understanding is, we still have our host, Mayor Nutter, here. Where's Mayor Nutter? There he is right there.

I want to just remind the New England and Pacific Northwest contingents, this is the City of Brotherly Love. So regardless of what you think about Sunday, I want you all to keep it clean. [*Laughter*] The—I am not taking sides on that one. [*Laughter*] I want to begin by—oh, bring your own footballs—that was—ooh. [*Laughter*] Oooh.

Audience members. Oooh—

The President. Wow. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. That's not overinflated.

The President. This is—and you're, what, a Giants fan?

Audience member. Jets fan.

The President. See, that's why he's so resentful. [*Laughter*]

I—let me begin by just acknowledging your outstanding leadership, starting with someone who, somehow, can travel for 17 hours, come off the plane perfectly coiffed—[*laughter*]—not a wrinkle on her, happy as a clam—[*laughter*]—come back another 17 hours later, after 2½, 3 days of programs, and go straight to a retreat of her caucus, and never miss a beat. I don't know what she drinks along with that chocolate. [*Laughter*] But I want some of it. Your outstanding leader, Nancy Pelosi. Give Nancy a big round of applause. [*Applause*] Hey!

Joe Crowley also went on that trip and didn't look perfectly coiffed when he got off the plane. [*Laughter*] But give Joe Crowley a big round of applause also. I want to thank Steny for the gracious introduction; Xavier, who helped obviously make this happen and is just providing outstanding leadership all the time; Jim Clyburn, one of my favorite people, just an

extraordinary gentleman and leader. We love him. And Debbie Wasserman Shultz, our chairwoman of the DNC. Thank you so much.

And then, the guy who I had a chance to see before I came out just to let him know that he should not feel overly disappointed when his hair gets gray, because in this job it will—Ben Ray Luján, the DCCC chair. I used to be youthful and attractive like him. [*Laughter*] We'll see how long that lasts, brother. [*Laughter*] He's going to have hair like Steve Israel. [*Laughter*]

I'm not going to give a long speech because I just gave one, and I want to spend most of the time on questions. Let me summarize then what I said last week.

We have been through an extraordinarily challenging journey, worst financial crisis in our lifetimes. We've seen the incredible courage and sacrifice, but also the costs of two difficult wars. There's been ups and downs in every region of the country and people feeling as if the economy is churning in ways that defy their control. And yet, despite all the challenges, despite all the fears, despite all the difficulties, over the last 6 years, what we've seen is the American people fighting their way back. And because of them, because of their resilience and their grit and their hard work, and because you and I, together, made some really tough choices—some sometimes politically unpopular choices—America has come back.

We've seen 11 million jobs created, best job growth since the nineties, best job growth in manufacturing since the nineties; steepest drop in the unemployment rate in 30 years; deficit cut by two-thirds; over 10 million people with health insurance that didn't have it before. We've seen reading scores go up, high school graduation rates go up, more young people attending college than ever before. We're number one in oil production, number one in natural gas production; doubled clean energy production; solar power up tenfold; wind power up threefold; carbon pollution down.

There is no economic metric by which we are not better off than when I took office. And that is because of the extraordinary will and dedication of the American people, but also because all of you have done a terrific job. And I'm proud of you for that.

Now, what we also know is, we've now got some choices to make. Going forward, are we going to be an economy in which a few do spectacularly well, or are we going to be an economy in which everybody who's willing to work hard is getting a fair shot and can succeed? Are we going to be an economy that continues to invest in innovation and infrastructure, all the ingredients that are necessary to power this economy through the 21st century, or are we going to be neglectful of those very things that have made us an economic superpower? Are we going to do what's necessary to make sure that everybody gets the tools they need to succeed—the education, the childcare support, the help when it comes to minimum wages and paid sick leave—that gives people a basic baseline of stability, but also allows them to constantly adapt to an ever-changing world?

That's the set of choices that we now have to make. And because the economy has gotten better, wages are beginning to tick up, people are starting to feel better about the economy. But I think what everybody here understands is that the ground that middle class families lost over the last 30 years still has to be made up and the trends that have squeezed middle class families and those striving to get into the middle class, those trends have not been fully reversed.

And so as much as we should appreciate the progress that's been made, it shouldn't be a cause for complacency, because we've got more work to do. We've got a lot more work to do. And in my State of the Union, I laid out a series of specific proposals that would allow us to continue to control our deficit, but would also ensure that we were investing in the kind of quality education, including free community college, that is so necessary for people to move forward. Specific proposals to make sure that

we provided some relief to middle class families in the form of a childcare credit and additional higher education credits so that somebody who is working hard and doing their best can get a little bit of relief, a little bit of help.

We talked about how important it is for us to rebuild our infrastructure in this country and put people back to work all across the country, something that everybody knows we need to do. And we've got very specific ways of paying for it, by closing loopholes that send jobs overseas and rewarding companies who are investing right here in the United States of America.

So I summarized all this as middle class economics. And what we know is, middle class economics works. That's been the history of this country. That's been the history of the last 6 years when we've implemented middle class economics. And the other side was telling us this would be a disaster and it would kill jobs and raise the deficit, health care costs would explode. And none of that happened. That's pretty rare where you have two visions, a vigorous debate, and then, you test who's right. And the record shows that we were right and middle class economics does work.

So the bottom line is this: We've got to make sure it continues to work. We should protect the progress we're making.

I hear Republicans are holding their 50th or 60th vote next year [week]^{*} to repeal or undermine the Affordable Care Act. I've lost count at this point. But here's something easy to remember: If that bill ever actually reached my desk, I would happily veto it. If they try to unravel new rules that we put in place to make sure Wall Street recklessness doesn't hurt American families again, I'll be happy to veto it. If, rather than try to solve the problem of a broken immigration system, they compound the problem, I'll veto it.

But my hope is that they join us. And one good piece of news is, I noticed that even though their policies haven't quite caught up yet, their rhetoric is starting to sound pretty Democratic. [*Laughter*] I heard—Chris Van Hollen was telling me about one Republican

^{*} White House correction.

Senator who shall go unnamed, but generally, doesn't agree with me on much, and he was suddenly shocked, shocked that the top 1 percent is doing really well and everybody else is getting squeezed, and we need to do something about it. And I think—I welcome that. I consider imitation the highest form of flattery. Come on board. Let's go help out that middle class family. Let's get something done.

We've got a former Presidential candidate on the other side who suddenly is just deeply concerned about poverty. [Laughter] That's great! Let's go! Come on! Let's do something about it!

I am glad that their rhetoric at least has shifted, but let's now make sure that the policies match up with the rhetoric. Let's make sure Americans are able to upgrade their skills for higher wages. Let's build the world's most competitive economy. Let's make sure that we end this across-the-board sequester that doesn't differentiate between smart Government spending and dumb Government spending. Let's take a scalpel and not a meat cleaver, and let's make sure that we're funding the things that we know help American families succeed. That's a smart thing to do.

I disagree with any Republican who says letting funding for the Department of Homeland Security lapse is "not the end of the world." That's a quote from one of them. I mean, I tell you, these are the guys who are always saying they're concerned about the borders. These are the folks who say they're concerned about terrorism. Well, who do you think helps monitor our borders? Well, what do you mean, it's not at the end of the world? That's all you've been talking about. And now, suddenly, because you want to make a political point, you think that we can afford to have the Department of Homeland Security not functioning, because of political games in Washington?

I mean, we can pay for all of the proposals that I put forward in the State of the Union we can pay for by fixing a Tax Code that is riddled with loopholes for special interests. And if Republicans don't agree with my approach for paying for it, then they should put forward their own proposals. And I'm happy to engage

them on that. I'm eager to engage with them on that. I think it's entirely fair for them to say, that's not the right way to fund higher education, that's not the right way to help families with childcare. And we can have a good, healthy debate. What we can't suggest is that childcare is not important to American families or that higher education costs are not relevant to folks who are currently in the middle class or trying to work their way into the middle class or hoping their children will be able to get in the middle class. Those things are important. So put forward alternatives.

And the good news is, is that I think there are some who want to work with us. And maybe the fact that I've now run my last election means that, instead of just blocking what we're trying to do, they may be interested in getting some stuff done. Of course, they'll then spend all their time attacking the next Democrat coming down the pike, but that's okay.

Because, ultimately, what this is about, the reason we are here, the reason so many of you make such extraordinary sacrifices—and your families make sacrifices—to be here, is because the story of the people that I mentioned in the State of the Union—people like Rebekah, who I talked about, from Minnesota—those people are us. They're our moms and our dads and our aunts and our uncles and our nephews and our cousins and our neighbors and our coworkers and our friends. And we remember some point in time where somebody gave us a little bit of a hand up. And we remember that scholarship that allowed us to go to school when it wasn't clear that our family might be able to afford it. And we remember what it was like to try to find childcare when you've got two folks working and trying to pay the mortgage at the same time, just like Michelle and I had to do. We remember those things.

And the reason that we do this is so that those folks have the same extraordinary opportunities in the same extraordinary country as we did. And more importantly, so that our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren have those same opportunities. And it is our obligation to make sure that we

are crystal clear about what we stand for and who we are fighting for.

And I will just say, obviously, we were all disappointed with the outcome of the last election, and there are a lot of reasons for it, and I'm happy to take on some of the blame. But one thing I'm positive about is, when we're shy about what we care about, when we're defensive about what we've accomplished, when we don't stand up straight and proud and say, yes, we believe that everybody in this country should have health insurance, and we're glad that we are making that happen; yes, we believe that families shouldn't be torn apart, and we're glad that we're fighting for immigration reform; yes, we believe in middle class economics, and we don't apologize for wanting to make sure that some wonderful young man or

young woman out there can actually afford to go to college even if their parents didn't go—we need to stand up and go on offense and not be defensive about what we believe in. That's why we're Democrats.

And I promise you, I'm not going out the last 2 years sitting on the sidelines. I am going to be out there making the case every single day, and I hope you join me.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:34 p.m. at the Sheraton Philadelphia Society Hill Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Steny H. Hoyer, Xavier Becerra, and Mario R. Díaz-Balart; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and St. Anthony, MN, resident, Rebekah Erler.

Remarks on Precision Medicine January 30, 2015

Good job! Well, thank you so much, Elana, for that wonderful introduction. Let me just be clear, when I was 19, I was not doing genetic testing. *[Laughter]* When I met Elana at the White House Science Fair last year, she tried to explain her research to me. And to help her explain her findings, she made these giant pink chromosomes out of swim noodles, which was helpful to me—*[laughter]*—because I know what swim noodles are, and I saw how they fit together. But I could not have been more impressed with Elana.

And she represents the incredible talent and energy and possibility of our young people, and so I'm so proud of her, and I'm so grateful that she introduced me here today. And she's doing great at Harvard from my—from what I understand. So those of you who are interested in purchasing stock in her—*[laughter]*—I'm sure she has an agent of some sort that you can talk to.

We've got some folks here who are doing outstanding work to keep Americans healthy. We have America's Health and Human Services Secretary, Sylvia Burwell. You can give her a round of applause. *[Applause]* She's worthy of it. We've got our Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy. Where's Vivek? Stand up, Vivek. Our new

Surgeon General. We haven't had one in a while. *[Laughter]* So we're really happy to have him here. And he looks sharp in his uniform. We have Dr. Harold Varmus of the National Cancer Institute. Harold. We have the singing scientist, Dr. Francis Collins, of NIH here. And we have my Science Adviser, Dr. John Holdren, who does not sing. For anyone wondering, "Is there a doctor in the house?"—we have got you covered.

We also have Members of Congress who are here. Lamar Alexander from the great State of Tennessee is one of the Senate's key supporters of encouraging medical innovation, and I'm so looking forward to working with him. Give Lamar a big round of applause. Senator Patty Murray is prepared to work with him on this issue. She couldn't make it here today. But we do have on the House side Congresswoman Diana DeGette, who is here and who is leading this effort in the House. And we're very proud of her.

Now, last week, in my State of the Union Address, I focused on what we need to do to make sure middle class economics helps more Americans get ahead in the new economy. We've got to help working families make ends

meet and make them feel more secure in a constantly changing, dynamic, global economy. We have to offer more opportunities for people to upgrade their skills for better paying jobs in this economy. And we've got to build the world's most competitive economy so that businesses create jobs here in the United States and not someplace else.

And that last part is what I want to focus on today. We've invited some of America's brightest minds in medicine and technology, some of our strongest advocates for privacy. And perhaps most importantly, we've invited patients who have the most at stake in these efforts. And we're here to harness what is most special about America, and that is our spirit of innovation, our ability to dream and take risks and tinker and try new things. And as a result of that, not only improve our economy, but improve the lives of men and women and children for generations to come. And together, what's so exciting is, is that we have the possibility of leading an entirely new era of medicine that makes sure new jobs and new industries and new lifesaving treatments for diseases are created right here in the United States.

Because we shouldn't just celebrate innovation. We have to invest in innovation. We have to nurture innovation. We have to encourage it and make sure that we're channeling it in ways that are most productive. And that's especially true when it comes to medicine. After all, when American researchers developed a vaccine for polio, a program created by Congress helped to distribute it. A federally funded study helped American doctors discover the risk factors for heart disease. Grants from the National Science Foundation and NIH supported the early experiments that led to the invention of the MRI.

And these kinds of investments don't always pay off. Basic research, by definition, will sometimes lead us down blind alleys and—but it will also tell us what we don't know, which then helps us figure out new pathways. And when things do pay off, then they create economic opportunities in ways that we could never imagine.

So Francis—Dr. Collins here—helped lead the Human Genome Project, and we've got a number of people here who are deeply involved in that process. And one study found that every dollar we spent to map the human genome has already returned \$140 to our economy. There's a huge economic stake in us tapping into this innovation. [*Applause*] Nothing wrong with clapping about that. Yes.

But as anybody who's ever watched a loved one battle with an illness, particularly a life-threatening illness—and I suspect that there's nobody here who hasn't been touched in some fashion by that experience—what everybody here understands is that the most important impact these investments can have can't be measured in dollars. If we have an opportunity to prevent hurt and heartbreak for more families; if we have the opportunity to help people live longer, happier, healthier lives; if we have the chance to make sure that a young person like Elana, who, stricken by a disease before their life has even really gotten going, if we have a chance to make sure that they're okay and cured and then able to make incredible contributions to our society, then we've got to seize that. We've got to go after that.

And that's why we're here today. Because something called precision medicine—in some cases, people call it personalized medicine—gives us one of the greatest opportunities for new medical breakthroughs that we have ever seen. Doctors have always recognized that every patient is unique, and doctors have always tried to tailor their treatments as best they can to individuals. You can match a blood transfusion to a blood type. That was an important discovery. What if matching a cancer cure to our genetic code was just as easy, just as standard? What if figuring out the right dose of medicine was as simple as taking our temperature?

And that's the promise of precision medicine: delivering the right treatments, at the right time, every time, to the right person. And for a small, but growing, number of patients, that future is already here. Eight out of 10 people with one type of leukemia saw white blood cell counts return to normal with a new drug targeting a specific gene. Genetic testing for

HIV patients helps doctors determine who will be helped by a new antiviral drug and who will experience harmful side effects.

And advances in technology means these breakthroughs could be just the beginning. The year Dr. Collins helped sequence the first human genome, it cost about \$100 million dollars, and today it costs less than \$2,000. Wearable electronics make it easier than ever to record vital signs from your blood sugar to your heart rate. Electronic medical records let doctors and researchers across the country collaborate more closely than ever before. And more powerful computers help us analyze data faster than ever before.

So if we combine all these emerging technologies, if we focus them and make sure that the connections are made, then the possibility of discovering new cures, the possibility of applying medicines more efficiently and more effectively so that the success rates are higher, so that there's less waste in the system, which then means more resources to help more people—the possibilities are boundless. So the time is right to unleash a new wave of advances in this area, in precision medicine, just like we did with genetics 25 years ago.

And the really good news—this is how you know that the moment is right—is, there's bipartisan support for the idea—[laughter]—here in Washington. Which makes me very happy. [Laughter] When I was a Senator back in 2005, I worked with Republican Senator Richard Burr on a bill supporting precision medicine. Newly elected Republican Senator Bill Cassidy—who also happens to be a gastroenterologist—recently called precision medicine “an incredible area of promise.”

And that's why the budget I send this Congress on Monday will include a new precision medicine initiative that brings America closer to curing diseases like cancer and diabetes and gives all of us access, potentially, to the personalized information that we need to keep ourselves and our families healthier.

So let me just outline the facets of this. First, we're going to work with the National Cancer Institute. We want to find the genetic factors that can lead to cancer. And we want to use

that knowledge to develop new and more effective approaches to help people beat this disease.

Second, we're going to work with the FDA to develop new approaches for evaluating next-generation genetic tests. The way we approve a new gene-sequencing technology is going to be different than the way we approve a new pacemaker or prosthetic device. And we need to make sure that our approach reflects the differences in technology.

Third, we're going to work with the National Institutes of Health to create a research group of 1 million volunteers. And just like analyzing our DNA teaches us more about who we are than ever before, analyzing data from one of the largest research populations ever assembled will teach us more about the connections between us than ever before. And this new information will help doctors discover the causes—and one day the cures—of some of the most deadly diseases that we face. So if we have a big data set, a big pool of people that's varied, then that allows us to really map out not only the genome of one person, but now we can start seeing connections and patterns and correlations that helps us refine exactly what it is that we're trying to do with respect to treatment.

And finally, we're going to make sure that protecting patient privacy is built into our efforts from day one. And I'm proud we have so many patients' rights advocates with us here today. They're not going to be on the sidelines. It's not going to be an afterthought. They'll help us design this initiative from the ground up, making sure that we harness new technologies and opportunities in a responsible way.

So the precision medicine initiative we're launching today will lay the foundation for a new generation of lifesaving discoveries. But in order for us to realize its potential, I'm asking more hospitals and researchers and privacy experts to join us in this effort. And I'm asking entrepreneurs and nonprofits to help us create tools that give patients the chance to get involved as well. Because we want every American ultimately to be able to securely access and analyze their own health data so that they can

make the best decisions for themselves and for their families.

And ultimately, this has the possibility of not only helping us find new cures, but it also helps us create a genuine health care system as opposed to just a disease care system. Part of what we want to do is to allow each of us to have sufficient information about our particular quirks—[laughter]—that we can make better life decisions. And that, ultimately, is one of the most promising aspects about this: making sure that we've got a system that focuses on prevention and keeping healthy, not just on curing diseases after they happen.

Medical breakthroughs take time, and this area of precision medicine will be no different. But the patients with us this morning are living proof that the dawn of a new era has arrived. If we start today and seize this moment and the focus and the energy and the resources that it demands, there is no telling how many lives we could change. And every single one of those lives matter.

Bill Elder was one of Michelle's guests at the State of the Union last week. Where's Bill? Here he is. Stand up, Bill. So Bill's a good-looking young guy. [Laughter] And about 20 years ago, Bill was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. But it turns out, Bill is one of 4 percent of cystic fibrosis patients whose disease is caused by a particular mutation in one gene. And a few years ago, the FDA fast-tracked a new drug targets—specifically targeting that mutation. And one night in 2012, Bill tried it for the first time. And just a few hours later, he woke up knowing something was different, and finally, he realized what it was: He had never been able to breathe out of his nose before. Think about that.

So Bill is now 27. When he was born, 27 was the median age of survival for a cystic fibrosis patient. Today, Bill is in his third year of medical school. "And for the first time in my life," Bill said—for the first time in his life, he says,

"I truly believe that I will live long enough to be a grandfather." One day, Bill will be able to tell his grandchildren about how he used the miracle of his own life to not only serve as an example, but also an inspiration and ultimately a pathway for his own career to help save the lives of other people.

And that's the spirit of hope and resilience and community that's always carried America forward. We may disagree sometimes, especially here in Washington, but we do share a common vision for our future. We want an economy powered by the world's best innovations, the best ideas. We want a country that extends its promise of opportunity to everybody who's willing to work for it. We want to have a nation in which the accidents and circumstances of our birth aren't determining our fate, and that if born with a particular disease or a particular genetic makeup that makes us more vulnerable to something, that that's not our destiny, that's not our fate—that we can remake it. That's who we are as Americans, and that's the power of scientific discovery.

And we want Bill's generation and the generations that come after to inherit that most extraordinary gift anybody can imagine, and that is not just a chance to live a long and happy and healthy life in this greatest country on Earth, but also the chance to remake that world continuously, in ways that provide great promise for future generations. So I'm very excited about this. I hope you are too.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States. Let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:19 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Elana Simon, student, Harvard University; Harold E. Varmus, Director, National Cancer Institute; and William Elder, Jr., student, Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine.

The President's Weekly Address *January 31, 2015*

Hi, everybody. At a moment when our economy is growing, our businesses are creating jobs at the fastest pace since the 1990s, and wages are starting to rise again, we have to make some choices about the kind of country we want to be. Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we build an economy where everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead?

That was the focus of my State of the Union Address: middle class economics, the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

This week, I will send a budget to Congress that's built on those values. We'll help working families' paychecks go farther by treating things like paid leave and childcare like the economic priorities that they are. We'll offer Americans of every age the chance to upgrade their skills so they can earn higher wages, with plans like making 2 years of community college free for every responsible student. And we'll keep building the world's most attractive economy for high-wage jobs, with new investments in research, infrastructure, manufacturing, and expanded access to faster Internet and new markets.

We can afford to make these investments. Since I took office, we've cut our deficits by about two-thirds, the fastest sustained deficit reduction since just after the end of World War II. We just have to be smarter about how we pay for our priorities, and that's what my budget does. It proposes getting rid of special

interest loopholes in our Tax Code and using those savings to cut taxes for middle class families and reward businesses that invest in America. It refuses to play politics with our homeland security and funds our national security priorities at home and abroad. And it undoes the arbitrary, across-the-board budget cuts known as the sequester for our domestic priorities and matches those investments dollar for dollar in resources our troops need to get the job done.

Now, I know there are Republicans in Congress who disagree with my approach. And like I said in my State of the Union, if they have ideas that will help middle class families feel some economic security, I'm all in to work with them. But I will keep doing everything I can to help more working families make ends meet and get ahead—not just because we want everyone to share in America's success, but because we want everyone to contribute to America's success.

That's the way the middle class thrived in the last century, and that's how it will thrive again.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:15 p.m. on January 30 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on January 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 31.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Italy *January 31, 2015*

I congratulate President Sergio Mattarella on his election as President of Italy and applaud his distinguished record of public service. Drawing on the enduring bond between

the United States and Italy, I look forward to working with President Mattarella to address transatlantic and global challenges and seize new opportunities for close cooperation.

Statement on the Death of Kenji Goto January 31, 2015

The United States condemns the heinous murder of Japanese citizen and journalist Kenji Goto by the terrorist group ISIL. Through his reporting, Mr. Goto courageously sought to convey the plight of the Syrian people to the outside world. Our thoughts are with Mr. Goto's family and loved ones, and we stand today in solidarity with Prime Minister Abe and the Japanese people in denouncing this barbaric act. We applaud Japan's steadfast commitment to advancing peace and prosperity in

the Middle East and globally, including its generous assistance for innocent people affected by the conflicts in the region. Standing together with a broad coalition of allies and partners, the United States will continue taking decisive action to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on the Federal Budget February 2, 2015

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Please, have a seat. Well, good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. It is good to be here at the Department of Homeland Security. And let me thank Jeh Johnson not only for the outstanding job that's he's doing as Secretary of DHS, but also for a short introduction. I like short introductions. [*Laughter*] Give him a big round of applause.

This is a great way to start the week, because I get to do something I enjoy doing, which is saying thank you. Nobody works harder to keep America safe than the people who are gathered here today. And you don't get a lot of attention for it. That's the nature of the job. But I know how vital you are, and I want to make sure that more Americans know how vital you are. Because against just about every threat that we face—from terrorist networks to microscopic viruses, to cyber attacks, to weather disasters—you guys are there. You protect us from threats at home and abroad, by air and land and sea. You safeguard our ports, you patrol our borders. You inspect our chemical plants, screen travelers for Ebola, shield our computer networks, help hunt down criminals from around the world. You have a busy agenda, a full plate. And here at home, you are

ready to respond to any emergency at a moment's notice.

It is simply extraordinary how much the Department of Homeland Security does every single day to keep our Nation, our people, safe. It's a critical job, and you get it done with not—without a lot of fanfare. And I want to make sure that you have what you need to keep getting the job done. Every American has an interest in making sure that the Department of Homeland Security has what it needs to achieve its mission, because we are reliant on that mission every single day.

Now, today I'm sending Congress a budget that will make sure you've got what you need to achieve your mission. It gives you the resources you need to carry out your mission in a way that is smart and strategic and makes the most of every dollar. It's also a broader blueprint for America's success in this new global economy. Because after a breakthrough year for America—at a time when our economy is growing and our businesses are creating jobs at the fastest pace since the 1990s and wages are starting to rise again—we've got some fundamental choices to make about the kind of country we want to be.

Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or are we go-

ing to build an economy where everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead?

And that was the focus of my State of the Union Address a couple weeks ago, what I called middle class economics: the idea that this country does best when everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody plays by the same set of rules.

The budget that Congress now has in its hands is built on those values. It helps working families' paychecks go farther by treating things like paid sick leave and childcare as the economic priorities that they are. It gives Americans of every age the chance to upgrade their skills so they can earn higher wages, and it includes my plan to make 2 years of community college free for responsible students. It lets us keep building the world's most attractive economy for high-wage jobs, with new investments in research and infrastructure and manufacturing, as well as expanded access to faster Internet and new markets for goods made in America.

It's also a budget that recognizes that our economy flourishes when America is safe and secure. So it invests in our IT networks to protect them from malicious actors. It supports our troops and strengthens our border security. And it gives us the resources to confront global challenges, from ISIL to Russian aggression.

Now, since I took office, we have cut our deficits by about two-thirds. I'm going to repeat that, as I always do when I mention this fact, because the public oftentimes, if you ask them, thinks that the deficit has shot up. Since I took office, we have cut our deficits by about two-thirds. That's the fastest period of sustained deficit reduction since after the demobilization at the end of World War II. So we can afford to make these investments while remaining fiscally responsible. And in fact, we cannot afford—we would be making a critical error if we avoided making these investments. We can't afford not to. When the economy is doing well, we're making investments when we're growing. That's part of what keeps deficits low, because the economy is doing well. So we've just got to be smarter about how we pay

for our priorities, and that's what my budget does.

At the end of 2013, I signed a bipartisan budget agreement that helped us end some of the arbitrary cuts known in Washington-speak as "sequestration." And folks here at DHS know a little too much about sequestration—[laughter]—because many of you had to deal with those cuts and the uncertainty around them and it made it a lot harder for you to do your jobs.

The 2013 agreement to reverse some of those cuts helped to boost our economic growth. Part of the reason why we grew faster last year was we were no longer being burdened by mindless across-the-board cuts, and we were being more strategic about how we handled our Federal budget. And now we need to take the next step. So my budget will end sequestration and fully reverse the cuts to domestic priorities in 2016. And it will match the investments that were made domestically, dollar for dollar, with increases in our defense funding.

And just last week, top military officials told Congress that if Congress does nothing to stop sequestration, there could be serious consequences for our national security, at a time when our military is stretched on a whole range of issues. And that's why I want to work with Congress to replace mindless austerity with smart investments that strengthen America. And we can do so in a way that is fiscally responsible.

I'm not going to accept a budget that locks in sequestration going forward. It would be bad for our security and bad for our growth. I will not accept a budget that severs the vital link between our national security and our economic security. I know there's some on Capitol Hill who would say, well, we'd be willing to increase defense spending, but we're not going to increase investments in infrastructure, for example, or basic research. Well, those two things go hand in hand. If we don't have a vital infrastructure, if we don't have broadband lines across the country, if we don't have a smart grid, all that makes us more vulnerable.

America can't afford being shortsighted, and I'm not going to allow it.

The budget I've sent to Congress today is fully paid for, through a combination of smart spending cuts and tax reforms. Let me give you an example. Right now our Tax Code is full of loopholes for special interests, like the trust fund loophole that allows the wealthiest Americans to avoid paying taxes on their unearned income. I think we should fix that and use the savings to cut taxes for middle class families. That would be good for our economy.

Now, I know there are Republicans who disagree with my approach. And I've said this before: If they have other ideas for how we can keep America safe, grow our economy, while helping middle class families feel some sense of economic security, I welcome their ideas. But their numbers have to add up. And what we can't do is play politics with folks' economic security or with our national security. You, better than anybody, know what the stakes are. The work you do hangs in the balance.

And just a few weeks from now, funding for Homeland Security will run out. That's not because of anything this Department did, it's because the Republicans in Congress who funded everything in Government through September, except for this Department. And they're now threatening to let Homeland Security funding expire because of their disagreement with my actions to make our immigration system smarter, fairer, and safer.

Now, let's be clear, I think we can have a reasonable debate about immigration. I'm confident that what we're doing is the right thing and the lawful thing. I understand they may have some disagreements with me on that, although I should note that a large majority—or a large percentage of Republicans agree that we needed comprehensive immigration reform and were prepared to act in the Senate and should have acted in the House. But if they don't agree with me, that's fine, that's how our democracy works. You may have noticed, they usually don't agree with me. [*Laughter*] But don't jeopardize our national security over this disagreement.

As one Republican put it, if they let your funding run out, "it's not the end of the world." That's what they said. Well, I guess literally that's not—that's true; it may not be the end of the world. But until they pass a funding bill, it is the end of a paycheck for tens of thousands of frontline workers who will continue to get—to have to work without getting paid: over 40,000 Border Patrol and Customs agents, over 50,000 airport screeners, over 13,000 immigration officers, over 40,000 men and women in the Coast Guard. These Americans aren't just working to keep us safe, they have to take care of their own families. The notion that they would get caught up in a disagreement around policy that has nothing to do with them makes no sense.

And if Republicans let Homeland Security funding expire, it's the end to any new initiatives in the event that a new threat emerges. It's the end of grants to States and cities that improve local law enforcement and keep our communities safe. The men and women of America's homeland security apparatus do important work to protect us, and Republicans and Democrats in Congress should not be playing politics with that.

We need to fund the Department, pure and simple. We've got to put politics aside, pass a budget that funds our national security priorities at home and abroad and gives middle class families the security they need to get ahead in the new economy. This is one of our most basic and most important responsibilities as a government. So I'm calling on Congress to get this done.

Every day, we count on people like you to keep America secure. And you are counting on us as well to uphold our end of the bargain. You're counting on us to make sure that you've got the resources to do your jobs safely and efficiently and that you're able to look after your families while you are out there working really hard to keep us safe.

We ask a lot of you. The least we can do is have your backs. That's what I'm going to keep on doing for as long as I have the honor of serving as your President. I have your back. And I'm going to keep on fighting to make sure that

you get the resources you deserve. I'm going to keep fighting to make sure that every American has the chance not just to share in America's success, but to contribute to America's success. That's what this budget is about.

It reflects our values in making sure that we are making the investments we need to keep America safe, to keep America growing, and to make sure that everybody is participating no matter what they look like, where they come from, no matter how they started in life, they've got a chance to get ahead in this great

country of ours. That's what I believe. That's what you believe. Let's get it done.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. at the Department of Homeland Security. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Mario R. Díaz-Balart. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Honoring the 2014 Stanley Cup Champion Los Angeles Kings and the 2014 Major League Soccer Champion Los Angeles Galaxy *February 2, 2015*

Welcome to the White House! After Super Bowl Sunday, we thought we'd help America ease back into the work week with some more sports. *[Laughter]* So let's give it up for the Stanley Cup Champion L.A. Kings and the Major League Soccer Champion L.A. Galaxy.

We have NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman here; give him a big round of applause. MLS Commissioner Don Garber is in the house. We've got also Dan Beckerman, the president and CEO of AEG, the company that owns both of these championship teams. And of course, we've got Kings and Galaxy management and Kings Coach Darryl Sutter and Galaxy Coach Bruce Arena. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, as a Chicago fan, I'm a little resentful. *[Laughter]* You guys have an embarrassment of riches. Today feels a little like "Groundhog Day." If you're feeling a little *déjà vu*, you're not alone. Two years ago, we had the Galaxy and the Kings here together. So if you see Bill Murray playing the piano in the foyer, you know something weird is going on, and we're probably going to do this again.

This is actually three titles in 4 years for the Galaxy. It is their fifth Cup overall, more than any other franchise in MLS. And it will be the last one for the greatest soccer players America has ever produced, Landon Donovan, who unfortunately couldn't make it today. But every-

body knows this team is a whole lot more than just Landon. There's league MVP Robbie Keane and Robbie Rogers. Apparently, there's some other guys not named Robbie—*[laughter]*—like Omar Gonzalez from Team U.S.A. And Juninho and Leonardo, two guys who've got that Brazilian one-name thing going, which is always very cool. *[Laughter]*

Now, this season wasn't a perfect storybook. The Galaxy started out the season in the cellar, then fought their way back into the playoffs. And then, in the MLS Cup against New England, the game went into extra time when Robbie Keane's goal gave them their latest title.

And I was just telling these guys backstage the degree to which they represent their sports so well, and America is starting to realize what the Beautiful Game is all about. And it is wonderful to see not just what's happening at the highest levels of professional sports, but how legions of young people are going to be continuing the traditions here in the United States with soccer for many years to come.

Now, like the Galaxy, the Kings needed overtime to win their championship; they needed two of them, in fact. And that was the easy part: Just to get to the Finals, the Kings had to win three straight Game Sevens—all on the road. They dug themselves out of a 3-0 hole against San Jose in the first round; they're laughing because they're thinking, man, let's

try to do it easier next time. [Laughter] In the Conference Final, they beat my Blackhawks, which is unfortunate. [Laughter] I mean, first of all, in L.A., there's not even any ice really. [Laughter] So you'd think, like, Chicago, where it's probably 10 degrees below zero today, at least, we'd get some hockey. But I mean, we've won a couple, so I can't complain.

The Kings have done the unthinkable: They have turned a city with no snow and no ice and no winter into a hockey town—[laughter]—complete with an outdoor game in Dodgers Stadium. They have done it with a team that L.A. fans have embraced, guys like goalie Jonathan Quick, playoff MVP Justin Williams. The first line of Brown and Kopitar and Gaborik, and Jeff Carter and his “hockey smile.” And of course, Coach Sutter and his one-liners with the press. [Laughter] I've tried those one-liners, by the way, with the press, and it never seems to work. [Laughter]

I've also got to mention that in the middle of their season, a lot of these guys played for their national teams at Sochi, and we were proud to have Jonathan Quick and Dustin Brown wearing the red, white, and blue on behalf of Team U.S.A. Very proud of them.

And that's just one example of how these teams represent more than the colors they wear for the Kings or the Galaxy. Both teams are major supporters of Children's Hospital Los Angeles. The Kings have partnered with Discovery Cube L.A., a local museum, on an

exhibit called “The Science of Hockey” to give kids a mental and physical workout. Galaxy players served meals to more than 2,000 families at Thanksgiving, and the organization built a soccer field for the community to use in South L.A.

And finally, I want to recognize what Robbie Rogers of the Galaxy has done for a lot of people by blazing a trail as one of professional sports' first openly gay players. My guess is that, as an athlete, Robbie wants to win first and foremost. That's what competition is all about. But, Robbie, you've also inspired a whole lot of folks here and around the world, and we are very proud of you. So where's Robbie? There he is.

So congratulations to both of these teams, to the City of Los Angeles, and its fans. And best of luck when you are not playing Chicago. [Laughter]

Thank you, everybody. We're going to strike the podium and get some pictures. Come on.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor William J. Murray; Landon T. Donovan and Robert D. Keane, forwards, Robert H. Rogers III and Vitor Gomes “Juninho” Pereira Júnior, midfielders, Omar Gonzalez and José Leonardo Ribeiro da Silva, defenders, Los Angeles Galaxy; and Justin Williams and Dustin Brown, right wings, Marian Gaborik, left wing, and Anze Kopitar and Jeff Carter, centers, Los Angeles Kings.

Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion With Beneficiaries of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and an Exchange With Reporters February 3, 2015

The President. Well, we are here with a bunch of folks who took the time to come to Washington, DC, and tell me face to face stories that they have told me in letters that they've written over the course of the last year. Everybody here has directly benefited from the Affordable Care Act, and it's a pretty good representative sample of people whose lives have been impacted in powerful ways.

You have folks like Tonya and Regina and Don, who had cancer, in some cases, before the Affordable Care Act was passed and were having trouble getting insurance. And because we no longer allow insurance companies to bar people because they've got preexisting conditions, they were now able to get health insurance and have the security and relief that was needed.

Regina said, for the first time since she was 12 years old, when she was first diagnosed with cancer, she felt free and now is planning her wedding with her fiancé. Tonya, who shortly after signing up for the ACA, in a checkup was diagnosed with a brain tumor, would not have even discovered it had it not been for the Affordable Care Act, and certainly would not have been able to afford treatments. The same is true for Don, who, as a consequence of regular checkups, in a colonoscopy that was part of the prevention regimen in the Affordable Care Act, was able to catch a tumor early and is now cancer-free.

We also have people who were able to benefit from Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act. So Ann in Connecticut, Derrick in California, both were able to get on a plan that they could afford, even as they were working, even as they were taking care of families, and as a consequence, are healthier for it. Ann was able to catch breast cancer early.

We have small-businesspeople, like Lynette over here and Darlene, who, because they weren't working for a company, had a tough time affording the premiums. And Lynette saved herself about \$300-and-something a month in premiums, and Lynette is—was able to cut her premiums in half. And she's got a cupcake company, I think—[laughter]—and she says she brought some samples, but Secret Service may have gotten them. [Laughter]

Maria, a teacher in Fairfax, Virginia; Naomi, a farmer down in Roberta, Georgia—both of them were able to benefit from greatly reduced premiums and, as a consequence, are able to maintain their health and pay their bills at the same time.

And then, Susanne has got a wonderful story. She's a doctor in rural Virginia—rural West Virginia. And not only are her and her sister able to benefit from the Affordable Care Act, but more importantly for her, patients that she had been seeing for years who would forego critical treatments are now able to pay for the tests and the medication that they need to maintain their health.

And so the bottom line is that the Affordable Care Act is not an abstraction. The debate

about making sure that every person in America is able to get basic, high-quality, affordable health care is not some political, ideological battle. It's about people. And for someone like Regina, who was diagnosed at the age of 12 with cancer, to have a sense of security so that she was able to finish college and is able now to plan her life, that is something that we should expect a country as wealthy as ours is providing to every person, to every citizen. And the idea that we would even consider taking that away from Regina or Tonya or Susanne's patients makes absolutely no sense.

Now, the good news is that we have over 10 million people who've now signed up under the Federal exchanges and millions more who are signing up from the expanded Medicaid that's taking place in States all across the country. And those are millions of people who are saving money, millions of people who are getting preventive care, millions of people who feel for the first time, in some cases, the security of knowing that if something goes wrong in their families or with them that they're covered, that somebody has got their backs, that they're not going to be bankrupt, that they're not going to have to split the pills that have been prescribed in half because that's all they can afford. They can continue with their professions or their schooling. And it makes this country more productive. It's good for all of us.

So my understanding is, the House of Representatives has scheduled yet another vote today to take health care away from the folks sitting around this table. I don't know whether it's the 55th or the 60th time that they are taking this vote. But I've asked this question before: Why is it that this would be at the top of their agenda, making sure that folks who don't have health care aren't able to get it?

It was maybe plausible to be opposed to the Affordable Care Act before it was implemented, but now it is being implemented and it is working. And people are being covered, just as anticipated. The premiums on average are less than a hundred dollars when you take into account the tax credit, so it is affordable for the people that it was designed to help. Health care inflation is at its lowest rate in 50 years.

The overall tab for the Affordable Care Act is costing less than the original projections.

In every respect, this is working not just as intended, but better than intended. And so the notion that we would play politics with the lives of folks who are out there working hard every single day, trying to make ends meet, trying to look after their families, makes absolutely no sense. And that's a message that I wanted to send very directly today.

I've got a second interest here, and that is that we still have the opportunity for millions of more people to sign up. The deadline for signing up for 2015 is February 15. So we've got a little over a week for people to sign up. For the cost of less than your cell phone bill or your cable bill, you can have the same kind of health security that the folks around this table do.

And I want to remind everybody—Ann told the story that she really didn't think she needed health insurance, ended up getting it because she heard that there was a fee involved if she didn't get it, ended up purchasing it—or ended up getting—finding out she was qualified for Medicaid because of the expanded Medicaid in Connecticut, and it was only after she signed up that she discovered through a mammogram that she had breast cancer.

So it turns out that even if you think out there that you're not going to need health insurance, you very may well need it at some point in your life. And here's an opportunity to sign up.

So I want everybody to get on healthcare.gov, find out what options are available to you in your State and in your community. We have people around this table who are paying as little as \$30 or \$20 a month for premiums. Some are paying more, but again, the average is less than a hundred dollars a month. And that is something that a lot of folks out there can afford. And we've got millions of people who are still qualified who have a chance to sign up, but you've got to do it by February 15.

So get on healthcare.gov, look at what your options are. Don't take my word for it. But understand that this is something that can give you the kind of security and peace of mind that is priceless.

And to my friends up on Capitol Hill, I would just ask them once again to consider why they would think it an important priority to take away health care for some 10 million people, people who are working hard and, in many cases, through no fault of their own, got dealt a bad hand.

Regina, at the age of 12, wasn't asking to have a series of cancers. And anybody who has a chance to talk to her would know we want her to succeed. She's overcome incredible odds. Why would we want to take health care away from her? Why would we want to make it impossible for her to live out her life with some sense of security and peace of mind? It doesn't make any sense.

So I just want to thank everybody here for sharing their stories. I'm very proud of them, and I'm proud of the work that they're doing to help spread the word. But I hope all of you—since you've got a lot of cameras and microphones—spread the word as well. You've got to sign up by February 15.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Death of Jordanian Air Force Pilot Moaz al-Kasabeh/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

Q. Mr. President, any reaction to the Jordanian pilot who, ISIS said, was burned alive?

The President. I just got word of the video that had been released. I don't know the details of the confirmations. But should, in fact, this video be authentic, it's just one more indication of the viciousness and barbarity of this organization. And it, I think, will redouble the vigilance and determination on the part of a global coalition to make sure that they are degraded and ultimately defeated.

And it also just indicates the degree to which, whatever ideology they're operating off of, it's bankrupt. We're here to talk about how to make people healthier and make their lives better, and this organization appears only interested in death and destruction.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Par-

ticipating in the roundtable discussion were Dallas, TX, resident Tonya Fisher; Philadelphia, PA, resident Regina Moran; Phoenix, AZ, resident Don Kuk; Westport, CT, resident Ann Chrisman; San Francisco, CA, resident Der-

rick Benn; Hyattsville, MD, resident Lynette Jackson; Cary, NC, resident Darlene Whitted; Fairfax, VA, resident Maria Villavicencio; Roberta, GA, resident Naomi Rosan; and Morgantown, WV, resident Susanne Choby.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting *February 3, 2015*

This is my first opportunity to bring all the Cabinet here together for this year. And I, first of all, am going to be thanking all of them for the outstanding work they did last year to make 2014 a breakthrough year for America. What we saw was job growth, unemployment coming down, energy production up, clean energy production up, reduction in deficits, continued expansion of exports.

And as I said at the State of the Union, we are now poised to not just have recovered from the recession, but really to move forward in the 21st century in a better position than just about any country on Earth. But that requires we make some smart choices. Are we going to have a country where just a few do spectacularly well, or are we going to have a country where prosperity is broad based and we're making sure everybody has got a shot if they're willing to work hard? And that middle class economics is going to be a central theme of the work that every single agency does not just in the coming weeks or in the coming months, but for the remainder of my Presidency.

The budget that we put forward reflects those priorities. It makes sure that we're investing in infrastructure, in research, to continue to make us grow. It makes sure that we are providing tax credits and tax breaks to middle class families for their childcare expenses, to make sure that they're able to afford college educations for their kids. That includes the proposal I put forward for free community college, which can reduce the debt burdens for young people who know that they need the skills to succeed in the 21st century.

It's fully paid for through smart spending cuts, as well as tax reforms. It fully reverses the arbitrary cuts of recent years to domestic priori-

ties in 2016 with dollar-for-dollar increases for defense. It's full of ideas that Republicans should embrace, like cutting taxes for middle class families. And one idea that they need to embrace right away is making sure that we're funding the Department of Homeland Security.

I talked about this yesterday, I want to re-emphasize it today: The Department of Homeland Security contains numerous agencies that every single day are keeping the American people safe. They're our front lines at our borders, at our airports, along our coasts. And they need certainty in order to do their jobs. The notion that we would risk the effectiveness of the department that is charged with preventing terrorism, controlling our borders, making sure that the American people are safe, makes absolutely no sense. The idea that we would have members of the Coast Guard or our Border Control or TSA not being paid, and expect them to still be able to perform as effectively as we need them to perform, makes no sense. And the idea that we would do that because of a separate disagreement between myself and the Republicans about the need for comprehensive immigration reform, certainly is something that is not going to make sense to the American people.

So I'm encouraging Congress to go ahead and get a budget done for the Department of Homeland Security, make sure it's properly funded. And then I'm looking forward to engaging with all of them so that we can make sure that we've got a Government that is delivering for the American people and making sure that we are giving middle class families and everybody who's willing to work hard to get into the middle class the chance to get ahead.

And we're also going to have an opportunity in our Cabinet to talk about some administrative actions that we're taking to continue to make Government more efficient, more effective, and more customer friendly. And we've made some real progress on that front in every single agency, from the Veterans Administration to the Small Business Administration. I'm really excited about some of the things that we're going to be doing, saving taxpayers mon-

ey and making sure that our organizations are tight, streamlined, and effective.

So I appreciate all the good work that all of you are doing. And I want to thank our press pool very much so we can get to work.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Moaz al-Kasasbeh *February 3, 2015*

Today we join the people of Jordan in grieving the loss of one of their own, First Lieutenant Moaz al-Kasasbeh, cruelly and brutally killed by ISIL terrorists. On behalf of the American people, I offer my deepest condolences to Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh's family and loved ones, to the brave men and women of the Jordan Armed Forces, and to King Abdullah II and the people of Jordan.

Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh will forever personify the bravery of a true son of Jordan, one who honored his family and country by his 7 years of military service. Along with his compatriots and other Arab and international members of the coalition, Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh was in the vanguard of the effort to degrade and defeat the threat posed by ISIL.

Lieutenant al-Kasasbeh's dedication, courage, and service to his country and family represent universal human values that stand in opposition to the cowardice and depravity of ISIL, which has been so broadly rejected around the globe. As we grieve together, we must stand united, respectful of his sacrifice to defeat this scourge. Today, the coalition fights for everyone who has suffered from ISIL's inhumanity. It is their memory that invests us and our coalition partners with the undeterred resolve to see ISIL and its hateful ideology banished to the recesses of history.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy *February 4, 2015*

Well, I've just had a chance to meet with these six wonderful young people who represent the very best that this country has to offer. What sets them apart is that they all came here—were brought here by their parents—and, up until recently, have had a very difficult situation because of their immigration status.

The stories you hear from these young people are parents who aspired for a better life for their children; these folks coming here at the age of 4 months or 7 months or 9-year-olds or 10-year-olds, oftentimes not realizing that their

status was any different than their classmates and their friends and their neighbors. In some cases, they didn't discover until they were about to go to college that there was a difference that might prevent them from giving back to their community and their country.

And because of the executive actions that we took with respect to "DREAM Act" kids, and because of the executive actions that I announced late last year with respect to many of their parents, what I've heard is lives transformed. Young people who didn't think it

would be possible for themselves to go to college suddenly are going to college. Young people who didn't think that it might be possible to start a business suddenly find themselves in a position to look at starting a business. Young people who have memories of their mothers weeping because they couldn't go to the funeral of their parent now are seeing the prospect, the hope, that their lives can stabilize and normalize in some way.

I don't think there's anybody in America who's had a chance to talk to these six young people or the young DREAMers all across the country who wouldn't find it in their heart to say these kids are American just like us and they belong here and we want to do right by them.

And so often in this immigration debate, it's an abstraction, and we don't really think about the human consequences of our positions. And part of the reason that I wanted to hear from these young people today, and part of the reason why I've heard from young DREAMers in the past, is because it's a constant reminder to me of why this is important.

Now, the House of Representatives recently passed a bill that would have these six young people deported. I think that's wrong. And I think most Americans would think it was wrong if they had a chance to meet these young people. And legislation is going to be going to the Senate that again tries to block these executive actions. I want to be as clear as possible: I will veto any legislation that got to my desk that took away the chance of these young people, who grew up here and who are prepared to contribute to this country, that would prevent them from doing so. And I am confident that I can uphold that veto.

So as we move forward in this debate over the next several months, the next year, the next year and a half, I would call on Members of Congress to think about all the talent that is already in this country, that is already working in many cases, is already making contributions—in some cases, are joining up in our military or are already starting businesses, are already attending school—and let's be true to our tradi-

tion as a nation of immigrants and as a nation of laws.

My strong preference is going to be to pass comprehensive immigration reform. And I know that there are Republicans out there who want to pass comprehensive immigration reform. In the Senate, they've shown that they are prepared to do the right thing. And rather than continue trying to go back to a system that everybody acknowledges was broken, let's move forward with the incredible promise that these young people represent.

Last point I'll make: There have been suggestions that we will not fund the Department of Homeland Security—which is responsible for patrolling our borders, as well as keeping our air travel safe, as well as patrolling our coasts—there's been talk about not funding that Department because of the disagreement around immigration reform. There's no logic to that position. Particularly for Republicans who claim that they are interested in strong border security, why would you cut off your nose to spite your face by defunding the very operations that are involved in making sure that we've got strong border security, particularly at a time when we've got real concerns about countering terrorism?

So my strong suggestion would be that Congress go ahead, fund the Department of Homeland Security. We're doing a tremendous amount of work at the borders. The concerns that people had about unaccompanied children tragically traveling from Central America, that spike has now diminished. We are below the levels that we were 2 years ago. We are working diligently with the Central American countries to make sure that young people there have hope and that their parents are getting a clear message of not sending them on this extraordinarily dangerous journey.

Let's make sure the Department of Homeland Security is properly funded, we're doing the right things at the borders, we're doing the right things with respect to our airports. And then let's get back to first principles and remind ourselves that each of these young people here are going to be doing incredible things on behalf of this country.

And to all the DREAMers who are out there and all those who qualified for my executive action, moving forward, I want you to know that I am confident in my ability to implement this program over the next 2 years, and I'm confident that the next President and the next Congress and the American people will ultimately recognize why this is the right thing to do. So I'm going to want all of you to get information so you can sign up if you qualify as well. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. And thank you, guys, for sharing your incredible stories.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the discussion were Jean Yannick Diouf, student, University of Maryland; Bati-amgalan Tsogtsaikhan, student, George Mason University; Maria Praeli, student, Quinnipiac University; Rishi Singh, educational justice organizer, DRUM—South Asian Organizing Center; Las Vegas, NV, resident Blanca Gamez; and Steven Arteaga Rodriguez, student, University of Houston. He also referred to H.R. 5759.

Statement on the Death of Charles L. Sifford *February 4, 2015*

Michelle and I offer our condolences on the passing of golf legend Charlie Sifford. Charlie was the first African American to earn a PGA Tour card, often facing indignity and injustice even as he faced the competition. Though his best golf was already behind him, he proved that he belonged, winning twice on tour and

blazing a trail for future generations of athletes in America. I was honored to award Charlie the Presidential Medal of Freedom last year, for altering the course of the sport and the country he loved. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, his friends, and his fans.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire *February 4, 2015*

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13396 of February 7, 2006, with respect to the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire is to continue in effect beyond February 7, 2015.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire and its people continue to make significant progress in promotion of democratic, social, and economic de-

velopment. The United States also supports the advancement of impartial justice in Côte d'Ivoire as well as the Government of Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to prepare for a peaceful, fair, and transparent presidential election in 2015, which will be an important milestone in Côte d'Ivoire's progress. We urge all sides to work for the benefit of the country as a whole by rejecting violence and participating in the electoral process.

While the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and its people continue to make progress toward peace and prosperity, the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The White House,
February 4, 2015.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast *February 5, 2015*

Thank you very much. Please, please. Thank you. Well, good morning. Giving all praise and honor to God. It is wonderful to be back with you here. I want to thank our cochairs, Bob and Roger. These two don't always agree in the Senate, but in coming together and uniting us all in prayer, they embody the spirit of our gathering today.

I also want to thank everybody who helped organize this breakfast. And it's wonderful to see so many friends and faith leaders and dignitaries, and Michelle and I are truly honored to be joining you here today.

I want to offer a special welcome to a good friend, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is a powerful example of what it means to practice compassion and who inspires us to speak up for the freedom and dignity of all human beings. I've been pleased to welcome him to the White House on many occasions, and we're grateful he's able to join us here today.

There aren't that many occasions that bring His Holiness under the same roof as NASCAR. [Laughter] This may be the first. [Laughter] But God works in mysterious ways. [Laughter] And so I want to thank Darrell for that wonderful presentation. Darrell knows that when you're going 200 miles an hour, a little prayer cannot hurt. [Laughter] I suspect that more than once, Darrell has had the same thought as many of us have in our own lives: Jesus, take the wheel. [Laughter] Although, I hope that you kept your hands on the wheel when you were thinking that. [Laughter]

He and I obviously share something in having married up. And we are so grateful to Stevie for the incredible work that they've done together to build a ministry where the fastest drivers can slow down a little bit and spend some time in prayer and reflection and thanks.

And we certainly want to wish Darrell a happy birthday. [Laughter] So happy birthday.

I will note, though, Darrell, when you were reading that list of things folks were saying about you, that—I was thinking, well, you're a piker. I mean, that—[laughter]—I mean, if you really want a list, come talk to me. [Laughter] Because that ain't nothing. [Laughter] That's the best they can do at NASCAR? [Laughter]

Slowing down and pausing for fellowship and prayer, that's what this breakfast is about. I think it's fair to say Washington moves a lot slower than NASCAR. Certainly, my agenda does sometimes. [Laughter] But still, it's easier to get caught up in the rush of our lives and in the political back and forth that can take over this city. And we get sidetracked with distractions, large and small. We can't go 10 minutes without checking our smartphones, and for my staff, that's every 10 seconds. And so for 63 years, this prayer tradition has brought us together, giving us the opportunity to come together in humility before the Almighty and to be reminded of what it is that we share as children of God.

And certainly for me, this is always a chance to reflect on my own faith journey. Many times as President, I've been reminded of a line of prayer that Eleanor Roosevelt was fond of. She said, "Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength." Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength. I've wondered at times if maybe God was answering that prayer a little too literally. [Laughter] But no matter the challenge, He has been there for all of us. He's certainly strengthened me "with the power through his Spirit," as I've sought His guidance not just in my own life, but in the life of our Nation.

Now, over the last few months, we've seen a number of challenges, certainly, over the last 6 years. But part of what I want to touch on today is the degree to which we've seen professions of faith used both as an instrument of great good, but also twisted and misused in the name of evil.

As we speak, around the world, we see faith inspiring people to lift up one another: to feed the hungry and care for the poor and comfort the afflicted and make peace where there is strife. We heard from—the good work that Sister has done in Philadelphia and the incredible work that Dr. Brantly and his colleagues have done. We see faith driving us to do right.

But we also see faith being twisted and distorted, used as a wedge, or worse, sometimes used as a weapon. From a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris, we have seen violence and terror perpetrated by those who profess to stand up for faith, their faith; professed to stand up for Islam, but in fact, are betraying it. We see ISIL, a brutal, vicious death cult that, in the name of religion, carries out unspeakable acts of barbarism: terrorizing religious minorities like the Yazidis, subjecting women to rape as a weapon of war, and claiming the mantle of religious authority for such actions.

We see sectarian war in Syria, the murder of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, religious war in the Central African Republic, a rising tide of anti-Semitism and hate crimes in Europe, so often perpetrated in the name of religion.

And so how do we, as people of faith, reconcile these realities, the profound good, the strength, the tenacity, the compassion, and love that can flow from all of our faiths, operating alongside those who seek to hijack religious for their own murderous ends?

Now, humanity has been grappling with these questions throughout human history. And lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ. Michelle and I returned from India, an

incredible, beautiful country, full of this magnificent diversity, but a place where, in past years, religious faiths of all types have, on occasion, been targeted by other peoples of faiths, simply due to their heritage and their beliefs, acts of intolerance that would have shocked Gandhiji, the person who helped to liberate that nation.

So this is not unique to one group or one religion. There is a tendency in us, a sinful tendency that can pervert and distort our faith. In today's world, when hate groups have their own Twitter accounts and bigotry can fester in hidden places in cyberspace, it can be even harder to counteract such intolerance. But God compels us to try. And in this mission, I believe there are a few principles that can guide us, particularly those of us who profess to believe.

And first, we should start with some basic humility. I believe that the starting point of faith is some doubt: not being so full of yourself and so confident that you are right and that God speaks only to us and doesn't speak to others, that God only cares about us and doesn't care about others, that somehow we alone are in possession of the truth.

Our job is not to ask that God respond to our notion of truth; our job is to be true to Him, His word, and His commandments. And we should assume humbly that we're confused and don't always know what we're doing and we're staggering and stumbling towards Him and have some humility in that process. And that means we have to speak up against those who would misuse His name to justify oppression or violence or hatred with that fierce certainty. No God condones terror. No grievance justifies the taking of innocent lives or the oppression of those who are weaker or fewer in number.

And so, as people of faith, we are summoned to push back against those who try to distort our religion—any religion—for their own nihilistic ends. And here at home and around the world, we will constantly reaffirm that fundamental freedom, freedom of religion: the right to practice our faith how we choose, to change our faith if we choose, to practice no faith at all

if we choose, and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination.

There's wisdom in our Founders writing in those documents that helped found this Nation the notion of freedom of religion, because they understood the need for humility. They also understood the need to uphold freedom of speech, that there was a connection between freedom of speech and freedom of religion. For to infringe on one right under the pretext of protecting another is a betrayal of both.

But part of humility is also recognizing in modern, complicated, diverse societies, the functioning of these rights, the concern for the protection of these rights calls for each of us to exercise civility and restraint and judgment. And if in fact we defend the legal right of a person to insult another's religion, we're equally obligated to use our free speech to condemn such insults and stand shoulder to shoulder with religious communities, particularly religious minorities who are the targets of such attacks. Just because you have the right to say something doesn't mean the rest of us shouldn't question those who would insult others in the name of free speech. Because we know that our nations are stronger when people of all faiths feel that they are welcome, that they too are full and equal members of our countries.

So humility, I think, is needed. And the second thing we need is to uphold the distinction between our faith and our governments, between church and between state. The United States is one of the most religious countries in the world, far more religious than most Western developed countries. And one of the reasons is that our Founders wisely embraced the separation of church and state. Our Government does not sponsor a religion, nor does it pressure anyone to practice a particular faith or any faith at all. And the result is a culture where people of all backgrounds and beliefs can freely and proudly worship, without fear or coercion. So that when you listen to Darrell talk about his faith journey, you know it's real. You know he's not saying it because it helps him advance or because somebody told him to. It's from the heart.

That's not the case in theocracies that restrict people's choice of faith. It's not the case in authoritarian governments that elevate an individual leader or a political party above the people or, in some cases, above the concept of God Himself. So the freedom of religion is a value we will continue to protect here at home and stand up for around the world and is one that we guard vigilantly here in the United States.

Last year, we joined together to pray for the release of Christian missionary Kenneth Bae, held in North Korea for 2 years. And today we give thanks that Kenneth is finally back where he belongs, home with his family.

Last year, we prayed together for a pastor, Saeed Abedini, detained in Iran since 2012. And I was recently in Boise, Idaho, and had the opportunity to meet with Pastor Abedini's beautiful wife and wonderful children and to convey to them that our country has not forgotten brother Saeed and that we're doing everything we can to bring him home. And then, I received an extraordinary letter from Pastor Abedini. And in it, he describes his captivity and expressed his gratitude for my visit with his family and thanked us all for standing in solidarity with him during his captivity.

And Pastor Abedini wrote, "Nothing is more valuable to the Body of Christ than to see how the Lord is in control and moves ahead of countries and leadership through united prayer." And he closed his letter by describing himself as "prisoner for Christ, who is proud to be part of this great nation of the United States of America that cares for religious freedom around the world."

And we're going to keep up this work, for Pastor Abedini and all those around the world who are unjustly held or persecuted because of their faith. And we're grateful to our new Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Rabbi David Saperstein, who has hit the ground running and is heading to Iraq in a few days to help religious communities there address some of those challenges. Where's David? I know he's here somewhere. Thank you, David, for the great work you're doing.

Humility. A suspicion of government getting between us and our faiths or trying to dictate our faiths or elevate one faith over another. And finally, let's remember that if there is one law that we can all be most certain of that seems to bind people of all faiths and people who are still finding their way towards faith, but have a sense of ethics and morality in them—that one law, that Golden Rule that we should treat one another as we wish to be treated. The Torah says, “Love thy neighbor as yourself.” In Islam, there is a hadith that states: “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” The Holy Bible tells us to “put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Put on love.

Whatever our beliefs, whatever our traditions, we must seek to be instruments of peace, and bringing light where there is darkness and sowing love where there is hatred. And this is the loving message of His Holiness Pope Francis. And like so many people around the world, I've been touched by his call to relieve suffering and to show justice and mercy and compassion to the most vulnerable, to walk with the Lord and ask, “Who am I to judge?” He challenged us to press on in what he calls our “march of living hope.” And like millions of Americans, I am very much looking forward to welcoming Pope Francis to the United States later this year.

His Holiness expresses that basic law: Treat thy neighbor as yourself. The Dalai Lama—anybody who's had an opportunity to be with him senses that same spirit. Kent Brantly expresses that same spirit. Kent was with Samaritan's Purse, treating Ebola patients in Liberia, when he contracted the virus himself. And with world-class medical care and deep reliance on faith, with God's help, Kent survived.

And then, by donating his plasma, he helped others survive as well. And he continues to advocate for a global response in West Africa, reminding us that “our efforts need to be on loving the people there.” And I could not have been prouder to welcome Kent and his wonderful wife Amber to the Oval Office. We are blessed to have him here today, because he re-

minds us of what it means to really “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Not just words, but deeds.

So each of us has a role in fulfilling our common and greater purpose: not merely to seek high position, but to plumb greater depths so that we may find the strength to love more fully. And this is perhaps our greatest challenge: to see our own reflection in each other, to be our brother's keepers and sister's keepers, and to keep faith with one another. As children of God, let's make that our work, together.

As children of God, let's work to end injustice: the injustice of poverty and hunger. No one should ever suffer from such want amidst such plenty. As children of God, let's work to eliminate the scourge of homelessness, because as Sister Mary says, “None of us are home until all of us are home.” None of us are home until all of us are home.

As children of God, let's stand up for the dignity and value of every woman and man and child, because we are all equal in His eyes, and work to send the scourge and the sin of modern-day slavery and human trafficking and “set the oppressed free.”

If we are properly humble, if we drop to our knees on occasion, we will acknowledge that we never fully know God's purpose. We can never fully fathom His amazing grace. “We see through a glass, darkly,” grappling with the expanse of His awesome love. But even with our limits, we can heed that which is required: to do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

And I pray that we will. And as we journey together on this “march of living hope,” I pray that, in His name, we will run and not be weary and walk and not be faint and we'll heed those words and “put on love.”

May the Lord bless you and keep you, and may He bless this precious country that we love.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:13 a.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Robert P. Casey, Jr., and Roger F. Wicker, in their capacity as cochairs, and former NASCAR driver Darrell L. Wal-

trip, in his capacity as keynote speaker, of the National Prayer Breakfast; Stevie Waltrip, wife of Mr. Waltrip; Sister Mary Scullion, executive director, Project HOME; and Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen im-

prisoned in Iran, and their children Jacob and Rebekka. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Hall Meeting at Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, Indiana

February 6, 2015

The President. Thank you, everybody! Hello, Hoosiers! Thank you so much. Well, please, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. Let me begin by saying thank you to Mayor Ballard for that introduction, for all the great work you're doing for the people of Indianapolis, and for your service as a marine. We are very proud of the partnership that we've had with this city.

I also want to recognize Ivy Tech Chancellor Kathleen Lee and President Tom Snyder. Where are they? There they are over here. Some outstanding Members of Congress—Joe Donnelly, our Senator. Where's Joe? There he is. Congressman André Carson. And somebody who has been a great friend for the people of this State, the people of this Nation, a great friend to me personally, one of the people who have ensured that America is safe for so many years: former Senator and mayor of Indianapolis Dick Lugar. So—[*applause*].

On the way over here, Dick and I were reminiscing about—the first foreign trip I ever took was with Dick Lugar. He was the savvy veteran; I was the green-behind-the-ears freshman. We went to Russia. We were both interested in nuclear proliferation. He had really written the book on it. And Dick Lugar seems like a kind of relaxed guy, but if you're on a trip with him, he will wear you out. [*Laughter*] And then, at one point, we were actually held by a Russian colonel at the airport for about 3 hours, which normally might have made people nervous, but Dick, he'd been around the block a few times, so he just took a nap. [*Laughter*] It was fine. It got cleared up.

It is great to be back in Indiana, great to be back close to my home State. I respect the Pacers. [*Laughter*] But yes, I am a Bulls fan.

[*Laughter*] I make no apologies. We've had some fierce, fierce rivalries in the past, and I'm looking forward to Mr. George and others getting back on track so we can have some more playoff runs.

But that's not all that I know about this State. One of my first trips as President was to Elkhart, and I stopped by some of your manufacturing plants. I played three-on-three at a school up in Kokomo, and my team won, by the way. [*Laughter*] When it comes to elections, I'm batting .500. I'm one for two, which isn't bad. The last time—I will acknowledge, the last time, I got kind of smoked here in Indiana. [*Laughter*] But that's okay. That's exactly why I wanted to come back. And I don't plan to take too long in the front because I want to make sure that we've got some time for questions.

But when I gave my State of the Union Address a couple of weeks ago, I repeated a vision that I originally laid out in Boston over a decade ago. And that's a vision that says there is no liberal America or conservative America, there's the United States of America. And I know that sometimes it seems like our politics are more divided than ever; that in parts of Indiana, the only blue you'll ever see is on Colts signs—[*laughter*]—and in Chicago, the only red is for the Chicago Bulls. But I still believe what I said back then: that we actually have so much more in common than not.

It doesn't always get focused on in our politics. And I've seen so much of the good, generous, big-hearted optimism of people across the country these past 6 years to give in to the cynicism that sometimes gets peddled as wisdom around the country.

And we've come a long way these past 6 years since we suffered the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. This morning we found out that America's businesses added another 267,000 jobs. In 2014, our economy created more than 3.1 million jobs, and that's the best year of job growth since the 1990s. So all told, over the past 59 months, the private sector has added about 11.8 million—so that's almost 12 million—new jobs. And that's the longest streak of private sector job growth in our history.

Meanwhile, our deficits are shrinking. They've gone down by about two-thirds. Our dropout rates are down. Our graduation rates are up. We're as free of foreign oil as we've been in 30 years. We're—we've doubled the amount of clean energy that we're producing. A lot of families are saving a lot of money at the gas pump, which is putting some smiles on folks' faces. *[Laughter]* And—

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. No, you're welcome. I mean, it's—*[laughter]*. Although, I was telling somebody the other day, at some point they're going to go back up, so don't start—*[laughter]*—going out there and ignoring the mileage on—when you're buying a new car. You've got to keep looking for those savings.

And in the single most hopeful sign for middle class families, wages are starting to go up again.

And so America is poised for another good year. Indianapolis is poised for another good year, as long as Washington works to keep this progress going. And I was struck as I was listening to the mayor's introduction, here in Indiana, we've been able to do some good things because we haven't been so worried about Democrat-Republican, and we focused more on trying to get the job done. And that attitude we're hoping to kind of infect Washington with, try to adapt that same attitude when it comes to the problems that we face going forward. And Dick Lugar was a great example of that.

We have written—we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any nation on Earth. But we've got to make some de-

cisions about what that future looks like. Are we going to be a nation where a few of us do spectacularly well and everybody else is struggling to get by? Or are we going to have a country in which everybody has opportunity, everybody has got a chance to succeed?

Last year, I got a letter from Jylian Milham, who lives up in Fishers. Where's Jylian? There she is right there, right in front. And Jylian has got four kids, ages 6 through 16—which means that she's busy. *[Laughter]* For 13 years, Jylian was a stay-home mom. A few years ago, she was going through a divorce, had to find a way to support her family. She didn't have a college degree. Most of the jobs that she could find paid minimum wage. As she put it, "I was a mom with four kids, and I had everything coming against me."

So Jylian came here to Ivy Tech to invest in herself, to learn new skills. She paid her way with the help of a grant from her country and a grant from the State of Indiana. She made the dean's list, earned a spot in the radiography program at IUPUI—*[laughter]*—and that's a profession that pays pretty well. And today, she's a few months from graduating. She's ready to get started on a new career. *[Applause]* And—really proud.

And in the letter she wrote, she said, it's not just the possibility of financial security and career advancement. She said, it's also "something I can show my children." It's about pride, and it's about being able to point to a brighter future for the next generation.

And that's who I get up for every single day. Sometimes, people ask me, Mr. President, your hair is so gray. *[Laughter]* Folks are always talking about you, not always in the most flattering way. How do you do it? Well, the reason is folks like Jylian, who are out there all across Indiana, all across the country; they're working so hard, doing the right thing, not asking for a handout. They just want to make sure that if they are putting in the effort and they're meeting their responsibilities that they can get ahead.

And we can't do it for them, but we can help. We can create structures of opportunity like we have here at Ivy Tech. That's some-

thing we can do for everybody. And that's what keeps me going. And I want to make sure that this is a country where hard work is rewarded and you get a chance to make a decent living.

And that's what I've been calling middle class economics is all about: the idea that in this country, everybody does best when everybody is doing their fair share and everybody has got a fair shot and everybody is playing by the same set of rules.

We live in a time of constant change. And technology has made some jobs obsolete; global competition has shipped some jobs overseas. It's tougher to afford economic necessities like childcare or health care. And that's been true since long before the financial crisis hit back in 2007, 2008. And that's why, at a time when the economy is finally picking up steam and growing again, we've got to work twice as hard, especially in Washington, to help more Americans like Jylian.

So this week, I sent Congress a budget that's built on this idea of middle class economics for the 21st century. It means helping middle class families afford childcare and health care, make it a little easier to pay for college without taking on loads of debt, paid leave at work, helping first-time home buyers, helping people save for retirement. And my budget addresses each of these issues, and it could put thousands of dollars back in the pockets of hard-working middle class families.

Middle class economics also means helping more people like Jylian upgrade their skills. Because this competitive economy is not going to get easier. Folks just aren't going to be in the same job for 30 years. These young people who are here today, they're going to have a bunch of different jobs, and they're going to be—there's going to be the need for you to continually upgrade your skills. It's all about lifelong learning now, not just a one-time deal.

So that's why my budget makes 2 years of community college free for every responsible student. *[Applause]* Every responsible student. Because here in America, it shouldn't matter how much money your folks make; if you're willing to work hard, you should be able to get that opportunity. And you shouldn't necessarily

have a hundred thousand dollars' worth of debt when you leave, especially if you're going to go into a profession like teaching or—*[applause]*.

And we're not just working to make community colleges free, like Ivy Tech; we want to make our community colleges even better and more responsive and more attuned to what's going in the marketplace. Right here, at this school—one of the best in the country, not just in the State of Indiana—you're finding ways to raise graduation rates and partner with businesses to help provide apprenticeships and other pathways to careers that pay well in fields like construction and technology.

Middle class economics also means that we're investing in what makes our economy grow: better roads, faster Internet, cutting-edge research so that our businesses are creating high-paying jobs. And the good news is, we can actually afford to pay for all this. We don't have to add to our deficits if we've got some smart spending cuts and if we fix a Tax Code that is filled up with special interest loopholes and kickbacks for folks who don't need them.

And in my budget, I identify some of these. There's a trust fund loophole that allows the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, who have benefited more over the last 20 years than anybody from—when the economy has been growing, but this trust fund loophole allows the top 1 percent of Americans to avoid paying taxes on their unearned income. That's not something that Jylian, when she gets her job, is going to be able to do. The majority of people here can't avoid paying taxes. I don't know why the folks who are most able to pay them should be able to avoid it. So we need to fix that. And then, we can use the savings to cut taxes for middle class families who really need it.

We know that there are companies that have stashed about \$2 trillion overseas that haven't paid U.S. taxes. Let's close those loopholes and make it more attractive for businesses to locate here in the United States of America. Let's give those folks a tax break. They'll create jobs right here in Indianapolis, right here in Indiana, as opposed to giving tax breaks to folks that are shipping jobs overseas or parking money overseas. We can do that.

So these are ideas that are pretty common sense. Now, in Washington, folks saw the budget, and they said, well, these are Obama's plans; some of them are pretty good ideas, but they're never going to go anyplace because the Republicans control Congress and they're not going to do it. Well, I'm not pushing these ideas for my sake; I'm pushing them because I think this is where America needs to go. And we should have a healthy debate about how to do the things that are necessary to help America grow.

Now, Republicans and Democrats won't agree on everything, and that's fine. But we should agree on the stuff we're talking about now. We should agree that hard-working families should be able to get childcare that's not more expensive than sending a kid to college. We should agree that somebody like Jylian, who wants to better herself, should be able to go to college without being loaded up with even more debt.

We should be willing to agree that a great city like Indianapolis needs to keep its infrastructure in good shape in order to attract new businesses so they feel confident that they can get their products and services out to market and that we've got the best trained workforce in the world because that's what's going to make companies want to locate here. Those are things we can agree on. We should agree that the Tax Code should be fair, and nobody should be treated better just because they've got better accountants or better lawyers.

So if Republicans disagree with the way I'm trying to solve these problems, they should put forward their own plans, and I am happy to look at it. But what we can't do is ignore the problems and pretend that they don't matter, pretend that families aren't out there struggling, doing their best.

And I believe in a crazy thing Dick Lugar once wrote. Dick said, "The other party is also patriotic and may have [some] good ideas." [Laughter] That's shocking. So I know Mayor Ballard believes the same thing, and certainly, I do. So let's roll up our sleeves, work together, and try to get some stuff done. That's what all of you elected us to do, not to turn everything

into a Washington food fight—[laughter]—not to just refight the old partisan battles. Let's have a debate that's worthy of this country and build on an economy that is picking up steam and make sure that it is serving everybody, that prosperity is broad based, that not only everybody is sharing America's success, but everybody is contributing to America's success. That's what we're trying to do.

So that's what's on my mind. Now, I want to hear what's on your mind. All right? So we're going to start taking some questions. And the way this is going to work is really simple. You raise your hand. [Laughter] I will call on you. And if you could stand up, introduce yourself, try to keep your question relatively short. I'll try to keep my answer relatively short. In fact, the only rule I'm going to impose is, I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, to make sure it's even. [Laughter] Make sure it's fair. All right? Okay, let's get started. Who wants to go first? This young lady right here.

College Affordability/Community Colleges/State Higher Education Funding

Q. Hi, I'm Erica Walsh with the College Democrats of Indiana. I was curious how you think offering 2-year free community college will impact universities with traditional 4-years college?

The President. Well, I think a lot of folks are going to still use the traditional pathway of going to a 4-year university. And if you—if that's your best option, God bless you, that's great. There's always going to be a market for Indiana University or Notre Dame. It's not like suddenly people are going to stop wanting to go there.

But what the 2 years of free community college potentially does is, for somebody who is cash strapped, their best option may be, let me go get 2 years in a community college; I may have already at that point gotten the training I need to go out into the workforce and get a good-paying job. Or if I decide that I want to continue with my education, I can now transfer to a 4-year institution with those credits, which means that the amount of tuition I'm paying at

the 4-year university is going to be reduced. Either way, you are saving money.

And this is part of what we need to do to be more creative about, how do young people get the skills they need without spending as much money or taking on as much debt? This isn't the only kind of thing we're looking at. For example—and I think Ivy Tech is looking at this kind of partnership with high schools—a number of community colleges now are linking up with high schools where you can start taking college credits in high school so that by the time you get to the community college, you've already got some credits, which reduces the amount of time that you have to spend in the community college. And that will save you money too.

So the point is, is that we have this very rigid system. We have this image in our heads: Okay, you go through high school, and then right away, you go to a 4-year university. And instead, what we should be thinking about is how do we create from the time you are in ninth grade all the way until the time that you've got a job, how do we make sure you're able to get the best skills possible at the cheapest cost.

And if there are faster pathways to do that, let's use those faster pathways. If there are cheaper ways to do that, let's find ways to reduce cost. Let's use technology in some cases. I mean, online learning is getting better and better and better. And are there ways in which, particularly, say, somebody who is a mom and has an irregular schedule and can't be on a campus all day, are there ways that she can get some credits while still looking after a family or working part time? So we just have to be much more creative about these issues.

The one thing that in addition to being creative we have to remember is that State legislators have a responsibility to make sure that State institutions are still getting the support that they need. Because part of what's happened—[applause]—part of the reason that the cost of higher education has gone up so rapidly is that State support for those institutions has gone down or not kept up with inflation. So what happens is then school adminis-

trators have to make up for it with higher tuition.

Now, the school administrators, they have a responsibility to be more efficient. And students and parents, we have a responsibility to be smart consumers. I joked with Malia and Sasha—because Malia is now at the age where she's starting to look at colleges—and I said, these days, I hear everybody is looking for fancy gyms and gourmet food and—[laughter]—really spiffy dorms.

Let me tell you, when I was at college, we—the college I started at, Occidental College, it did have a gym, but, like, the weight room was—it was, like, a medicine ball, and you had to, like—[laughter]—I mean, it wasn't fancy. It wasn't State of the art. Cafeteria, I don't remember some of the stuff they served there, but I remember it wasn't that appetizing. [Laughter] I do know there was something on the menu that we called roast beast, because we couldn't really tell what kind of meat it was. [Laughter] It was some sort of meat product.

So students and parents have to be better consumers. The universities have to figure out how to become more efficient and also give information to young people ahead of time. Because part of what happens these days is, in recruiting students, they'll say, don't worry about it, you'll be able to afford it. Well, it's true that, in part, we've expanded Pell grants, and we cut out the bank middleman on student loans so that we could give more student loans, that a lot of young people are able to finance college that they couldn't do before. But if they don't know ahead of time that when you get out you may have a \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 bill, then that's a problem. So we've got to provide them better information.

But ultimately, what also has to happen is, State legislators have to step up. The Federal Government will do its part. And we've expanded the support we're giving to students. But these public institutions have a special obligation. And it is a good investment, because the States with the best educational system, that's where companies are going to go. It's true not just in this country, it's true all across the world. All right?

Okay, it's a gentleman's turn. This young man right here, white shirt. I'm not sure we've got a mike back here. How loud are you? Are you able to just shout? No. [Laughter] All right. It's kind of a soft-spoken guy. Here we go.

Community Colleges/Job Training Programs

Q. Hi. I'm Mario Keisman, an ASAP student here at Ivy Tech. My question is, if community college does become free, do you feel as if the value of having an associate's degree will begin to drop?

The President. Absolutely not. But I think it's a good question. I've been asked this question before. I don't know where this is coming from.

I'll tell you a story—or I'll give you an example. There is a college in New York called City Colleges of New York. And back in the forties, fifties, sixties, the City Colleges of New York produced as many Nobel laureates as a lot of Ivy League schools. It was free, but it was considered one of the best universities in the country, one of the best college systems in the country. Nobody thought, well, because you went to the city colleges and it didn't cost you any money, that somehow the education was devalued.

So the issue is not whether you're—how much money you're paying. The issue is what kind of education is it providing you. And the reputation of the school is going to be determined by, when the graduates come out, do they have the skills they need to do the job? And if they do, then employers are going to know it, because employers are hungry for well-qualified students. I can't tell you how many businesses I talk to where they say, our biggest problem is, we can't find enough workers who are trained in the fields that we're searching for. So don't let anybody think that paying more means a better education.

One thing that we do have to think about—and this is where community colleges can be an outstanding bridge—is making sure that we're reaching out to businesses and finding out what do they need for the positions that they're hiring and having those businesses help

community colleges design training programs and departments to serve those needs.

And we're seeing a lot more work done by community colleges on that front. And Ivy Tech does a great job also with apprenticeships in partnership with labor councils. That's another example of smart education. It turns out, the average apprentice gets a \$50,000 starting salary once they get out of apprenticeship, on average across the country. So we're doing a lot to encourage schools to expand apprenticeships and partnerships.

But yes, don't think paying more is better. Paying less is better. I'm always looking for a deal. [Laughter]

All right, let's see; yes, right there. Yes, hold—mike is coming right there.

Q. Yes, my name is Amy Saxton.

The President. Hold on, Amy. There you go.

529 College Savings Plans

Q. Oh, sure. Thank you. My name is Amy Saxton, and my question is, I paid for my daughter's college. I'm now saving for my grandchildren's college with a 529 plan.

The President. Right.

Q. Do you see any changes that might impact me as I go into retirement?

The President. We initially looked at changing the 529 plan. And the reason is that—I have 529s for both Malia and Sasha. For those who aren't familiar, 529 is basically a savings account that you can put in tax free up to a certain amount for savings for your child's college. The problem is, when you looked at the statistics, the folks who used the most were folks who were a little more on the high end. A lot of people couldn't use them because they just weren't generating enough savings to be able to take advantage of the benefit. And so our thinking was, you could save money by eliminating the 529 and shifting it into some other loan programs that would be more broadly based.

But I think enough people—and we were going to hold harmless folks like you or me who already have money in 529s, so it wasn't as if suddenly you had to start paying taxes on it.

But just going forward we were going to change it.

I'll be honest with you. There were enough people who already were utilizing 529s that they started feeling as if, well, changing like this in midstream, even if I'm not affected right now, I like the program. It wasn't worth it for us to eliminate it, the savings weren't that great. So we actually, based on response, changed our mind and are going to be paying for the 2 years of free community college with other sources, including some of the tax loopholes that we're closing. So, short answer to your question is, 529s will not change at this point. Okay?

Got a gentleman here who really has a question, right here. He was waving and everything. This is going to be a good one.

Q. It's going to be a good one.

The President. I know that's right.

Basketball/"My Brother's Keeper" Initiative/National Basketball Association

Q. My names Eddie White with the Indiana Pacers.

The President. Oh, good to talk to you, man. [Laughter]

Q. Basketball is really important in this State. You know, we have this saying, "In 49 States, it's just basketball, but this is Indiana." [Laughter] Years ago, on a radio show, you told me that—when I asked you about your game, you said you were "a poor man's Tayshaun Prince." Where is your game today? And one more thing: Tamika Catchings says she's ready, one-on-one any time you want.

The President. All right. Well, let me make a couple of points here. [Laughter] First of all, I love Tamika. She refereed the game we played in Kokomo, so she was a witness to my domination on the court. [Laughter] But when it comes to me playing her one-on-one, at this point I'm not sure. Because I'll be honest with you, my game is a little broke. [Laughter] I've been a little busy. And what happens is that sort of the risk-reward ratio starts shifting. Like, the chances of an Achilles tear or an ACL injury are—is increasing each month. And then, the satisfaction I get from playing dimin-

ishes because I'm so bad. [Laughter] And so I think golf. [Laughter] Likelihood of injury much lower. But I still love the game. I still love the game.

And this is a good time for me to give a shout-out to the NBA. Mayor Ballard mentioned the work that he's doing with "My Brother's Keepers." And this is something that we initiated in response to all the negative news that we were hearing about young African American men and Latino men and their interactions with police. And we said, all right, there are a whole bunch of issues that we have to deal with on the criminal justice side, but we have to have an affirmative agenda to make sure that young people feel hope and opportunity and pathways.

And so the idea of "My Brother's Keepers" is that we are working with both the private sector and the public sector, all across the country, on mentorship programs. The mayor is talking to folks about doing a zero-to-three program, because we know that if you invest early in young people, they are much more likely to succeed in school. We know that there are certain points in time where kids are more likely to drop out or more likely to get in trouble with the criminal justice system, and so figuring out interventions. We know that if they're reading at grade level in the third grade, then they're much more likely to graduate, so making sure that we're really concentrating on reading skills at that level.

And the interest and involvement has surprised even me. People have been really generous and stepped up to the plate. And the NBA is participating. And some of you who have been watching the games may have seen some of the ads of some of the players talking directly to the TV screen and saying to young people, they matter. And so I just want to commend them for the great work they're doing on that front. Commissioner Silver has been very good on it. So we appreciate it.

All righty, let's see. Young lady way in the back. Right there. Yes, you. Hold on one second though. Wait for the mike to come.

Q. I want to get this right, so I'm going to read it off.

The President. Okay.

Q. Hi. My name is Isabelle Keller.

The President. But you don't have to talk that fast. [Laughter]

Q. Okay, I'll go slowly. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

The President. You're just kind of nervous.

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay.

Q. A little bit.

The President. Yes.

Political Participation

Q. My name is Isabelle Keller, and I'm the junior class president at my high school. And I'm cochairing a bipartisan event at my school next year to help engage high school students in our political process. What advice do you have in helping attract high school students and get them more engaged, like, in our country's politics?

The President. That's great. See, I love young leaders like this. They're juniors in high school taking an interest. Make sure one of our volunteers gets—what's your name again? Isabelle? Okay, let's get Isabelle's e-mail, and maybe I'll send her a note for the—to kick off the event next year. The—[applause].

One of the big challenges that we have in this country is the lack of civic engagement, the lack of participation. In the last election, only about a third of people who were eligible to vote voted—a third. And you have elections that take place, for example, in Ukraine, where they're in the middle of a war, and their participation rates are at 60 percent. And here, with all the blessings that we've got, the notion that only a third of us would vote that are eligible doesn't make any sense. And so it starts at a young age.

And I think the most important thing in any bipartisan event like that is to help young people understand that politics is not some side-show in Washington, it's not some cable chatter yacking, arguing. It's how we, together, as a community, make decisions about our priorities. What do we think is important?

When you're a junior in high school, if you're like Malia, if you decide you and your friends are going out, you've got to make all kinds of decisions about where we're going to eat and what movie do you want to see, and you guys take votes, and you're trying to figure out maybe one of your friends doesn't have enough money, and are we going to chip in to help make sure she can go too.

Well, the same thing is true for a country. We've got to make priorities. We've got to make decisions. Are we going to invest in schools? Are we going to make sure that when you graduate you can afford to go to college? Are we going to make sure that we're investing in the research that creates new medicines that will help cure cancer or Parkinson's disease? Are we going to make sure that we're treating our veterans the way they need to be treated when they come home? How are we going to pay for that? Who's going to pay for that? Are we going to make sure that we're passing on an environment with clean air and clean water, and how are we going to do that? And how are we going to balance that with making sure that we're growing an economy so when you graduate from college there's a job for you?

Well, those are all the things that politics determines. So I think, more than anything, helping young people understand that this stuff matters to them and that government is not something separate from you, it is you. In a democracy, it's you that makes these decisions.

And then, making sure you've got good pizza at the event is also important. [Laughter]

All right. Who's next? Young man right here. Right here. [Laughter] Thank you. Thank you.

The President's Community College Tuition Assistance Proposal

Q. Hi, I am Mark. Oh, first, I want to say thank you for all the things you're doing and the things that you're going to do for our Nation.

The President. Oh, indeed. Yes.

Q. Secondly, my name is Mark Kelly. I am actually currently the president of the ASAP organization. And my question is, what is the

criteria and the requirements for this plan that you're trying to propose?

The President. For which plan?

Q. For 2 years free of college? Yes.

The President. The idea would be that you would have to maintain at least a 2.5 average. So we're not going to—I mean, there's no such thing as a completely free lunch. We want to reward people who are making the effort. Because one of the problems we have when it comes to college educations is that young people aren't graduating fast enough, they're dragging things out too long, and that just adds costs. And even if they are taking out loans, so it's—technically, they're paying for it, the problem is, is that the more expensive it gets, the less likely it may be that they can pay it back.

So what we're saying is you've got to earn it. You've got to have a 2.5 average. You've got to maintain attendance. You've got to stay on a schedule and have a game plan at the front end so that you graduate on time.

And obviously, there would be special circumstances like illness or what have you, but the point is, this is not you get 2 years of free goofing off. This is to help you achieve your goals. But that means that you have to put in the effort. All right? So that would be the main criteria.

All right. Yes, right here. Hold on a second, mike is coming.

Veterans' Health Care/Employment Opportunities for Veterans

Q. My name is Christylee Vickers. I'm an OIF veteran from the U.S. Army, and I'm also the president of the Ivy Tech Collegiate Veterans Organization. I'm—[applause].

The President. Yay! What branch were you in?

Q. I was in the Army, and I was a mechanic.

The President. Army strong!

Q. Hooah!

The President. All right.

Q. Now, my question is, veterans get to use the GI bill. They also get VOC rehab if they are underemployed or if they use their GI bill or if their GI bill—if they were a cold war veteran, they never got that. How does this affect

a veteran's use of education? Because veterans today are dealing with unemployment rates higher than other people. They're dealing with unemployment altogether. And what's really important is getting a veteran who is dealing with posttraumatic stress or other problems to get an education and have people who understand the fact that they have issues, but at the same time, they have benefits that they've earned and they've paid for through blood and tears?

The President. Right. Well, first of all, thank you for your service. We're proud of you. For those who qualify under the post-9/11 GI bill, you're already supposed to be getting the benefits that you have earned. And so nothing would change about that program.

As you point out, it's not just college tuition, though, that is often a burden on our veterans. So I am very proud of the fact that I have increased veterans funding more than any administration since I've been in office. And a lot of it is focused on some of the challenges that you talk about.

For example, we made it much easier for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder to qualify under disability claims. We expanded significantly the number of mental health facilities that were available. We set up, for example, special programs for women veterans, because they've got different medical needs, through the VA system.

Another example that's really important is we've been working with States and local governments around issues of licensing. So you said you were a mechanic. There may be, in a lot of States, licensing requirements for you to be a mechanic or to be an EMS officer or to be a nurse. And what we were finding was, is that—I still remember I had a conversation with a guy up in Minnesota. This is when I first came into office. We're at a little diner, sitting down. He had just come back from Iraq. He had two or three tours in Iraq. And you can imagine what an emergency medic in Iraq is dealing with in 2006 or 2007. He decided he wanted to make a career as a nurse. He was having to come back, and he was having to start with Nursing 101. I mean, he had to start from

scratch, as if he didn't have this incredible wealth of experience and skill.

And so we set out to work with State legislators and cities and others that oftentimes are responsible for licensing to say there's got to be transferability and credit for the incredible work that veterans do on the job so that they don't have to start all over again and take a whole bunch of new classes just to get certified on stuff they already know how to do. And that's been really helpful as well.

The key now is to get more employers to recognize the skills of our veterans. So Michelle and Jill Biden, through their Joining Forces program, have been able to recruit companies all across the country—major corporations like Honeywell, smaller companies—to not just do job fairs, but make concrete commitments we are going to hire a certain number of veterans, a certain number of military spouses. And hundreds of thousands of folks have come through these programs.

The challenge that we've still got is that we've got to find ways for veterans to upgrade their skills through this process. And that's where things like apprenticeships and—so that folks aren't just getting hired at the bottom rungs, but have the opportunity to maybe come in at a higher wage and a higher salary. So we've got tie together the education process with the hiring process. All right?

Q. Can I add to that?

The President. Sure.

Q. In Indiana, there's a bill currently in the house and in the senate that is trying to give the private sector military hiring preference, like the government does. Within the government, you have a point system being a veteran, for serving, for having a disability rating, for being a spouse, and so on. And in Indiana, they're trying to pass this bill to give a hiring preference, saying if you and a veteran have the same qualifications, veterans should get the job. I feel like that is somewhat fair because they put their life on hold for 2 to 20 years to serve our country, and they're taking this job experience that you've acknowledged, and they're taking that real-world, and they're—the fact that they always show up to work on time,

they'll pass a drug test. And they're willing to put in that extra mile. Do you agree with that bill that's trying to get passed?

The President. I am always careful about not look—agreeing with bills that I have not read, because that's how I get into trouble. [*Laughter*] But if there are any State legislators here, this young lady is going to be very interested in talking to you. And the—

Q. Mr. President, we just passed that bill out of the senate committee this past week.

The President. Well, there you go. See, so—that's your representatives and senators hard at work. [*Laughter*]

But I think the basic concept of making sure that we are crediting the work that is done by veterans is really important. I mean, the sacrifices that not just veterans, but their families, make are incredible.

And I'm proud to say that we do much better now than we did in the past. I mean, when you read about the Vietnam era, it's just heart-breaking how veterans were treated when they came home. I think we, as a society—and this has been bipartisan—have really improved, but we still have a lot more work to do. So the veterans' health system, for example, is far better now than it was 30 years ago or 20 years ago—demonstrably better.

But as we saw—remember in Phoenix—there are still situations where the wait times are too long. Veterans are really satisfied once they get in the system, but getting the initial appointment is often too tough. There's too much bureaucracy. There's too much redtape. So we have to just constantly keep at this and constantly keep improving it.

And as we end—we've now ended both the Iraq war and the Afghan war. We've got millions of people—[*applause*—in terms of the combat role, we've got hundreds of thousands of folks who are coming home, and they're going to need help making this transition. And obviously, we still have folks in harm's way now dealing with ISIL, as well as helping to train both Iraqi and Afghan armies. And they're going to need help as well. They're still on rotations. Their families are still missing them, and

they're missing birthdays and soccer games. And it's a big sacrifice.

So thanks for the question, and thanks for your service.

All right, we've got a gentleman? Let's see. This is a good bunch to choose from. He's got a veteran's—he's got a veteran's hat on, which makes me more biased towards him. [Laughter] This is an example of your—but are you going to ask another veteran's question?

Q. No.

The President. Okay, right here.

Textbook Costs/President's Community College Tuition Assistance Proposal/Role of College Advisers

Q. Mr. President, thank you for coming, and thanks for taking my question. I am Chris Bowen. I'm the student government president here, and I—so I represent the students here in the central region of Indiana for Ivy Tech.

The President. That's great.

Q. And something we could use right away is a tax credit for books. They're just—the costs on the books are just running away. We need somebody to do—some help in that area, and then the same thing with advisers. We really need some advisers that know the classes that we need, to look at the skills that we already have in our life and say, hey, have you thought about looking at an approach in a different way. And so we really need some help from the Federal Government in those areas.

The President. I think that's a great point. First of all, I should have mentioned at the outset, when Michelle and I got out of—when we got married, in addition to our—the bonds of love, we had the bonds of debt. [Laughter] We—our net worth was negative because we had all these student loans. And basically, for the first 10 years of our marriage, we paid more in student loan repayment than we did on our mortgage.

And since we both went to law school, we both remember well the cost of books. And for those—and then I taught in the law school, so I remember having to assign books. I actually cheated a little bit and put together these syllabi that—where I'd Xerox stuff off, and they

could get a packet, and it was a lot cheaper for folks. But that's not always possible. [Laughter]

But I will say, nothing is worse than when a professor assigns their own book. [Laughter] Because then you know they're getting over. [Laughter] But the book costs are enormous. They're real.

Now, one of the advantages of the 2 year of free college tuition plan: That doesn't include room and board and books, but what that does then is it frees up your ability to use Pell grants or other programs for books, right? So it would relieve some of those costs and living expenses and transportation and all that stuff. So school still wouldn't be perfectly free, but you would now have the budget to manage that.

With respect to advisers, I think this is a great point. We're actually starting at the high school level. Michelle just had an event to celebrate counselors. And she had Connie Britton—remember, she played a counselor in "Friday Night Lights"? You all watch that show? That was a good show. [Laughter] So she came to speak, but it was celebrating the role of counselors in high schools.

But the same is true in community colleges with advisers. A lot of young people have a general idea of what they want to do, but don't always know the path to get there, don't know what the requirements are, don't know what classes they should be taking. And one of the big problems that drives up college costs is, young people start down one path, they get about halfway through it, they realize, actually, that's the thing I'm more interested in over there. They switch, but all those credits that they took now are wasted. And they've got to start all over again. And that extends greatly the amount of time that it takes to graduate. So having more counselors and investors on the front end, end up being a good investment for the system overall.

Now, I haven't talked to your president here about how schools are currently budgeting advisers, but certainly, this is something that we are interested in. And we're going to want to partner with community colleges and public universities, as well as with high schools to see what more work we can do on that front. So

good suggestions. That's why you got elected president. Absolutely.

All right. It's a young lady's turn. Right here. Right in the middle. You, yes.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Dana Phillips with Nathaniel Lee and LeAnne Fairman. And my question is, with the focus being on 2-year community colleges right now, what focus does your administration have for Historically Black Colleges and Universities for students outside of Indiana, where they may choose to attend these institutions with such dire straits that many of them are facing right now?

The President. Well, we have some outstanding Historically Black Colleges and Universities. We've got some universities that historically serve primarily Latino students, who do a great job as well. Many of those schools, because of their critical role in serving underrepresented communities, under Federal legislation get additional dollars to help with infrastructure and maintain their faculties and so forth.

But many of the problems that those schools face are also the ones that every other school faces, which is rising tuition, students taking out too much debt, graduation rates that are too low. And so we're working with them on this common set of problems.

Now, I will say this: There are some Historically Black Colleges and Universities that are not doing a good job with graduation rates. And so one of the things that we're doing is, we're saying to schools of all stripes that we're going to develop some measures so that parents and students can know ahead of time how those schools are performing, so that we can increase consumer education. Because what I don't want to do is to have the Federal Government pay for a Pell grant or student loans, and you go to a school where they're taking that money, you're getting into debt, but your graduation rate is low, which means you may end up leaving without a degree. You now are on the hook for this debt; if you can't pay it, then taxpayers have to pay for it. That's a problem.

So what we're doing is, those schools that are doing outstanding jobs serving underrepresented communities, we're going to give them some extra help. Schools that are not doing a good job, we're saying to them we're going to give you the training to get better, but at a certain point, if you don't get better, we're going to start advertising the fact that your graduation rates are too low. I mean, we've got to have some accountability in this overall process. All right? Good.

Gentleman right here in—there you go—in that spiffy gray jacket.

National Economy/Infrastructure/Childcare/Paid Sick Leave

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Frank Short. I have a question. You've been our leader for 6 years, you have 2 years left. What would be your number-one priority, and what could we, as hard-working Hoosiers, help you to do to accomplish that?

The President. I appreciate that. My number-one priority is to make sure that the American people's wages and incomes are going up, since right now the stock market has gone up, corporate profits are at an alltime high, corporate balance sheets have never been better in history. That's not according to me, that's according to Bloomberg and Fortune magazine, not publications that generally are my big promoters. [Laughter] So they're doing well. And the question now is, how do the folks who work in those companies, how do we get them more income and more wages?

Now, that can't happen if the economy doesn't grow. So first and foremost, we've got to keep this growth going. And one of the worries that we're going to have this year—the economy is doing well. The problem is, overseas, the economies aren't doing so well. Europe is not doing well. China is slowing down because they're transitioning, and so that's having some impact on our exports.

So if we want to keep the progress that we're—that's going on right now, the best thing we can do is to make the investments that I talked about in the State of the Union to

create more growth and more demand here in the United States.

I'll be very specific. This is something that you can help on: Infrastructure. We know that we've got about \$2 trillion worth of deferred maintenance we need to do in this country: bridges that are unsafe, sewer mains that are bursting, airports that are out of date. We've got an air traffic control system that doesn't take advantage of new technologies. If we put in place a new state-of-the-art air traffic control system, it's estimated that airlines could save 30 percent on their fuel costs because they wouldn't be hovering around trying to wait to land. That means 30-percent less pollution from fuel. It means we could cut delays by about 30 percent, which I know everybody here who has flown lately would really appreciate. It would be good for business.

So—and the good thing about infrastructure is, you can't export those jobs. They have to be done here by American workers. And so then those American workers have more money in their pocket, and then they go the restaurant nearby, and then suddenly, the restaurant is doing a little bit better, and so they hire a couple more shifts, and you get this virtuous cycle.

So—and traditionally, that's been a bipartisan issue. So if we can get Republican Representatives and Senators and Democratic Representatives and Senators here in Indiana, if you guys can push them to say, let's go ahead and move forward on an infrastructure program—I know the mayor wouldn't mind doing it, right?—and convince them, that keeps the economy growing overall.

But then there are also some things that I want to do more directly for middle class families, and that has to do with this tax system. As I mentioned before, there was a young woman I talked about at the State of the Union—wonderful family, the Erlers, two little boys, not yet—one of them school age, one of them is still too young and in preschool. Their childcare is more than tuition at the University of Minnesota or at least close.

We are the only advanced nation on Earth that does not provide support to families when their kids are really young and doesn't invest in

making sure that our childcare system works the way it should. So I've put forward an initiative that says let's consolidate and make more helpful a tax credit for childcare. Let's boost the quality of childcare so that parents have confidence when they're putting their kids someplace that teachers there are trained and they're getting good early childhood education. Let's get more slots. That's something that just is concretely helping families right now.

And by the way, it's not just the poor family that has trouble here. There are a lot of folks who we'd all consider middle class who have the same problem. I mean, it's just hard, especially now that the typical middle class family, they've got two breadwinners. Folks both have to work in order to succeed.

And we know how to do this. My grandfather, when he went away to war, fighting in Patton's army in Europe, my grandmother stayed home; she was Rosie the Riveter. She was working on an assembly line for bombers, and this country provided childcare because they knew it was a necessity. If you were going to have women working in the workforce, somebody had to look after those kids. So it's not as if we don't have any experience doing this. We just don't do a good job.

Paid sick leave, it's another good example. We've got 43 million Americans who don't have paid sick leave. You think about that. Again, we're, like, the only country in the industrialized world that does not provide paid sick leave. Well, that's money out of people's pockets. People will get sick. And the idea that in a society like ours we would force people to choose between leaving a sick child at home, for example, or giving up a day's pay, that doesn't make any sense.

That's—so the way Hoosiers can help, the way folks all across America can help, is to let your Members of Congress know these things are important.

And if, as I said before, Republicans in Congress, Mitch McConnell and John Boehner and the leadership there, if they disagree with how I'm paying for a bigger childcare tax credit, if they disagree with how I plan to pay for infrastructure, if they don't want to raise—or

close loopholes on the top 1 percent or go after some of these loopholes that send profits overseas—if they don't want to do it that way, then they should show me another way.

But your voice letting them know this is important—not because it's partisan, but because it's the right thing to do for America—if they hear that from enough people, then that's going to make a difference.

But it goes back to what that young lady asked me about—Isabelle, right? See, I've got a good memory. I'm not getting too old. [Laughter] The—it goes back to what Isabelle was saying: Our system only works when people are involved. When people are involved and informed and taking the time to ask questions and let their opinions be known, then ultimately, the Government will respond. But if only a third of the people are saying anything, the Government doesn't respond, and you get the Government that we've seen in Washington lately, which is unresponsive, and it's not doing enough.

So people have to get involved, and you've got to be informed. And if we are, then I am so optimistic about this country. I have to—the reason we've gotten out of this recession over the last 6 years is in part—I'm going to go ahead and brag a little bit—we made some good decisions. We made the decision to save the auto industry. We made the decision to stabilize the financial system. We made the decision to help local governments keep their teachers on the payroll and not lay them off. We made a bunch of decisions to do infrastructure spending. And all that helped lift us out of the recession we were in.

But the main reason was because people worked hard in the private sector and small businesses, and they tightened their belts, and they made sacrifices, and they paid down debt,

and they dug themselves out of holes. The resilience and the grit and the basic decency of the American people and our willingness to work hard and our innovation, our willingness to take risks—it puts us in such a good position.

I travel all around the world. I know the economies of every country in the world. I know their problems, I know their advantages. People talk about China, and they talk about Germany, and they talk about India. Nobody has got better cards than we do if we make good decisions together. And somebody once said about America, we always end up doing the right thing after we've tried everything else. [Laughter] And I'm hoping that we don't have to try every other thing before we do the right thing right now to help middle class families get ahead.

If we do that, the economy is going to be stronger, businesses are going to do better, consumers are going to be more confident, we'll sell more goods overseas, our kids will have the kind of future we want for them. That's what I'm going to be working on for the next 2 years. I hope you help. All right?

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. in the auditorium of the Corporate College and Culinary Center. In his remarks, he referred to Paul George, strong forward, National Basketball Association's Indiana Pacers; Tamika Catchings, forward, Women's National Basketball Association's Indiana Fever; and St. Anthony, MN, resident Rebekah Erler, her husband Ben Erler, and their sons Jack and Henry. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. A participant referred to Tayshaun Prince, strong forward, NBA's Boston Celtics.

Statement on the Death of Representative P. Alan Nunnelee February 6, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of Representative Alan Nunnelee. Alan represented the people of his beloved Mississippi for two decades, first as a

State senator and then in Congress. A proud son of Tupelo, Alan never wavered in his determination to serve the men and women who placed their trust in him, even as he

bravely battled the illness that ultimately took his life. As a Sunday school teacher and a deacon at his church, Alan believed deeply in the power of faith and the strength of

American families. Today our thoughts and prayers are with Alan's family: his wife Tori, their children and grandchildren, and all those who loved him.

Statement on the 2015 National Security Strategy *February 6, 2015*

Today, the United States is stronger and better positioned to seize the opportunities of a still new century and safeguard our interests against the risks of an insecure world.

America's growing economic strength is the foundation of our national security and a critical source of our influence abroad. Since the Great Recession, we have created nearly 11 million new jobs during the longest private sector job growth in our history. Unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in 6 years. We are now the world leader in oil and gas production. We continue to set the pace for science, technology, and innovation in the global economy.

We also benefit from a young and growing workforce, and a resilient and diversified economy. The entrepreneurial spirit of our workers and businesses undergirds our economic edge. Our higher education system is the finest in the world, drawing more of the best students globally every year. We continue to attract immigrants from every corner of the world who renew our country with their energy and entrepreneurial talents.

Globally, we have moved beyond the large ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that defined so much of American foreign policy over the past decade. Compared to the nearly 180,000 troops we had in Iraq and Afghanistan when I took office, we now have fewer than 15,000 deployed in those countries. We possess a military whose might, technology, and geostrategic reach is unrivaled in human history. We have renewed our alliances from Europe to Asia.

Now, at this pivotal moment, we continue to face serious challenges to our national security, even as we are working to shape the opportunities of tomorrow. Violent extremism and an evolving terrorist threat raise a persistent risk of attacks on America and our allies. Escalating

challenges to cybersecurity, aggression by Russia, the accelerating impacts of climate change, and the outbreak of infectious diseases all give rise to anxieties about global security. We must be clear-eyed about these and other challenges and recognize the United States has a unique capability to mobilize and lead the international community to meet them.

Any successful strategy to ensure the safety of the American people and advance our national security interests must begin with an undeniable truth—America must lead. Strong and sustained American leadership is essential to a rules-based international order that promotes global security and prosperity as well as the dignity and human rights of all peoples. The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead.

Abroad, we are demonstrating that while we will act unilaterally against threats to our core interests, we are stronger when we mobilize collective action. That is why we are leading international coalitions to confront the acute challenges posed by aggression, terrorism, and disease. We are leading over 60 partners in a global campaign to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, including by working to disrupt the flow of foreign fighters to those countries, while keeping pressure on al-Qa'ida. We are leading a global effort to stop the deadly spread of the Ebola virus at its source. In lockstep with our European allies, we are enforcing tough sanctions on Russia to impose costs and deter future aggression.

Even as we meet these pressing challenges, we are pursuing historic opportunities. Our rebalance to Asia and the Pacific is yielding deeper ties with a more diverse set of allies and partners. When complete, the Trans-Pacific Partnership will generate trade and investment

opportunities—and create high-quality jobs at home—across a region that represents more than 40 percent of global trade. We are primed to unlock the potential of our relationship with India. The scope of our cooperation with China is unprecedented, even as we remain alert to China's military modernization and reject any role for intimidation in resolving territorial disputes. We are deepening our investment in Africa, accelerating access to energy, health, and food security in a rapidly rising region. Our opening to Cuba will enhance our engagement in our own hemisphere, where there are enormous opportunities to consolidate gains in pursuit of peace, prosperity, democracy, and energy security.

Globally, we are committed to advancing the Prague Agenda, including by stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials. We are currently testing whether it is possible to achieve a comprehensive resolution to assure the international community that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful, while the Joint Plan of Action has halted the progress of Iran's program. We are building on our own energy security—and the ground-breaking commitment we made with China to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—to cement an international consensus on arresting climate change. We are shaping global standards for cybersecurity and building international capacity to disrupt and investigate cyber threats. We are playing a leading role in defining the international community's post-2015 agenda for eliminating extreme poverty and promoting sustainable development while prioritizing women and youth.

Underpinning it all, we are upholding our enduring commitment to the advancement of democracy and human rights and building new coalitions to combat corruption and to support open governments and open societies. In doing so, we are working to support democratic transitions, while also reaching out to the drivers of change in this century: young people and entrepreneurs.

Finally, I believe that America leads best when we draw upon our hopes rather than our fears. To succeed, we must draw upon the

power of our example—that means viewing our commitment to our values and the rule of law as a strength, and not an inconvenience. That is why I have worked to ensure that America has the capabilities we need to respond to threats abroad, while acting in line with our values—prohibiting the use of torture; embracing constraints on our use of new technologies like drones; and upholding our commitment to privacy and civil liberties. These actions are a part of our resilience at home and a source of our influence abroad.

On all these fronts, America leads from a position of strength. But, this does not mean we can or should attempt to dictate the trajectory of all unfolding events around the world. As powerful as we are and will remain, our resources and influence are not infinite. And in a complex world, many of the security problems we face do not lend themselves to quick and easy fixes. The United States will always defend our interests and uphold our commitments to allies and partners. But, we have to make hard choices among many competing priorities, and we must always resist the overreach that comes when we make decisions based upon fear. Moreover, we must recognize that a smart national security strategy does not rely solely on military power. Indeed, in the long-term, our efforts to work with other countries to counter the ideology and root causes of violent extremism will be more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield.

The challenges we face require strategic patience and persistence. They require us to take our responsibilities seriously and make the smart investments in the foundations of our national power. Therefore, I will continue to pursue a comprehensive agenda that draws on all elements of our national strength, that is attuned to the strategic risks and opportunities we face, and that is guided by the principles and priorities set out in this strategy. Moreover, I will continue to insist on budgets that safeguard our strength and work with the Congress to end sequestration, which undercuts our national security.

This is an ambitious agenda, and not everything will be completed during my Presidency. But I believe this is an achievable agenda, especially if we proceed with confidence and if we restore the bipartisan center that has been a pillar of strength for American foreign policy in decades past. As Americans, we will always have our differences, but what unites us is the national consensus that American global leadership remains indispensable. We embrace our exceptional role and responsibilities

at a time when our unique contributions and capabilities are needed most, and when the choices we make today can mean greater security and prosperity for our Nation for decades to come.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as part of the 2015 National Security Strategy.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the 2015 National Security Strategy *February 6, 2015*

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

BARACK OBAMA

Consistent with section 108 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended (50 U.S.C. 3043), I transmit herewith the National Security Strategy of the United States.

Sincerely,

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Weekly Address *February 7, 2015*

Hi, everybody. I'm talking with you today from Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, where I just held a town hall and heard from everyday Americans about what we can do together to make their lives a little better.

This week, we got news that confirms what we already know: that our businesses continue to create jobs for hard-working folks all across the country. Last month, America's businesses added another 267,000 jobs. In 2014, our economy created more than 3.1 million jobs in all, the best year for job growth since the late 1990s. All told, over the past 59 months, the private sector has added 11.8 million new jobs, the longest streak on record. And in the single most hopeful sign for middle class families, wages are rising again.

So America is poised for another good year, as long as Washington works to keep this progress going. We have to choose: Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectac-

ularly well, or will we build an economy where everyone who works hard can get ahead?

Because while we've come a long way, we've got more work to do to make sure that our recovery reaches more Americans, not just those at the top. That's what middle class economics is all about: the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

This week, I sent Congress a budget built on middle class economics. It helps families afford childcare, health care, college, paid leave at work, homeownership, and saving for retirement, and it could put thousands of dollars back into the pockets of a working family each year. It helps more Americans learn new skills to earn higher wages, including by making 2 years of community college free for responsible students all across the country. It invests in the research and infrastructure our

businesses need to compete and create high-paying jobs. And it pays for this with smart spending cuts and by fixing a Tax Code that's riddled with special-interest loopholes for folks who don't need them, allowing us to offer tax breaks to students and families who do need them.

I believe this is where we need to go to give working families more security in a time of constant economic change. And I'll work with anyone, Republican or Democrat, who wants to get to "yes" on these issues. We won't agree on everything, and that's natural. But we should stop refighting old battles and start working together to help you succeed in the new economy.

Statement on the Death of Dean E. Smith *February 8, 2015*

Last night America lost not just a coaching legend, but a gentleman and a citizen. When he retired, Dean Smith had won more games than any other college basketball coach in history. He went to 11 Final Fours, won 2 national titles, and reared a generation of players who went on to even better things elsewhere, including a young man named Michael Jordan—and all of us from Chicago are thankful for that.

But more importantly, Coach Smith showed us something that I've seen again and again on the court: that basketball can tell us a lot more about who you are than a jump shot alone ever could. He graduated more than 96 percent of his players and taught his teams to point to the teammate who passed them the ball after a basket. He pushed forward the civil rights

That's what you elected us to do: not to turn everything into another Washington food fight, but to have debates that are worthy of this country and to build an economy not just where everyone can share in America's success, but where everyone can contribute to America's success.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:30 p.m. on February 6 in Conference Room 121 of the Corporate College and Culinary Center at Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, IN, for broadcast on February 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 6, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 7.

movement, recruiting the first Black scholarship athlete to North Carolina and helping to integrate a restaurant and a neighborhood in Chapel Hill. And in his final years, Coach Smith showed us how to fight an illness with courage and dignity. For all of that, I couldn't have been prouder to honor Coach Smith with Medal of Freedom in 2013.

Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to his wife Linnea, to his family, and to his fans all across North Carolina and the country.

NOTE: The statement referred to Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; and Charles J. Scott, former guard, NBA's Phoenix Suns.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany *February 9, 2015*

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Please be seated. As always, it is a great pleasure to welcome my close friend and partner, Chancellor Angela Merkel, back to the

White House. Angela, of course, has been here many times. But this visit is a chance for me to congratulate her on two achievements. Well into her third term, Angela is now one of Ger-

many's longest serving Chancellors. Perhaps more importantly, this is my first opportunity to publicly congratulate Angela and Germany on their fourth World Cup title. *[Laughter]* As we all saw in Rio, Angela is one of her team's biggest fans. Our U.S. team, however, gets better each World Cup, so watch out in 2018. *[Laughter]*

Germany is one of us—our strongest allies, so whenever we meet, it's an opportunity to coordinate closely on a whole range of issues critical to our shared security and prosperity. As Angela and our German friends prepare to host the G-7 this spring, it's also important for us to be able to coordinate on a set of shared goals.

And at our working lunch this afternoon, we'll focus on what we can do to keep the economy growing and creating jobs. As strong supporters of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, we agree that there needs to be meaningful progress this year toward an agreement that boosts our economies with strong protections for consumers and workers and the environment.

I look forward to hearing Angela's assessment of how Europe and the IMF can work with the new Greek Government to find a way that returns Greece to sustainable growth within the euro zone, where growth is critical to both the United States and the global economy. And we'll be discussing our work to get all major economies to take ambitious action on climate change, including our initiative to limit public financing for coal-fired power plants overseas and our global efforts to phase down some of the most dangerous greenhouse gases.

Our discussion this morning focused on global security issues. We reaffirmed our commitment to training Afghan security forces and supporting a sovereign, secure, and united Afghanistan. We agree that the international community has to continue enforcing existing sanctions as part of our diplomatic effort to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, even as the P5-plus-1 works closely together to do everything we can to try to achieve a good, verifiable deal.

Two issues in particular that dominated our workday this morning: Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the international fight against ISIL. With regard to Russia and the separatists it supports in Ukraine, it's clear that they've violated just about every commitment they made in the Minsk agreement. Instead of withdrawing from eastern Ukraine, Russian forces continue to operate there, training separatists and helping to coordinate attacks. Instead of withdrawing its arms, Russia has sent in more tanks and armored personnel carriers and heavy artillery. With Russian support, the separatists have seized more territory and shelled civilian areas, destroyed villages and driven more Ukrainians from their homes. These are the facts.

But Russian aggression has only reinforced the unity of the United States and Germany and our allies and partners around the world. And I want to thank Angela for her strong leadership and partnership as we've met this challenge. Chancellor Merkel and Vice President Biden met with Ukrainian President Poroshenko in Munich over the weekend, and Angela also shared with me the results of her talks in Moscow. We continue to encourage a diplomatic resolution to this issue. And as diplomatic efforts continue this week, we are in absolute agreement that the 21st century cannot stand idle—have us stand idle and simply allow the borders of Europe to be redrawn at the barrel of a gun.

So today we've agreed to move forward with our strategy. Along with our NATO allies, we'll keep bolstering our presence in Central and Eastern Europe, part of our unwavering article 5 obligation to our collective defense. We will continue to work with the IMF and other partners to provide Ukraine with critical financial support as it pursues economic and anticorruption reforms. We discussed the issue of how best to assist Ukraine as it defends itself, and we agreed that sanctions on Russia need to remain fully in force until Russia complies fully with its obligations.

Even as we continue to work for a diplomatic solution, we are making it clear again today that if Russia continues on its current course—

which is ruining the Russian economy and hurting the Russian people, as well as having such a terrible effect on Ukraine—Russia's isolation will only worsen, both politically and economically.

With regard to ISIL, Germany and the United States remain united in our determination to destroy this barbaric organization. I thanked Angela for her strong support as a member of the international coalition that is working in Iraq. In a significant milestone in its foreign policy, Germany has taken the important step of equipping Kurdish forces in Iraq, and Germany is preparing to lead the training mission of local forces in Erbil. Germany is a close partner in combating the threat of foreign terrorist fighters, which was the focus of a special session of the U.N. Security Council that I chaired last fall. And under Angela's leadership, Germany is moving ahead with new legislation to prevent fighters from traveling to and from Syria and Iraq.

At the same time, both Angela and I recognize that young people in both our countries, especially in Muslim communities, are being threatened and targeted for recruitment by terrorists like Al Qaida and ISIL. And protecting our young people from this hateful ideology so that they're not vulnerable to such recruitment is, first and foremost, a task for local communities, families, neighbors, faith leaders who know their communities best. But we can help these communities, starting with the tone and the example that we set in our own countries.

So I want to commend Angela for her leadership: her leadership speaking out forcefully against xenophobia and prejudice and on behalf of pluralism and diversity. She's made it clear that all religious communities have a place in Germany, just as they do here in the United States. And we're grateful that our German friends will be joining us at our summit next week on countering violent extremism, because this is a challenge our countries have to meet together.

And let me end on a historic note. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It marks the 25th anniver-

sary of the reunification of Germany. So in a time when conflicts around the world sometimes seem intractable, when progress sometimes seems beyond grasp, Germany's story gives us hope. We can end wars. Countries can rebuild. Adversaries can become allies. Walls can come down. Divisions can be healed. Germany's story and the story of Angela's life remind us that when free people stand united, our interests and our values will ultimately prevail.

And as we look to the future, as I prepare to visit Bavaria in June, I'm grateful for my partnership with Angela, as Americans are grateful for their partnership with the people of Germany.

Chancellor Merkel.

Chancellor Merkel. Thank you, President, dear Barack. I'm delighted to be back in Washington. Nine months ago, we were here for the last time, and this visit here has a lot to do with, first and foremost, the fact that we have assumed the Presidency of the G-7 Presidency this year and that we coordinate on these matters very closely, as we do on others. And obviously, we will address issues related to the global economy when we meet in Bavaria, on Schloss Elmau, in the summer.

From a European vantage point, I think we can say that we have made significant progress in a number of areas. We have countries who are now back on the growth path. Ireland comes to mind here in particular, but also Spain and Portugal. After a strong phase of structural reforms, they have now made significant progress. The new Commission—the new European Commissioner that's come in office has launched a growth program with—in which Germany will participate.

We will pin our hopes basically on growth and infrastructure, but also on other growth projects, for example, the digital economy. If I think of the state of the digital economy in the United States, there is a lot of things to be done by the Europeans now.

I would say that a free trade agreement, the conclusion of a free trade agreement, for example, would also go a long way towards boosting growth. We know that you are very much

engaged in the Asian-Pacific area; there are a lot of free trade agreements there as well. And Germany will come out very forcefully in seeing that the negotiations between the EU and the United States on free trade agreements are pursued in a vigorous manner. It's in our own vested interest: in the interest of the United States, but also in the German interest.

We are dealing basically on our G-7 agenda with health issues. Let me just mention one: What sort of lessons have we drawn, for example, from the terrible Ebola epidemic? I think the one thing that we've learned is that the international organizations, the international community has to be quicker in reacting to such epidemics. And the G-7 can give a very important contribution to doing this.

And we're also interested, for example, in seeing Gavi be successful. We're delighted to be able to conclude the replenishment conference that has just been completed in Germany so successfully.

Then, we dealt with security issues this morning. It is true Germany this year celebrates the 25th anniversary of its reunification. This would not have been possible, not have been achievable without our transatlantic partners, without the support of the United States of America. And we will always be grateful for this. And it is one case in point that it is well worth the effort to stand by one's values for decades to pursue long-term goals and not relent in those efforts.

After we thought in the nineties maybe that things would turn out somewhat more easily, somewhat less complicated, now we see ourselves confronted with a whole wealth of conflicts, and very complex ones. I said we worked together in Afghanistan; we talked about this as well. Germany has decided, in its fight against IS, to give help to deliver training missions, to deliver also weapons, if necessary. We work together on the Iran nuclear program, where we also enter into a crucial phase of negotiations.

One particular priority was given to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia this morning. We stand up for the same principles of inviolability of territorial integrity. For somebody who comes from Europe, I can only say if we

give up this principle of territorial integrity of countries, then we will not be able to maintain the peaceful order of Europe that we've been able to achieve. This is not just any old point, it's an essential, a crucial point, and we have to stand by it. And Russia has violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine in two respects: in Crimea and also in Donetsk and Luhansk.

So we are called upon now to come up with solutions, but not in the sense of a mediator, but we also stand up for the interests of the European peaceful order. And this is what the French President and I have been trying to do over the past few days. We're going to continue those efforts.

And I'm very grateful that throughout the Ukraine crisis, we have been in very, very close contact with the United States of America and Europe on sanctions, on diplomatic initiatives. And this is going to be continued. And I think that's, indeed, one of the most important messages we can send to Russia and need to send to Russia.

We continue to pursue a diplomatic solution, although we have suffered a lot of setbacks. These days we will see whether all sides are ready and willing to come to a negotiated settlement. I've always said I don't see a military solution to this conflict, but we have to put all our efforts in bringing about a diplomatic solution.

So there's a whole host of issues that we need to discuss. Over lunch, we will continue to talk about climate protection, about sustainable development, and the sustainable development goals.

So yet again, thank you very much for the very close cooperation, very close coordination, and the possibility to have an exchange of views on all of these crucial issues. I think not only in hindsight can we safely say that the United States have always stood by us, have helped us to regain our unity in peace and freedom, but we can only—also say we continue to cooperate closely if it is about solving the conflicts of the world today. Unfortunately, there are many of them, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Thank you for your hospitality.

President Obama. First question, Steve Mufson, Washington Post.

Ukraine

Q. Thank you. You've said—stressed that U.S. and Europe need to have cohesion on the issue of sanctions and on dealing with the Ukraine, and yet the administration is discussing sending lethal weapons to Ukraine, which is very different from what the Chancellor said over the weekend. So I was wondering whether this was a good cop, bad cop act, or is this a real reflection of difference of views in the situation on the ground?

And more broadly, if there's no agreement this week, what lies ahead? Are we looking at a broader set of sanctions? What makes us think those set of sanctions will change the Russian President's mind any more than the current ones?

President Obama. Okay. Well, let me start with the broader point. I think both Angela and I have emphasized that the prospect for a military solution to this problem has always been low. Russia obviously has a extraordinarily powerful military. And given the length of the Russian border with Ukraine, given the history between Russia and Ukraine, expecting that if Russia is determined, that Ukraine can fully rebuff a Russian Army has always been unlikely.

But what we have said is that the international community, working together, can ratchet up the costs for the violation of the core principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity. And that's exactly what we've done.

And Russia has paid a significant cost for its actions: first in Crimea and now in eastern Ukraine. It has not yet dissuaded Mr. Putin from following the course that he is on, but it has created a measurable negative impact on the Russian economy, and that will continue.

My hope is that through these diplomatic efforts, those costs have become high enough that Mr. Putin's preferred option is for a diplomatic resolution. And I won't prejudge whether or not they'll be successful. If they are successful, it will be in part because of the extraordinary patience and effort of Chancellor

Merkel and her team. If they are not, then we will continue to raise those costs. And we will not relent in that. And one of the things I've very encouraged about is the degree to which we've been able to maintain U.S.-European unity on this issue.

Now, it is true that if in fact diplomacy fails, what I've asked my team to do is to look at all options—what other means can we put in place to change Mr. Putin's calculus—and the possibility of lethal defensive weapons is one of those options that's being examined. But I have not made a decision about that yet. I have consulted with not just Angela, but will be consulting with other allies about this issue. It's not based on the idea that Ukraine could defeat a Russian Army that was determined. It is rather to see whether or not there are additional things we can do to help Ukraine bolster its defenses in the face of separatist aggression. But I want to emphasize that a decision has not yet been made.

One of the bigger issues that we're also concerned with, though, is making sure the Ukrainian economy is functioning and that President Poroshenko and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk can continue with the reform efforts that they've made. And I'm glad to see that because of our cooperation and our efforts, we're starting to see a package come together with the IMF, with the European Union, and others that can help bolster the European economy so that they have the space to continue to execute some of the reforms and anticorruption measures that they've made.

One of the most important things we can do for Ukraine is help them succeed economically, because that's how people on the ground feel this change, this transformation, inside of Ukraine. If that experiment fails, then the larger project of an independent Ukraine will fail. And so we're going to do everything we can to help bolster that.

But there is no doubt that if in fact diplomacy fails this week, there's going to continue to be a strong, unified response between the United States and Europe. That's not going to change. There may be some areas where there are tactical disagreements; there may not be.

But the broad principle that we have to stand up for the—not just Ukraine, but the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty, is one where we are completely unified.

Chancellor Merkel. The French President and I have decided to make one further attempt to make progress through diplomatic means. We have the Minsk agreement—the Minsk agreement has never been implemented. Quite the contrary is true. The situation has actually worsened on the ground. So now there is a possibility to try and bring about a cease-fire and to also create conditions that are in place where you have not every day civilians dying, civil victims that fall prey to this. And I'm absolutely confident that we will do this together.

I, myself, actually would not be able to live with not having made this attempt. So there is anything but an assured success in all of this; I have to be very clear about this. But if at a certain point in time, one has to say that a success is not possible even if one puts every effort into it, then the United States and Europe have to sit together and try and explore further possibilities of what one can do. Just let me point out here that Foreign Ministers of the European Union last week already tasked the Commission to think about further possible sanctions.

On the issue of what is effective and what not, I'm somewhat surprised sometimes. Just let me mention Iran. For a fairly long period of time, we have had sanctions in place there; people don't seem to question them. And I think they have been fairly successful, if we look at the current state of affairs, what with the negotiations on the nuclear program. So I think, in parallel, I think it was a very good thing to put some costs onto the Russians through these sanctions that we agreed on, because we see also that Russia seems to be influenced by this. And this is why I am a hundred-percent behind these decisions.

As to the export of arms, I have given you my opinion. But you may rest assured that no matter what we decide, the alliance between the United States and Europe will continue to stand, will continue to be solid, even though

in—on certain issues, we may not always agree. But this partnership—be it on Ukraine and Russia, be it on combating terrorism on the international stage, be it on other issues—is a partnership that has stood the test of time and that is—I mean, in Europe, we're very close. But this transatlantic partnership for Germany and for Europe is indispensable. And this will remain so. And I can say this also on behalf of my colleagues in the European Union.

Sorry, I have to call you myself—[inaudible]. From DPA, the German Press Agency.

U.S. Military Assistance to Ukraine/Russia-U.S. Relations/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program/Germany-U.S. Relations

Q. President, you said that you have not yet made a decision as to whether weapons ought to be delivered to Ukraine. What would be your red line? What would be the red line that needs to be crossed for you to decide an armament of the Ukrainian Army? And what do you think—will this hold by way of a promise? Because the Chancellor said it will make matters worse. And what can the Nobel Laureate Obama do more to defuse this conflict?

And, Madam Chancellor, President Putin today demanded yet again that the Government in Kiev negotiate directly with the separatists. When do you think the right moment has come to do this? And with looking at all of the big issues that you discussed, this breach of confidence due to the NSA affair, has—of the U.S.-German relations, has that played a role today?

President Obama. Do you want to go first, Angela?

Chancellor Merkel. I can gladly start. The question as to how one assesses the effectiveness of certain measures has been actually dealt with. The President has not yet made a decision, as he said. What's important for me is that we stand very closely together on the question of a renewed diplomatic effort. We keep each other of—informed. We're in close touch. And nobody wishes more for a success than the two of us who stand here side by side.

But this would also mean not only having a cease-fire in place, but to also, over and above that, having certain rules in place. And you said that the Russian President himself thinks there ought to be direct contracts. Let me just point out to you, these direct contracts already exist through the Trilateral Contact Group with representatives from Donetsk and Luhansk. And the problem of the last few days and the problem of the last meetings actually was rather more than that there was not really that much of an end result—if they met at all, or if representatives from Donetsk and Luhansk were there at all. Sometimes, they didn't even arrive.

And this was, after all, for me, the core of the Minsk agreement, that there are local elections in accordance with the Ukrainian Constitution and that the outcome of that is that you have representatives, authorities that can speak for those regions. And the Ukrainian President has paved the way for this, to giving certain specific status to the oblasts of Luhansk and Donetsk. And these elections are an essential point that will then enable us to say, well, maybe now there can be contacts even without a trilateral group.

And this is actually on the agenda of the many talks that we need to make. But I can very well understand the Ukrainian side, that on the territory they consider to be part of their territory and that anything else would violate their territorial integrity, that they want to actually see that elections take place there. And that has also been stated by President Putin that he wishes to see those elections happening there.

Now, on the NSA issue, I think there are still different assessments on individual issues there, but if we look at the sheer dimension of the terrorist threat, we are more than aware of the fact that we need to work together very closely. And I, as German Chancellor, want to state here very clearly that the institutions of the United States of America have provided us and still continue to provide us with a lot of very significant, very important information that also ensures our security. And we don't want to do without this. There are other possi-

bilities, through the cyber dialogue, for example, to continue to talk about the sort of protection of privacy versus data protection and so on, and security. But this was basically—combating terrorism was basically in the foreground today.

President Obama. On providing lethal weapons to Ukraine, it's important to point out that we have been providing assistance to the Ukrainian military generally. That's been part of a longstanding relationship between NATO and Ukraine. And our goal has not been for Ukraine to be equipped to carry on offensive operations, but to simply defend itself. And President Poroshenko has been very clear: He's not interested in escalating violence, he is interested in having his country's boundaries respected by its neighbor.

So there's not going to be any specific point at which I say, ah, clearly, lethal defensive weapons would be appropriate here. It is our ongoing analysis of what can we do to dissuade Russia from encroaching further and further on Ukrainian territory. Our hope is, is that that's done through diplomatic means.

And I just want to emphasize here once again for the benefit not just of the American people, but for the German people: We are not looking for Russia to fail. We are not looking for Russia to be surrounded and contained and weakened. Our preference is for a strong, prosperous, vibrant, confident Russia that can be a partner with us on a whole host of global challenges. And that's how I operated throughout my first term in office.

Unfortunately, Russia has made a decision that I think is bad for them strategically, bad for Europe, bad for the world. And in the face of this aggression and these bad decisions, we can't simply try to talk them out of it. We have to show them that the world is unified in imposing a cost for this aggression. And that's what we're going to continue to do.

With respect to the NSA, I'll just make this point very briefly. There's no doubt that the Snowden revelations damaged impressions of Germans with respect to the U.S. Government and our intelligence cooperation. And what I have done over the last year, year and a half, is

to systematically work through some of these issues to create greater transparency and to restore confidence not just for Germans, but for our partners around the world.

And we've taken some unprecedented measures, for example, to ensure that our intelligence agencies treat non-U.S. citizens in ways that are consistent with due process and their privacy concerns, something that I put in a Presidential order and has not been ever done, not only by our intelligence agencies, but I think by most intelligence agencies around the world.

There are going to still be areas where we've got to work through these issues. We have to internally work through some of these issues, because they're complicated, they're difficult. If we are trying to track a network that is planning to carry out attacks in New York or Berlin or Paris, and they are communicating primarily in cyberspace, and we have the capacity to stop an attack like that, but that requires us then being able to operate within that cyberspace, how do we make sure that we're able to do that, carry out those functions, while still meeting our core principles of respecting the privacy of all our people?

And given Germany's history, I recognize the sensitivities around this issue. What I would ask would be that the German people recognize that the United States has always been on the forefront of trying to promote civil liberties, that we have traditions of due process that we respect, that we have been a consistent partner of yours in the course of the last 70 years, and certainly the last 25 years, in reinforcing the values that we share. And so occasionally, I would like the German people to give us the benefit of the doubt, given our history, as opposed to assuming the worst; assuming that we have been consistently your strong partners and that we share a common set of values.

And if we have that fundamental, underlying trust, there are going to be times where there are disagreements and both sides may make mistakes and there are going to be irritants like there are between friends, but the underlying foundation for the relationship remains sound.

Christi Parsons [Los Angeles Times].

Iran/Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel/Israel-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Iran nuclear negotiators have now missed two deadlines. Should the upcoming March deadline for talks be the final one? And what are the circumstances in which you think it would be wise to extend those talks? Also, sir, some have suggested that you are outraged by the Israeli Prime Minister's decision to address Congress. Is that so? And how would you advise Democrats who are considering a boycott?

President Obama. First of all, we understood, I think, from the start, when we set up the interim agreement with Iran, that it would take some time to work through incredibly complex issues and a huge trust deficit between the United States and Iran and the world and Iran, when it comes to their nuclear program. So I think there was always the assumption that, although the interim agreement lasted a certain period of time, that we would probably need more time to move forward.

The good news is, is that there have been very serious discussions. That time has been well spent. During this period of time, issues have been clarified, gaps have been narrowed, the Iranians have abided by the agreement. So this is not a circumstance in which, by talking, they've been stalling and meanwhile advancing their program. To the contrary: What we know is, the program has not only been frozen, but with respect to, for example, 20-percent enriched uranium, they've reversed it. And so we're in a better position than we were before the interim program was set up.

Having said all that, the issues now are sufficiently narrowed and sufficiently clarified where we're at a point where they need to make a decision. We are presenting to them, in a unified fashion—the P5-plus-1, supported by a coalition of countries around the world, are presenting to them a deal that allows them to have peaceful nuclear power but gives us the absolute assurance—that is verifiable—that they are not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

And if in fact what they claim is true—which is they have no aspiration to get a nuclear weapon, that, in fact, according to their Supreme Leader, it would be contrary to their faith to obtain a nuclear weapon—if that is true, there should be the possibility of getting a deal. They should be able to get to “yes.” But the—we don’t know if that’s going to happen. They have their hardliners; they have their politics.

And the point, I guess is, Christi, at this juncture, I don’t see a further extension being useful if they have not agreed to the basic formulation and the bottom line that the world requires to have confidence that they’re not pursuing a nuclear weapon.

Now, if the framework for a deal is done, if people have a clear sense of what is required and there’s some drafting and t’s to cross and i’s to dot, that’s a different issue. But my view—and I’ve presented this to Members of Congress—is that we now know enough that the issues are no longer technical. The issues now are, does Iran have the political will and the desire to get a deal done?

And we could not be doing this were it not for the incredible cohesion and unity that’s been shown by Germany, by the other members of the P5-plus-1, which, I should acknowledge, includes Russia. I mean, this is an area where they’ve actually served a constructive role. And China has served a constructive role. And there has been no cracks in this on the P5-plus-1 side of the table. And I think that’s a testament to the degree to which we are acting reasonably in trying to actually solve a problem.

With respect to Prime Minister Netanyahu, as I’ve said before, I talk to him all the time, our teams constantly coordinate. We have a practice of not meeting with leaders right before their elections, 2 weeks before their elections. As much as I love Angela, if she was 2 weeks away from an election, she probably would not have received an invitation to the White House—[laughter]—and I suspect she wouldn’t have asked for one. So the—[laughter].

So this is just—some of this just has to do with how we do business. And I think it’s important for us to maintain these protocols, because the U.S.-Israeli relationship is not about a particular party. This isn’t a relationship founded on affinity between the Labor Party and the Democratic Party or Likud and the Republican Party. This is the U.S.-Israeli relationship that extends beyond parties and has to do with that unbreakable bond that we feel and our commitment to Israel’s security and the shared values that we have.

And the way to preserve that is to make sure that it doesn’t get clouded with what could be perceived as partisan politics. Whether that’s accurate or not, that is a potential perception, and that’s something that we have to guard against.

Now, I don’t want to be coy. The Prime Minister and I have a very real difference around Iran, Iran sanctions. I have been very clear—and Angela agrees with me, and David Cameron agrees with me, and the others who are a member of the negotiations agree—that it does not make sense to sour the negotiations a month or two before they’re about to be completed. And we should play that out. If in fact we can get a deal, then we should embrace that. If we can’t get a deal, then we’ll have to make a set of decisions, and as I’ve said to Congress, I’ll be the first one to work with them to apply even stronger measures against Iran.

But what’s the rush, unless your view is that it’s not possible to get a deal with Iran and it shouldn’t even be tested? And that I cannot agree with because, as the President of the United States, I’m looking at what the options are if we don’t get a diplomatic resolution. And those options are narrow, and they’re not attractive. And from the perspective of U.S. interests—and I believe from the perspective of Israel’s interests, although I can’t speak for, obviously, the Israeli Government—it is far better if we can get a diplomatic solution.

So there are real differences substantively, but that’s separate and apart from the whole issue of Mr. Netanyahu coming to Washington. All right?

Ukraine/U.S. Military Assistance to Ukraine

Q. Mr.—[*inaudible*—]please. Ms. Merkel, you just said the question is, what will be effective in the Ukrainian crisis? And diplomacy, as you said yourself, has not really made all that—has not really brought about that much of a progress. Can you understand the impatience of the Americans when they say we ought to now deliver weapons? And what makes you feel confident that diplomacy will carry the day in the next few days and weeks?

And on Greece, obviously, I also have to ask you, what is your comment on the most recent comments of the Greek Prime Minister, who says, let's end those programs, and I'm going to stand by the promises I made during the election campaign? How do you envisage the further cooperation with the Greek Government?

And to you, Mr. President, I address the question: There is quite a lot of pressure by members of your Government who say weapons should be delivered to the Ukrainians. Now, you yourself have said you want to ratchet up the cost that Putin has to bear and then make him relent and give in maybe. And you said all options have to be on the table, so apparently, also weapons. So what makes you so sure that these weapons will not only go into the hands of the regular Ukrainian Army, but will then also perhaps get into the hands of separatists—of militias—on the Ukrainian side, who are accused by Amnesty International and other NGOs of having violated human rights?

Thank you.

Chancellor Merkel. Whenever you have political conflict, such as the one that we have now between Russia and Ukraine, but also in many other conflicts around the world, it has always proved to be right to try again and again to solve such a conflict. We've spoken at some length about the Iranian conflict. Here too we are expected to try time and again. And there's always a point where you say, well, all of the options are on the table, we've gone back and forth, but then, one has to think again.

Looking just at the Middle East conflict, for example, how many people have tried to bring

about a solution to this conflict? And I've welcomed it every time, and I'm going to participate and support it every time because I think every time it has been well worth the effort.

Now, when you have a situation now where every night you see people dying, you see civilian casualties, you see the dire conditions under which people die—live, it is our—it is incumbent upon us as politicians, we owe it to the people to explore every avenue until somebody gives in.

But we've grown up under conditions—I have to point this again—where we said nobody would have dreamt of German unity. The people who have said in West Germany, remember they said, well, should we keep up citizenship of Germany for the GDR? They've been criticized by people as some who have revanchist ideas. And then think of President Reagan when he said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate. Many people said at the time, how can he possibly say that? But it was right.

We have no guarantee. I cannot give you a guarantee for the outcome of the Wednesday talks or for other talks. And maybe nothing will come out of it. But then we're called upon again to think about a new possibility. And since we thought about every step of the way, will this be effective or not, we will continue to do so.

A lot of things have to be thought about, and I'm very glad that with the American President, I have always been able to put all of the cards on the table and discuss the pros and cons. In my speech in Munich, I gave you clearly where I stand. But we'll continue to try it. I think that's why we are politicians, that's why we chose these professions. Others have to do other things; researchers have to, all of the time, find new things to explore and we have to see that the well-being, the prosperity, of our people is ensured. But we never have a guarantee that the policies we adopt will work, will have the effect—oh, sorry, Greece. I almost forgot. Yes. On Wednesday, there's going to be a Eurogroup meeting. And I think what counts is what Greece will put on the table at

that Eurogroup meeting or perhaps a few days later.

The German policy, ever since 2010, has been aimed at Greece staying a member of the euro zone. I've said this time and again. The basic rules have always been the same. You put in your own efforts, and on the other side, you're being shown solidarity as a *quid pro quo*. The three institutions of the "Troika"—the ECB, the European Union Commission, and the IMF—have agreed on programs. These programs are the basis of any discussion we have. I've always said I will wait for Greece to come with a sustainable proposal and then we'll talk about this.

President Obama. The point Angela made, I think, is right, which is, we never have guarantees that any particular course of action works. As I've said before, by the time a decision reaches my desk, by definition, it's a hard problem with no easy answers. Otherwise, somebody else would have solved it, and I would never even hear about it.

The issue that you raised about, can we be certain that any lethal aid that we provide Ukraine is used properly, doesn't fall into the wrong hands, does not lead to overaggressive actions that can't be sustained by the Ukrainians, what kinds of reactions does it prompt not simply from the separatists, but from the Russians—those are all issues that have to be considered. The measure by which I make these decisions is, is it more likely to be effective than not? And that is what our deliberations will be about.

But what I do know is this: that the United States and Europe have not stood idly by. We have made enormous efforts, enormous investments of dollars, of political capital, of diplomacy, in trying to resolve this situation. I think the Ukrainian people can feel confident that we have stood by them. People like Vice President Biden and Secretary of State Kerry have spent countless hours on this issue, as has An-

gela and her team on the German side. And just because we have not yet gotten the outcome that we want doesn't mean that this pressure is not, over time, making a difference.

I think it's fair to say that there are those inside of Russia who recognize this has been a disastrous course for the Russian economy. I think Mr. Putin is factoring that in. But understandably, until the situation is entirely resolved, we're going to have to keep on trying different things to see if we can get a better outcome.

What I do know is, is that we will not be able to succeed unless we maintain the strong transatlantic solidarity that's been the hallmark of our national security throughout the last 70 years. And I'm confident that I've got a great partner in Angela in maintaining that. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran; and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Chancellor Merkel referred to Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Jyrki Katainen of the European Commission; President François Hollande of France; and former President Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev of the Soviet Union. She also referred to the Gavi vaccine alliance, an international organization aimed at distributing vaccines to children in developing countries. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece. Chancellor Merkel and two reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Death of Kayla J. Mueller *February 10, 2015*

It is with profound sadness that we have learned of the death of Kayla Jean Mueller. On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I convey our deepest condolences to Kayla's family—her parents Marsha and Carl, and her brother Eric and his family—and all of those who loved Kayla dearly. At this time of unimaginable suffering, the country shares in their grief.

Kayla dedicated her life to helping others in need at home and around the world. In Prescott, Arizona, she volunteered at a women's shelter and worked at an HIV/AIDS clinic. She worked with humanitarian organizations in India, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories, compelled by her desire to serve others. Eventually, her path took her to Turkey, where she helped provide comfort and support to Syrian refugees forced to flee their homes during the war. Kayla's compassion and dedication to assisting those in need shows us that even amongst unconscionable evil, the essential decency of humanity can live on.

Kayla represents what is best about America and expressed her deep pride in the freedoms that we Americans enjoy and that so many others strive for around the world. She said: "Here we are. Free to speak out without fear of being

killed, blessed to be protected by the same law we are subjected to, free to see our families as we please, free to cross borders, and free to disagree. We have many people to thank for these freedoms, and I see it as an injustice not to use them to their fullest."

Kayla Mueller used these freedoms she so cherished to improve the lives of others. In how she lived her life, she epitomized all that is good in our world. She has been taken from us, but her legacy endures, inspiring all those who fight, each in their own way, for what is just and what is decent. No matter how long it takes, the United States will find and bring to justice the terrorists who are responsible for Kayla's captivity and death.

ISIL is a hateful and abhorrent terrorist group whose actions stand in stark contrast to the spirit of people like Kayla. On this day, we take comfort in the fact that the future belongs not to those who destroy, but rather to the irrepressible force of human goodness that Kayla Mueller shall forever represent.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on the United States Response to the Ebola Epidemic in West Africa *February 11, 2015*

The President. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Well, thank you, Rear Admiral Giberon, not only for the introduction, but for your extraordinary leadership and your service.

Last summer, as Ebola spread in West Africa, overwhelming public health systems and threatening to cross more borders, I said that fighting this disease had to be more than a national security priority, but an example of American leadership. After all, whenever and wherever a disaster or a disease strikes, the world looks to us to lead. And because of ex-

traordinary people like the ones standing behind me and many who are in the audience, we have risen to the challenge.

Now, remember, there was no small amount of skepticism about our chances. People were understandably afraid, and if we're honest, some stoked those fears. But we believed that if we made policy based not on fear, but on sound science and good judgment, America could lead an effective global response while keeping the American people safe and we could turn the tide of the epidemic.

We believed this because of people like Rear Admiral Giberson. We believed this because of outstanding leaders like Raj Shah at USAID and Tom Frieden at the CDC. We believed it because of the men and women behind me and the many others here at home and who are still overseas who respond to challenges like this one not only with skill and professionalism, but with courage and with dedication. And because of your extraordinary work, we have made enormous progress in just a few months.

So the main reason we're actually here today is for me to say thank you. Thank you to the troops and public health workers who left their loved ones to head into the heart of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, and many of them did so over the holidays. Thank you to the health care professionals here at home who treated our returning heroes like Dr. Kent Brantly and Dr. Craig Spencer. Thank you to Dr. Tony Fauci and Nancy Sullivan and the incredible scientists at NIH, who worked long days and late nights to develop a vaccine. All of you represent what is best about America and what's possible when we lead.

And we're also here to mark a transition in our fight against this disease—not to declare mission accomplished, but to mark a transition. Thanks to the hard work of our nearly 3,000 troops who deployed to West Africa, logistics have been set up, Ebola treatment units have been built, over 1,500 African health workers have been trained, and volunteers around the world have gained the confidence to join the fight. We were a force multiplier. It wasn't just what we put in. It's the fact that when we put it in, people looked around and said, all right, America has got our back, so we'll come too. And as a result, more than 1,500 of our troops have been able to return.

Today I'm announcing that by April 30, all but a hundred who will remain to help support the ongoing response, all but those hundred will also be able to come home, not because the job is done, but because they were so effective in setting up the infrastructure that we are now equipped to deal with the job that needs to be done in West Africa, not only with a

broader international coalition, but also with folks who have been trained, who are from the countries that were most at risk.

So I want to be very clear here: While our troops are coming home, America's work is not done. Our mission is not complete. Today we move into the next phase of the fight, winding down our military response while expanding our civilian response. That starts here at home, where we're more prepared to protect Americans from infectious disease, but still have more work to do. For as long as Ebola simmers anywhere in the world, we will have some Ebola-fighting heroes who are coming back home with the disease from time to time. And that's why we're screening and monitoring all arrivals from affected countries. We've equipped more hospitals with new protective gear and protocols. We've developed partnerships with States and cities, thanks to public servants like Mayor Mike Rawlings and Judge Clay Jenkins of Dallas, Texas, who were on the front lines when the first case appeared here on our shores.

A few months ago, only 13 States had the capability to even test for Ebola. Today, we have more than 54 labs in 44 States. Only three facilities in the country were qualified to treat an Ebola patient. Today, we have 51 Ebola treatment centers. We have successfully treated eight Ebola patients here in the United States. And we are grateful to be joined by six of these brave survivors today, including Dr. Richard Sacra, who received world-class care at Nebraska Medical Center and a plasma donation from Dr. Kent Brantly. Then he returned to Liberia to treat non-Ebola patients who still need doctors. That's the kind of commitment and the kind of people we're dealing with here.

Meanwhile, in West Africa, it's true that we have led a massive global effort to combat this epidemic. We mobilized other countries to join us in making concrete, significant commitments to fight this disease and to strengthen global health systems for the long term. In addition to the work of our troops, our USAID DART teams have directed the response. Our CDC disease detectives have traced contacts. Our health care workers and scientists helped contain the outbreak. Our team is providing

support for 10,000 civilian responders on the ground.

That's what Brett Sedgewick did. Where's Brett? There he is. [*Laughter*] So Brett went to Liberia with Global Communities, which is an NGO that partnered with us to respond to Ebola. Brett supported safe-burial teams that traveled to farflung corners of Liberia to ensure that those who lost their lives to Ebola were carefully, safely, and respectfully buried so that they could not transmit the disease to anyone else. And Brett reflects the spirit of so many volunteers when he said, "If you need me, just say the word." That's a simple, but profound statement.

That's who we are: big-hearted and optimistic, reflecting the can-do spirit of the American people. That's our willingness to help those in need. They're the values of Navy Lieutenant Andrea McCoy and her team. Andrea, raise your hand so that I don't look so—[*laughter*]. Andrea and her team deployed some 7 tons of equipment, processed over 1,800 blood samples. They're the values that drive Commander Billy Pimentel. Where's Billy? Raise your hand.

Commander Guillermo "Billy" Pimentel, USN. Here, sir.

The President. Thank you, sir. [*Laughter*] Like that Navy can-do attitude.

He led a team of Naval microbiologists to set up mobile laboratories that can diagnose Ebola within 4 hours. And he said, "It has been an honor for us to use our skills to make a difference."

These values, American values, matter to the world. At the Monrovia Medical Unit in Liberia—built by American troops, staffed by Rear Admiral Giberson and his team from the U.S. Public Health Service Corps—a nurse's aide named Rachael Walker went in for treatment and left Ebola-free. And I want you to listen to what Rachael's sister said about all of you. "We were worried at first," she said, "but when we found out [Rachael] was being transferred to the American Ebola treatment unit, we thanked God first and then we thanked America second for caring about us."

And the Americans who she was speaking of aren't just doctors or nurses or soldiers or scientists. You're what one lieutenant commander from the U.S. Public Health Service Corps called the "hope multipliers." And you've multiplied a lot of hope. Last fall, we saw between 800 and 1,000 new cases a week. Today, we're seeing between 100 and 150 cases a week, a drop of more than 80 percent. Liberia has seen the best progress. Sierra Leone is moving in the right direction. Guinea has the longest way left to go.

Our focus now is getting to zero, because as long as there is even one case of Ebola that's active out there, risks still exist. Every case is an ember that, if not contained, can light a new fire. So we're shifting our focus from fighting the epidemic to now extinguishing it.

The reason we can do that is because of a bipartisan majority in Congress, including some of the Members who are here today, who approved funding to power this next phase of our response. And I want to thank those Members of Congress who are here for the outstanding work that they do. [*Applause*] Thank you. One of them, Chris Coons, recently traveled to the region and saw firsthand that we have to continue this fight in Africa.

So while our troops are coming home, plenty of American heroes remain on the ground, with even more on the way. Doctors and nurses are still treating patients, CDC experts are tracking cases, NIH teams are testing vaccines, USAID workers are in the field, and countless American volunteers are on the front lines. And while I take great pride in the fact that our Government organized this effort—and I particularly want to thank Secretary Burwell and her team at Health and Human Services for the outstanding work that they did—we weren't working alone. I just had a chance to meet with some leading philanthropists who did so much and are now committed to continuing the work and finding new ways in which we can build platforms not only to finish the job with respect to Ebola, but also to be able to do a more effective surveillance, prevention, and quick response for diseases in the future.

Other nations have joined the fight, and we're going to keep working together, because our common security depends on all of us. That's why we launched the Global Health Security Agenda last year to bring more nations together to better prevent and detect and respond to future outbreaks before they become epidemics. This was a wakeup call and why it's going to be so important for us to learn lessons from what we've done and sustain it into the future.

And in the 21st century, we cannot build moats around our countries. There are no drawbridges to be pulled up. We shouldn't try. What we should do is instead make sure everybody has basic health systems, from hospitals to disease detectives, to better laboratory networks, all of which allows us to get early warnings against outbreaks of diseases. This is not charity. The investments we make overseas are in our self-interest. This is not charity. We do this because the world is interconnected, in the same way that the investments we make in NIH are not a nice-to-do, they are a must-do. We don't appreciate basic science and all these folks in lab coats until there's a real problem and we say, well, do we have a cure for that, or can we fix it? And if we haven't made those investments, if we've neglected them, then they won't be there when we need them.

So as we transition into a new phase in this fight, make no mistake: America is as committed as ever, I am as committed as ever, to getting to zero. And I know we can. And I know this because of the people who stand behind me and the people out in the audience. I know this because of people like Dr. William Walters. William, you here?

Department of State Managing Director for Operational Medicine William A. Walters. Sir.

The President. Thank you. [Laughter]

Dr. Walters is the Director of Operational Medicine at the State Department. Last summer, he was called to help move Dr. Kent Brantly, who's here, back to the United States for treatment. And Dr. Walters says the first thing he did was to Google Dr. Brantly. [Laughter] A little plug for Google there. I know we've got some—[laughter]. And the first picture he saw was of Kent and his family.

Now, remember, the decision to move Kent back to the United States was controversial. Some worried about bringing the disease to our shores. But what folks like William knew was that we had to make the decisions based not on fear, but on science. And he knew that we needed to take care of our heroes who had sacrificed so much to save the lives of others in order for us to continue to get people to make that kind of commitment. They had to know we had their backs in order for us to effectively respond. And so, as William said, "We do the work we do to impact something bigger than ourselves." We do the work we do to impact something bigger than ourselves.

That's the test of American leadership. We have this extraordinary military. We have an extraordinary economy. We have unbelievable businesses. But what makes us exceptional is when there's a big challenge and we hear somebody saying it's too hard to tackle, and we come together as a nation and prove you wrong. That's true whether it's recession or war or terrorism. There are those who like to fan fears. But over the long haul, America does not succumb to fear. We master the moment with bravery and courage and selflessness and sacrifice and relentless, unbending hope. That's what these people represent. That's what's best in us. And we have to remember that, because there will be other circumstances like this in the future.

We had 3 weeks in which all too often we heard science being ignored and sensationalism, but you had folks like this who were steady and focused and got the job done. And we're lucky to have them, and we have to invest in them.

So I want to thank all of you for proving again what America can accomplish. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Kent P. Brantly, former medical director, Samaritan's Purse Ebola Case Management Center in Monro-

via, Liberia; Craig A. Spencer, physician, Doctors Without Borders; Richard A. Sacra, assistant professor, University of Massachusetts Medical School's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health; Nina Pham and Amber Vinson, nurses, Texas

Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas in Dallas, TX; Ian Crozier, former doctor, Kenema Government Hospital in Kenema, Sierra Leone; and Lt. Cmdr. Kate R. Migliaccio, public information officer, U.S. Public Health Service's Commissioned Corps.

Remarks on Proposed Legislation Submitted to the Congress To Authorize the Use of Military Force Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization *February 11, 2015*

Good afternoon. Today, as part of an international coalition of some 60 nations, including Arab countries, our men and women in uniform continue the fight against ISIL in Iraq and in Syria.

More than 2,000 coalition airstrikes have pounded these terrorists. We're disrupting their command and control and supply lines, making it harder for them to move. We're destroying their fighting positions, their tanks, their vehicles, their barracks, their training camps, and the oil and gas facilities and infrastructure that fund their operations. We're taking out their commanders, their fighters, and their leaders.

In Iraq, local forces have largely held the line and, in some places, have pushed ISIL back. In Syria, ISIL failed in its major push to take the town of Kobani, losing countless fighters in the process, fighters who will never again threaten innocent civilians. And we've seen reports of sinking morale among ISIL fighters as they realize the futility of their cause.

Now, make no mistake, this is a difficult mission, and it will remain difficult for some time. It's going to take time to dislodge these terrorists, especially from urban areas. But our coalition is on the offensive, ISIL is on the defensive, and ISIL is going to lose. Its barbaric murders of so many people, including American hostages, are a desperate and revolting attempt to strike fear in the hearts of people it can never possibly win over by its ideas or its ideology, because it offers nothing but misery and death and destruction. And with vile groups like this, there is only one option: With

our allies and partners, we are going to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group.

And when I announced our strategy against ISIL in September, I said that we are strongest as a nation when the President and Congress work together. Today my administration submitted a draft resolution to Congress to authorize the use of force against ISIL. I want to be very clear about what it does and what it does not do.

This resolution reflects our core objective to destroy ISIL. It supports the comprehensive strategy that we've been pursuing with our allies and our partners: a systemic and sustained campaign of airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria; support and training for local forces on the ground, including the moderate Syrian opposition; preventing ISIL attacks in the region and beyond, including by foreign terrorist fighters who try to threaten our countries; regional and international support for an inclusive Iraqi Government that unites the Iraqi people and strengthens Iraqi forces against ISIL; humanitarian assistance for the innocent civilians of Iraq and Syria, who are suffering so terribly under ISIL's reign of horror.

I want to thank Vice President Biden, Secretaries Kerry and Hagel, and General Marty Dempsey for their leadership in advancing our strategy. Even as we meet this challenge in Iraq and Syria, we all agree that one of our weapons against terrorists like ISIL—a critical part of our strategy—is the values we live here at home. One of the best antidotes to the hateful ideologies that try to recruit and radicalize

people to violent extremism is our own example as diverse and tolerant societies that welcome the contributions of all people, including people of all faiths.

The resolution we've submitted today does not call for the deployment of U.S. ground combat forces to Iraq or Syria. It is not the authorization of another ground war, like Afghanistan or Iraq. The 2,600 American troops in Iraq today largely serve on bases, and yes, they face the risks that come with service in any dangerous environment. But they do not have a combat mission. They are focused on training Iraqi forces, including Kurdish forces.

As I've said before, I'm convinced that the United States should not get dragged back into another prolonged ground war in the Middle East. That's not in our national security interest, and it's not necessary for us to defeat ISIL. Local forces on the ground who know their countries best are best positioned to take the ground fight to ISIL, and that's what they're doing.

At the same time, this resolution strikes the necessary balance by giving us the flexibility we need for unforeseen circumstances. For example, if we had actionable intelligence about a gathering of ISIL leaders, and our partners didn't have the capacity to get them, I would be prepared to order our Special Forces to take action, because I will not allow these terrorists to have a safe haven. So we need flexibility, but we also have to be careful and deliberate. And there is no heavier decision than asking our men and women in uniform to risk their lives on our behalf. As Commander in Chief, I will only send our troops into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary for our national security.

Finally, this resolution repeals the 2002 authorization of force for the invasion of Iraq and limits this new authorization to 3 years. I do not believe America's interests are served by endless war or by remaining on a perpetual war footing. As a nation, we need to ask the difficult and necessary questions about when, why, and how we use military force. After all, it is

our troops who bear the costs of our decisions, and we owe them a clear strategy and the support they need to get the job done. So this resolution will give our Armed Forces and our coalition the continuity we need for the next 3 years.

It is not a timetable. It is not announcing that the mission is completed at any given period. What it is saying is that Congress should revisit the issue at the beginning of the next President's term. It's conceivable that the mission is completed earlier. It's conceivable that after deliberation, debate, and evaluation, that there are additional tasks to be carried out in this area. And the people's representatives, with a new President, should be able to have that discussion.

In closing, I want to say that in crafting this resolution we have consulted with, and listened to, both Republicans and Democrats in Congress. We have made a sincere effort to address difficult issues that we've discussed together. In the days and weeks ahead, we'll continue to work closely with leaders and Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. I believe this resolution can grow even stronger with the thoughtful and dignified debate that this moment demands. I'm optimistic that it can win strong bipartisan support and that we can show our troops and the world that Americans are united in this mission.

Now, today, our men and women in uniform continue the fight against ISIL, and we salute them for their courageous service. We pray for their safety. We stand with their families who miss them and who are sacrificing here at home. But know this: Our coalition is strong, our cause is just, and our mission will succeed. And long after the terrorists we face today are destroyed and forgotten, America will continue to stand free and tall and strong.

May God bless our troops, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:37 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Message to the Congress on Submitting Proposed Legislation To Authorize the Use of Military Force Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

February 11, 2015

To the Congress of the United States:

The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) poses a threat to the people and stability of Iraq, Syria, and the broader Middle East, and to U.S. national security. It threatens American personnel and facilities located in the region and is responsible for the deaths of U.S. citizens James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Abdul-Rahman Peter Kassig, and Kayla Mueller. If left unchecked, ISIL will pose a threat beyond the Middle East, including to the United States homeland.

I have directed a comprehensive and sustained strategy to degrade and defeat ISIL. As part of this strategy, U.S. military forces are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. Although existing statutes provide me with the authority I need to take these actions, I have repeatedly expressed my commitment to working with the Congress to pass a bipartisan authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) against ISIL. Consistent with this commitment, I am submitting a draft AUMF that would authorize the continued use of military force to degrade and defeat ISIL.

My Administration's draft AUMF would not authorize long-term, large-scale ground combat operations like those our Nation conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan. Local forces, rather than U.S. military forces, should be deployed to conduct such operations. The authorization I propose would provide the flexibility to conduct ground combat operations in other, more

limited circumstances, such as rescue operations involving U.S. or coalition personnel or the use of special operations forces to take military action against ISIL leadership. It would also authorize the use of U.S. forces in situations where ground combat operations are not expected or intended, such as intelligence collection and sharing, missions to enable kinetic strikes, or the provision of operational planning and other forms of advice and assistance to partner forces.

Although my proposed AUMF does not address the 2001 AUMF, I remain committed to working with the Congress and the American people to refine, and ultimately repeal, the 2001 AUMF. Enacting an AUMF that is specific to the threat posed by ISIL could serve as a model for how we can work together to tailor the authorities granted by the 2001 AUMF.

I can think of no better way for the Congress to join me in supporting our Nation's security than by enacting this legislation, which would show the world we are united in our resolve to counter the threat posed by ISIL.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 11, 2015.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released the text of the proposed legislation. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks on Signing the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act

February 12, 2015

Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, good afternoon, everybody. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome

to the White House. And thank you, Jake, for a moving tribute to your friend and your brother-in-arms. I think it's clear that Clay

Hunt lives on in you: in your devotion to his memory and your commitment to our country. So, Jake, on behalf of all of us, but especially, I think, on behalf of Clay's family and all his friends and fellow veterans who loved him too, thanks for your extraordinary service.

Today we honor a young man who isn't here, but should be here. Clay Hunt was a proud Texan. As a boy, I understand, he collected turtles—[laughter]—which was ironic for a kid who, by all accounts, never sat still. [Laughter] He loved the outdoors; he knew every inch of his grandparents' ranch, where he fished and hunted all year long. A decorated marine, he served with distinction in Iraq and Afghanistan. He suffered physical injuries—injuries that healed, and he suffered invisible wounds that stayed with him. And by all accounts, he was selfless, and he was brave. And when he died in 2011, it was a heartbreaking loss for his family, his fellow marines, and our Nation. Because Clay had already done a great deal of good in the world, and the truth is, he was just getting started.

So we're here today to pick up where Clay left off. The best way to honor this young man who should be here is to make sure that more veterans like him are here for all the years to come and may—able to make extraordinary contributions, building on what they've already done for our safety and our security.

Clay was a passionate advocate for veterans. And now, more than ever, that's something we're all called to be. After 13 years, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over, and a new generation of veterans is coming home. And like Clay, they are talented, and they are ready to roll up their sleeves and begin the next chapter of their lives: starting companies, going back to school, reentering the workforce, raising families, becoming leaders in every field. And whether they found a new path or are just starting out on their new civilian life, one thing is certain: Every single veteran in America has something extraordinary to give to this country—every single one.

And at the same time, too many of our troops and veterans are still struggling. They're

recovering from injuries. They're mourning fallen comrades. They're trying to reconnect with family and friends who can never fully understand what they went through in war theater. For many of them, the war goes on: in the flashbacks that come rushing forward and in the nightmares that don't go away.

And that tension between then and now, that struggle to make the transition from war to home, is one that Clay Hunt knew all too well. In Iraq and Afghanistan, he lost good friends. After one buddy died, Clay slept in his empty bunk for a while, to stay close just a little longer. A few weeks later, another friend was fatally shot right in front of him. There was nothing Clay could do to save him, but he was still wracked with grief and guilt. And when he got home, he found it hard to sleep and hard to go football games or anywhere that was loud or crowded.

Now, part of what made him remarkable was, he was able to name the problem; he understood it. Like many of our troops and veterans, Clay had posttraumatic stress. And as a country, we've been doing more to help our troops and veterans deal with injuries like posttraumatic stress. We've been doing more awareness and more outreach, and more counselors have been put in place to improve access to care. We've been doing more research and prevention—into prevention and treatment. And we've been saying loud and clear to anyone out there who's hurting: It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help, it's a sign of strength.

And Clay Hunt was strong that way. He asked for help. In fact, he did everything that we urge people with posttraumatic stress to do. He reached out to his family; they embraced him with love. He opened up to other veterans, and they were there for him too. He sought treatment, and not once, but repeatedly. And he channeled his stress into service. As part of Team Rubicon, as Jake described, he went to Haiti after the earthquake to help families rebuild. He refurbished bikes for injured veterans so they could join wounded warrior rides. He even appeared in a public service announcement, encouraging veterans having a tough time to reach out for help, because he

knew that even though you can't see it, post-traumatic stress is an injury just like any other and the stigma has to end.

And Clay received care through the VA, but he struggled to get the right medication and the right disability rating. And by the time the severity of his condition was recognized, it was too late, and Clay had taken his life just weeks before. And he was 28 years old.

Amid unimaginable grief, Clay's family, Jake, and his fellow veterans made it their mission to spare any more families the pain they endured. So they shared Clay's story far and wide. And they reached out to Members of Congress, and they lobbied, and they testified and made personal appeals.

And thanks to their tireless efforts—and we are particularly grateful to Clay's family being able to transform grief into action—today I will sign the Clay Hunt SAV Act into law. And SAV stands for “Suicide Prevention for American Veterans.” It helps fill critical gaps in serving veterans with posttraumatic stress and other illnesses. It increases peer support and outreach to servicemembers transitioning to civilian life. It recruits talented psychiatry students to work at the VA after graduation. It makes it easier for veterans to find the care they need when they need it. And it includes strict accountability measures so we can track and continually improve these efforts as we learn more.

Now, this law is not a complete solution. We've still got a lot more work to do. Our Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Bob McDonald, is here and is doing a terrific job pushing reforms to get our veterans the care that they deserve. But one of the messages I want to make sure to deliver today, and I know that the First Lady and Jill Biden and others have been delivering this continually through their Joining Forces effort: This is not just a job for government. Every community, every American, can reach out and do more with and for our veterans. This has to be a national mission. As a nation, we should not be satisfied—will not be satisfied—until every man and woman in uniform, every veteran, gets the help that they need to stay strong and healthy.

And this law will not bring Clay back, as much as we wish it would. But the reforms that it puts in place would have helped. And they'll help others who are going through the same challenging process that he went through. So this is a good day, and we pay tribute to everyone who helped to make it possible.

We want to thank Clay's family, especially his mom and stepfather, Susan and Richard Selke; his father and stepmother, Stacy and Dianne Hunt. You guys never stopped fighting for Clay, and for all the families who have lost sons and daughters as well. And as a Commander in Chief and as a father, I can't think of a more beautiful and special way to honor your son. So we thank you very much.

We want to thank Jake and all those who served with Clay, who protected him and loved him like a brother, and all the veterans service organizations that fought for this law and who advocated so passionately for those who have served. We thank all the military families who have lost a loved one, families here today who channeled their grief into helping others. They believe, as we all do, that we have to end this tragedy of suicide among our troops and veterans.

I want to thank the Members of Congress, Republican and Democrat, who worked to get this done. I want to give a special acknowledgement to somebody who knows a little bit about service, Senator John McCain. Dick Blumenthal, we're grateful for your efforts. Representative Jeff Miller. My homegirl from the Chicago area—[laughter]—Tammy Duckworth. Couldn't be prouder of her. And, Tim Walsh—Tim Walz, thank you so much for the great work.

And just to be clear about the bipartisanship here, this is one of those areas where we can't have an argument. Clay's parents are Texas Republicans. [Laughter] I mean, that's just not run-of-the-mill Republican. [Laughter] And they worked with this entire spectrum: conservatives, liberals. And that's just a reminder of what we can accomplish when we take a break from the partisan bickering that so often dominates this town and focus on what really matters to the American people.

I wish I had gotten a chance to know Clay. But in a way, I feel that I do, because there are a lot of incredible men and women all across this country who, like Clay, just love their country and want to serve. Michelle and I have had a chance to meet so many of them, and it's such an incredible privilege.

I think of the soldiers I sat down with at Fort Bliss a few years ago, and they told me they were proud to serve, but struggled with challenges like posttraumatic stress. They told me about the challenges they had in getting support and treatment and managing their medications, staying strong for their families and their fellow soldiers, and most of all, the challenge of asking for help, which is hard to do for folks who are used to helping others.

I think of Staff Sergeant Ty Carter, whom I awarded the Medal of Honor. He survived an unimaginable battle in Afghanistan and carried a badly wounded comrade to safety. As tough as they come. But he too acknowledged before the ceremony—and talked about it publicly—his struggles with posttraumatic stress. At first, he resisted even seeking help, but eventually, he reached out for the care that he needed. Today, he is transitioning to civilian life. He's started his own business, and he travels across the country as an advocate, helping veterans and other Americans turn their struggles into a source of strength.

I think of the college student who recently wrote me a letter on Christmas Day. This is as tough a letter as I've received since I've been President. She talked about her father, who's a retired marine, and told me about how her dad used to love to hunt and fish and spend time with her and her little brother. But gripped with posttraumatic stress, he became less and less like himself and withdrew from the family. And yet, despite these struggles, she wrote: "I knew that my dad was still in there somewhere. . . . He is still my father. And I am still his little

girl." And she was writing, she said, to ask for help—help her father find his way back—"not for my family, Mr. President," she said. "I'm asking you to help the others," other families like hers. And she said, "Don't forget about them."

And that's really what today is about: Don't forget. So today we say again, to every person in uniform, every veteran who has ever served: We thank you for your service. We honor your sacrifice. But sometimes, talk is cheap. And sometimes—particularly at a time when we've got an All-Volunteer Force and so often we can celebrate them at a ball game, but too many are insulated from the impacts—we've got to also act. We can't just talk.

So we're ready to help you begin the next chapter of your lives. And if you are hurting, know this: You are not forgotten. You are not alone. You are never alone. We are here for you. America is here for you, all of us. And we will not stop doing everything in our power to get you the care and support you need to stay strong and keep serving this country we love. We need you. We need you. You make our country better.

So I thank all of you. God bless our troops, our veterans, our military families. God bless the United States of America.

And with that, I want Michelle to—and Clay's family and our other guests to join us on stage so I can sign the Clay Hunt SAV Act into law.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jacob Wood, cofounder and executive director, Team Rubicon; Bill and Muriel Knotts, grandparents of Clay W. Hunt; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. H.R. 203, approved February 12, was assigned Public Law No. 114–2.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Ashton B. Carter as Secretary of Defense

February 12, 2015

Ash Carter served as a key leader of our national security team in the first years of my Presidency, and with his overwhelming bipartisan confirmation by the Senate today, I'm proud to welcome him back as our next Secretary of Defense. With his decades of experience, Ash will help keep our military strong as we continue the fight against terrorist networks, modernize our alliances, and invest in new capabilities to keep our Armed Forces prepared for long-term threats.

As Secretary of Defense, Ash will play a central role in our work with Congress to find a more responsible approach to defense spending that makes the Department more efficient, preserves military readiness, and keeps faith with our men and women in uniform and their families. We have the strongest military in history of the world, and with Secretary Carter at the Pentagon and our troops serving bravely around the world, we're going to keep it that way.

Statement on the Resignation of Ronald A. Klain as White House Ebola Response Coordinator

February 12, 2015

When I asked Ron Klain last fall to become the administration's Ebola Response Coordinator, the apprehension and even fear of Ebola in the United States was at its peak. Likewise, there was more than a little skepticism from some corners at the selection of Ron to fulfill this function. But, the background noise notwithstanding, I chose Ron for a reason: I have known him to be nothing less than an effective, dedicated, and tireless manager and leader. And those traits have been on full display since October, as Ron has helped marshal our whole-of-government approach to tackle Ebola

at the source in West Africa and to fortify our preparedness here at home. The results of that effort speak for themselves, so much so that we can now turn our focus to our ultimate goal of getting to zero cases in West Africa, which might have seemed unthinkable last fall.

As Ron finishes his tenure and returns to private life, I extend my gratitude for his service. He took on a challenge that many called insurmountable and, in leading the team responsible for the tremendous progress, helped remind the world what makes America so exceptional.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order on Promoting Private Sector Cybersecurity Information Sharing in Stanford, California

February 13, 2015

The President. Hello, Stanford! Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Have a seat, have a seat.

Audience member. Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can! [*Laughter*]

First of all, let me thank President Hennessy for not just the introduction, but for your outstanding leadership at one of the great universities of the world. I've got to admit, like, I kind

of want to go here. [*Laughter*] I was trying to figure out why it is that a really nice place like this is wasted on young people—[*laughter*—who don't fully appreciate what you've got. It's really nice. And everybody here is so friendly and smart, and it's beautiful. And what's there not to like?

I want to thank you and everyone at Stanford for hosting this summit, especially Amy

Zegart, George Triantis, and someone who served as a great adviser to me at the White House and as an outstanding Ambassador to Russia before coming back to the “Farm,” Mike McFaul.

It is great to be here at Leland Stanford Junior University. And I’m pleased to be joined by members of my team who bleed Cardinal red. We’re infiltrated with Stanford people. We’ve got Senior Adviser Valerie Jarrett, National Security Adviser Susan Rice, Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker. And let’s face it, I like Stanford grads. I noticed Steve Chu was around here, who helped lead our Energy Department for a while. And he’s not a—he’s now hanging out. I’m also pleased to be joined by other members of my Cabinet: Our Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, is here, and our Small Business Administrator, Maria Contreras-Sweet. And I want to acknowledge my tireless Homeland Security Adviser, who helped, and continues to shape, our cybersecurity efforts, Lisa Monaco. Thank you, Lisa.

So I’d always heard about this campus, and everybody is riding bikes and people hopping into fountains—[laughter]—and the current holder of the Axe. This is the place that made “nerd” cool. [Laughter] I was thinking about wearing some black-rimmed glasses, some tape in the middle, but I guess that’s not what you do anymore. Ambassador McFaul told me if I came to Stanford, you’d “talk nerdy to me.” [Laughter]

But I’m not just here to enjoy myself. As we gather here today, America is seeing incredible progress that we can all be proud of. We just had the best year of job growth since the 1990s. Over the past 59 months, our businesses have created nearly 12 million new jobs, which is the longest streak of private sector job growth on record. And in a hopeful sign for middle class families, wages are beginning to rise again.

And meanwhile, we’re doing more to prepare our young people for a competitive world. Our high school graduation rate has hit an all-time high, and more Americans are finishing college than ever before. Here at Stanford and across the country, we’ve got the best universities, we’ve got the best scientists, the best re-

searchers, in the world. We’ve got the most dynamic economy in the world. And no place represents that better than this region. So make no mistake: More than any other nation on Earth, the United States is positioned to lead in the 21st century.

And so much of our economic competitiveness is tied to what brings me here today, and that is America’s leadership in the digital economy. It’s our ability—almost unique across the planet—our ability to innovate and to learn and to discover and to create and build and do business online and stretch the boundaries of what’s possible. That’s what drives us. And so when we had to decide where to have this summit, the decision was easy, because so much of our Information Age began right here, at Stanford.

It was here where two students, Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard, met and then, in a garage not far from here, started a company that eventually built one of the first personal computers, weighing in at 40 pounds. [Laughter] It was from here, in 1968, where a researcher, Douglas Englebart, astonished an audience with two computers, connected “online,” and hypertext you could click on with something called a “mouse.”

A year later, a computer here received the first message from another computer 350 miles away, the beginnings of what would eventually become the Internet. And by the way, it’s no secret that many of these innovations built on Government-funded research is one of the reasons that if we want to maintain our economic leadership in the world, America has to keep investing in basic research in science and technology. It’s absolutely critical.

So here at Stanford, pioneers developed the protocols and architecture of the Internet, DSL, the first webpage in America, innovations for cloud computing. Student projects here became Yahoo and Google. Those were pretty good student projects. [Laughter] Your graduates have gone on to help create and build thousands of companies that have shaped our digital society, from Cisco to Sun Microsystems, YouTube to Instagram, StubHub, Bonobos. According to one study, if all the

companies traced back to Stanford graduates formed their own nation, you'd be one the largest economies in the world and have a pretty good football team as well. So—[laughter].

And today, with your cutting-edge research programs and your new cyber initiatives, you're helping us navigate some of the most complicated cyber challenges that we face as a nation. And that's why we're here. I want to thank all of you who have joined us today: Members of Congress, representatives from the private sector, government, academia, privacy and consumer groups, and especially the students who are here. Now, just as we're all connected like never before, we have to work together like never before, both to seize opportunities, but also meet the challenges of this Information Age.

And it's one of the great paradoxes of our time that the very technologies that empower us to do great good can also be used to undermine us and inflict great harm. The same information technologies that help make our military the most advanced in the world are targeted by hackers from China and Russia who go after our defense contractors and systems that are built for our troops. The same social media we use in Government to advocate for democracy and human rights around the world can also be used by terrorists to spread hateful ideologies. So these cyber threats are a challenge to our national security.

Much of our critical infrastructure—our financial systems, our power grid, health systems—run on networks connected to the Internet, which is hugely empowering, but also dangerous and creates new points of vulnerability that we didn't have before. Foreign governments and criminals are probing these systems every single day. We only have to think of real-life examples—an air traffic control system going down and disrupting flights or blackouts that plunge cities into darkness—to imagine what a set of systematic cyber attacks might do. So this is also a matter of public safety.

As a nation, we do more business online than ever before: trillions of dollars a year. And high-tech industries, like those across the Valley, support millions of American jobs. All this

gives us an enormous competitive advantage in the global economy. And for that very reason, American companies are being targeted, their trade secrets stolen, intellectual property ripped off. The North Korean cyber attack on Sony Pictures destroyed data and disabled thousands of computers and exposed the personal information of Sony employees. And these attacks are hurting American companies and costing American jobs. So this is also a threat to America's economic security.

As consumers, we do more online than ever before. We manage our bank accounts. We shop. We pay our bills. We handle our medical records. And as a country, one of our greatest resources are the young people who are here today, digitally fearless and unencumbered by convention and uninterested in old debates. And they're remaking the world every day. But it also means that this problem of how we secure this digital world is only going to increase.

I want more Americans succeeding in our digital world. I want young people like you to unleash the next waves of innovation and launch the next startups and give Americans the tools to create new jobs and new businesses and to expand connectivity in places that we currently can't imagine, to help open up new worlds and new experiences and empower individuals in ways that would seem unimaginable 10, 15, 20 years ago.

And that's why we're working to connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet, because when it comes to educating our children, we can't afford any digital divides. And it's why we're helping more communities get across to the next generation of broadband faster, with cheaper Internet, so that students and entrepreneurs and small businesses across America, not just in pockets of America, have the same opportunities to learn and compete as you do here in the Valley. It's why I've come out so strongly and publicly for net neutrality, for an open and free Internet, because we have to preserve one of the greatest engines for creativity and innovation in human history.

So our connectivity brings extraordinary benefits to our daily lives, but it also brings

risks. And when companies get hacked, Americans' personal information, including their financial information, gets stolen. Identity theft can ruin your credit rating and turn your life upside down. In recent breaches, more than a hundred million Americans had their personal data compromised, including, in some cases, credit card information. We want our children to go online and explore the world, but we also want them to be safe and not have their privacy violated. So this is a direct threat to the economic security of American families, not just the economy overall, and to the well-being of our children, which means, we've got to put in place mechanisms to protect them.

So shortly after I took office, before I had gray hair—[laughter]—I said that these cyber threats were one of the most serious economic national security challenges that we face as a nation, and I made confronting them a priority. And given the complexity of these threats, I believe we have to be guided by some basic principles. So let me share those with you today.

First, this has to be a shared mission. So much of our computer networks and critical infrastructure are in the private sector, which means government cannot do this alone. But the fact is that the private sector can't do it alone either, because it's government that often has the latest information on new threats. There's only one way to defend America from these cyber threats, and that is through government and industry working together, sharing appropriate information as true partners.

Second, we have to focus on our unique strengths. Government has many capabilities, but it's not appropriate or even possible for government to secure the computer networks of private businesses. Many of the companies who are here today are cutting edge, but the private sector doesn't always have the capabilities needed during a cyber attack: the situational awareness or the ability to warn other companies in real time or the capacity to coordinate a response across companies and sectors. So we're going to have to be smart and efficient and focus on what each sector does best and then do it together.

Third, we're going to have to constantly evolve. The first computer viruses hit personal computers in the early 1980s, and essentially, we've been in a cyber arms race ever since. We design new defenses, and then hackers and criminals design new ways to penetrate them. Whether it's phishing or botnets, spyware or malware, and now ransomware, these attacks are getting more and more sophisticated every day. So we've got to be just as fast and flexible and nimble in constantly evolving our defenses.

And fourth, and most importantly, in all our work we have to make sure we are protecting the privacy and civil liberty of the American people. And we grapple with these issues in government. We've pursued important reforms to make sure we are respecting peoples' privacy as well as ensuring our national security. And the private sector wrestles with this as well. When consumers share their personal information with companies, they deserve to know that it's going to be protected. When government and industry share information about cyber threats, we've got to do so in a way that safeguards your personal information. When people go online, we shouldn't have to forfeit the basic privacy that we're entitled to as Americans.

In recent years, we've worked to put these principles into practice. And as part of our comprehensive strategy, we've boosted our defenses in government, we're sharing more information with the private sector to help those companies defend themselves, we're working with industry to use what we call a cybersecurity framework to prevent, respond to, and recover from attacks when they happen.

And by the way, I recently went to the National Cybersecurity Communications Integration Center, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security, where representatives from government and the private sector monitor cyber threats 24/7. And so defending against cyber threats, just like terrorism or other threats, is one more reason that we are calling on Congress not to engage in politics—this is not a Republican or a Democratic issue—but work to make sure that our security is safeguarded and that we fully fund the Depart-

ment of Homeland Security, because it has great responsibilities in this area.

So we're making progress, and I've recently announced new actions to keep up this momentum. Now, we've called for a single national standard so Americans know within 30 days if your information has been stolen. This month, we'll be proposing legislation that we call a Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights to give Americans some baseline protections, like the right to decide what personal data companies collect from you, and the right to know how companies are using that information. We've proposed the Student Digital Privacy Act, which is modeled on the landmark law here in California, because today's amazing educational technologies should be used to teach our students and not collect data for marketing to students.

And we've also taken new steps to strengthen our cybersecurity, proposing new legislation to promote greater information sharing between government and the private sector, including liability protections for companies that share information about cyber threats. Now, today I'm once again calling on Congress to come together and get this done.

And this week, we announced the creation of our new Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center. Just like we do with terrorist threats, we're going to have a single entity that's analyzing and integrating and quickly sharing intelligence about cyber threats across Government so we can act on all those threats even faster.

And today we're taking an additional step—which is why there's a desk here. You were wondering, I'm sure. *[Laughter]* I'm signing a new Executive order to promote even more information sharing about cyber threats, both within the private sector and between government and the private sector. And it will encourage more companies and industries to set up organizations—hubs—so you can share information with each other. It will call for a common set of standards, including protections for privacy and civil liberties, so that gov-

ernment can share threat information with these hubs more easily. And it can help make it easier for companies to get the classified cybersecurity threat information that they need to protect their companies.

I want to acknowledge, by the way, that the companies who are represented here are stepping up as well. The Cyber Threat Alliance, which includes companies like Palo Alto Networks and Symantec, are going to work with us to share more information under this new Executive order. You've got companies from Apple to Intel, from Bank of America to PG&E, who are going to use the cybersecurity framework to strengthen their own defenses. As part of our BuySecure initiative, Visa and MasterCard and American Express and others are going to make their transactions more secure. Nationstar is joining companies that are giving their companies [customers]^{*} another weapon to battle identity theft, and that's free access to their credit scores.

And more companies are moving to new, stronger technologies to authenticate user identities, like biometrics, because it's just too easy for hackers to figure out usernames and passwords, like "password." *[Laughter]* Or "12345"—*[laughter]*—"7." *[Laughter]* Those are some of my previous passwords. *[Laughter]* I've changed them since then.

So this summit is an example of what we need more of: all of us working together to do what none of us can achieve alone. And it is difficult. Some of the challenges I've described today have defied solutions for years. And I want to say very clearly that, as somebody who is a former constitutional law teacher and somebody who deeply values his privacy and his family's privacy—although, I chose the wrong job for that—*[laughter]*—but will be a private citizen again and cares deeply about this, I have to tell you that grappling with how government protects the American people from adverse events while, at the same time, making sure that government itself is not abusing its capabilities is hard.

^{*} White House correction.

The cyber world is sort of the wild, wild West. And to some degree, we're asked to be the sheriff. When something like Sony happens, people want to know what can government do about this. If information is being shared by terrorists in the cyber world and an attack happens, people want to know are there ways of stopping that from happening. By necessity, that means government has its own significant capabilities in the cyber world. But then people, rightly, ask, well, what safeguards do we have against government intruding on our own privacy? And it's hard, and it constantly evolves because the technology so often outstrips whatever rules and structures and standards have been put in place, which means that government has to be constantly self-critical and we have to be able to have an open debate about it.

But we're all here today because we know that we're going to have to break through some of these barriers that are holding us back if we are going to continue to thrive in this remarkable new world. We all know what we need to do. We have to build stronger defenses and disrupt more attacks. We have to make cyberspace safer. We have to improve cooperation across the board. And by the way, this is not just here in America, but internationally, which also, by the way, makes things complicated because a lot of countries don't necessarily share our investments—or our commitment to openness, and we have to try to navigate that.

But this should not be an ideological issue. And that's one thing I want to emphasize: This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. This is not a liberal or a conservative issue. Everybody is online, and everybody is vulnerable. The business leaders here want their privacy and their children protected, just like the consumer and privacy advocates here want America to keep leading the world in technology and be safe from attacks. So I'm hopeful that through this forum and the work that we do subsequently, that we're able to generate ideas and best practices and that the work of this summit can help guide our planning and execution for years to come.

After all, we are just getting started. Think about it. Tim Berners-Lee, from his lab in Switzerland, invented the World Wide Web in 1989, which was only 26 years ago. The great epochs in human history—the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Agricultural Revolution, Industrial Revolution—they spanned centuries. We're only 26 years into this Internet Age. We've only scratched the surface. And as I guess they say at Google, "The future is awesome." [Laughter] We haven't even begun to imagine the discoveries and innovations that are going to be unleashed in the decades to come. But we know how we'll get there.

Reflecting on his work in the 1960s on ARPANET, the precursor of the Internet, the late Paul Baran said this: "The process of technological developments is like building a cathedral. Over the course of several hundred years, new people come along and each lays down a block on top of the old foundations, each saying, 'I built the cathedral.' And then comes along an historian who asks, 'Well, who built the cathedral?'" And Baran said: "If you're not careful, you can con yourself into believing that you did the most important part. But the reality is that each contribution has to follow on to previous work. Everything is tied to everything else."

Everything is tied to everything else. The innovations that first appeared on this campus all those decades ago—that first mouse, that first message—helped lay a foundation. And in the decades since, on campuses like this, in companies like those that are represented here, new people have come along, each laying down a block, one on top of the other. And when future historians ask who built this Information Age, it won't be any one of us who did the most important part alone. The answer will be, "We all did, as Americans."

And I'm absolutely confident that if we keep at this, if we keep working together in a spirit of collaboration, like all those innovators before us, our work will endure, like a great cathedral, for centuries to come. And that cathedral will not just be about technology, it will be about the values that we've embedded in the architecture of this system. It will be about pri-

vacy, and it will be about community. And it will be about connection. What a magnificent cathedral that all of you have helped to build. We want to be a part of that, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you for your partnership. With that, I'm going to sign this Executive order. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. at the White House Summit on Cybersecurity and Consumer Protection at Stanford Univer-

sity. In his remarks, he referred to Amy Zegart, codirector of the Center for International Security and Cooperation, George Triantis, associate dean for strategic planning and associate dean of research, and Michael A. McFaul, director of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University; and Timothy J. Berners-Lee, director, World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Executive Order 13691 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco, California

February 13, 2015

Thank you, everybody. Well, first of all, let me just say, Sandy and Jeanne are some of my most longstanding stalwart supporters, and I am so grateful to them. They have been with me just about every step of the way, and I'm sure this shows their Illinois good sense—[laughter]—but I am truly grateful, and they arranged a spectacular setting for a spectacular event. And I want to thank them both.

I want to thank everybody who helped to co-host this. There are a lot of friends here who've—I've been in your houses too. [Laughter] And you've known me before I had any gray hair—[laughter]—and before a lot of people could pronounce my name properly, and I'm grateful. And for those of you who I'm meeting for the first time, thank you so much for being here.

I'm going to—the way I usually do these is to make some very brief remarks on the front end, and then really, I want to spend most of the time just in a conversation and answering questions or hearing ideas that you may have. If you look at what happened last year—and I talked about this in the State of the Union—after a debilitating recession, worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, 4 or 5 hard years of rebuilding and retooling and recovery, last year ended up being really a breakout year for America, in which all that hard work began to show itself not just in the fact that we had the fastest drop in unemployment in 30 years,

not only in the fastest job growth since the 1990s, not only in strong GDP growth, export growth, but also a whole series of structural changes that we had begun way back in 2009 that were beginning to really bear fruit.

Doubling the production of clean energy. Ten times more solar power than we had. Three times more wind power than we had. Cutting carbon emissions. High school graduation rates at an alltime high. For younger students, reading and math scores showing appreciable gains. Highest college enrollment that we had seen in a very long time.

All these issues that had affected a lot of people for a long time finally began to pay off. And obviously, one of the most striking examples was health care, where despite all the battles back and forth in Washington, after a year we've seen more than 10 million people have affordable health insurance, high-quality health insurance for the first time, in some cases, in their lives.

And so the question I posed at the State of the Union was, how do we sustain this momentum and drive it in such a way that the overall growth that we're seeing, the aggregate GDP numbers, the improved stock market—that all of that begins to now manifest itself in hard-working families feeling a little bit more secure, feeling a little bit more hopeful, seeing more ladders of opportunity for young people? How do we make sure that our prosperity is