

Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval the Keystone XL Pipeline Approval Act February 24, 2015

To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning herewith without my approval S. 1, the “Keystone XL Pipeline Approval Act.” Through this bill, the United States Congress attempts to circumvent long-standing and proven processes for determining whether or not building and operating a cross-border pipeline serves the national interest.

The Presidential power to veto legislation is one I take seriously. But I also take seriously

my responsibility to the American people. And because this act of Congress conflicts with established executive branch procedures and cuts short thorough consideration of issues that could bear on our national interest—including our security, safety, and environment—it has earned my veto.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 24, 2015.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at an MSNBC/Telemundo Immigration Town Hall in Miami, Florida February 25, 2015

MSNBC and Telemundo News Anchor José Díaz-Balart. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

It’s good to see you, Mr. President.

The President. It’s good to be with you, José.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Thanks for being here at FIU. Really appreciate you being here with us.

The President. It is wonderful to be with the Golden Panthers.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. There you go!

Mr. President, let’s begin. It’s going to be a little bilingual at times, but you and I are used to that.

The President. I can handle that.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Thanks.

Immigration Reform/President’s Executive Actions on Immigration/U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States

[*At this point, Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which he translated into English as follows.*]

Senator McConnell, on Tuesday, made an offer to break the Department of Homeland Security impasse. He wants to vote to fund

DHS through September and then separately vote to strip funding for your executive actions on immigration. As you know, it seems as if the Democrats are on board in the Senate. We’re 48 hours from the deadline. Republicans have a plan. Democrats seem to be on board. You’re waiting on a judge. Is that enough?

The President. Well, José, let me start by just talking generally about why immigration is so important and why we’ve got to fix a broken system.

We’ve had a system for a very long time that nobody is happy with. We know that businesses are being deprived of outstanding workers. We know that our agricultural sector that’s so dependent on immigrants is hurting because of uncertainty. We know that we should be deploying our resources and focusing it more on dealing with felons and national security issues with respect to our borders and not focusing on the mom who’s working someplace, looking after her kids and doing the right thing.

And for over 6 years, now, I’ve been calling on the Republicans to work with us to pass a comprehensive fix that would strengthen our borders, that would make sure that businesses

have the workforce that they needed, above-board, not paying them under the table, not depriving them of things like overtime or workers' rights, and that we provided a pathway for people to earn their way into a legal status and ultimately citizenship.

And to their credit, Members of the Senate passed a bipartisan bill, overwhelmingly. But the House Republicans blocked it. They refused to even allow it to get on the floor for a vote. What I did, then, was to say, I'm going to use all of the authority that I have as the Chief Executive of the United States, as well as Commander in Chief, to try to make sure that we are prioritizing our immigration system a lot smarter than we've been doing. And what that means is, is that instead of focusing on families, we're going to focus on felons. We're going to strengthen our borders, which are people—is what people are concerned about.

We're going to build on what we did in 2012 with DACA, which allowed young people who had come here and were Americans in all respects except they didn't have the proper papers to get legal so that they could continue in their higher education or serving in the military—

Mr. Díaz-Balart. They know no other country.

The President. They know no other country. And this approach of executive actions has been used by previous Republican and Democratic Presidents throughout modern times.

Now, what we did most recently was to expand that so that more people would qualify for DACA, and we also said if you are the parent of a U.S. citizen or a legal resident, if you've been here for a while, if you're part of our community, then you should be able to come forward, get registered, go through a background check, and if you generally have been contributing to our community, you should be able to stay here legally and not be in fear of deportation.

It did not provide citizenship because only Congress could do that, but it was going to help. And I think we saw the reaction in the community, and the truth is, across the coun-

try, people recognized this was the right thing and the smart thing to do.

Now, unfortunately, a number of Republican Governors chose to sue. They found a district court judge who has enjoined—meaning stopped—us going forward with this program. But that's just the first part of the process. This is just one Federal judge. We have appealed it very aggressively. We're going to be as aggressive as we can because not only do we know that the law is on our side, but history is also on our side.

And in the meantime, what we said to Republicans is, instead of trying to hold hostage funding for the Department of Homeland Security, which is so important for our national security, fund that, and let's get on with actually passing comprehensive immigration reform.

So in the short term, if Mr. McConnell, the leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, want to have a vote on whether what I'm doing is legal or not, they can have that vote. I will veto that vote, because I'm absolutely confident that what we're doing is the right thing to do. And in the meantime, we're going to continue to pursue all legal avenues to make sure that we have a country in which we are respecting not only the law, because we're a nation of laws, but we're also respecting the fact that we're a nation of immigrants.

And I'm confident that, ultimately, people who have been living here for a long time, who have roots here, oftentimes have U.S. citizen children here or legal resident children here, that they deserve to have an opportunity. And that's what we want to provide them.

The President's Executive Actions on Immigration/Border Security

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, independently of what can happen with all the appeals and judges, it would take months. Mr.

President, we're facing very real consequences and our community is in fear—has fear that's due to your actions, because that fear is that uncertainty. Millions of people are in the balance here against a rock and a hard place. What is the responsibility you feel regarding this uncertainty, this pain that a lot of the community, the Hispanic community are feeling?

The President. Well, one of the most important things that I think everybody needs to know—and this didn't get enough attention when I made my announcement last year—in addition to expanding DACA, in addition to creating the DAPA program for the parents of DREAMers, what we also did was, we said we're going to change how ICE and our Border Patrol system operates. Because we recognize we're not going to deport 11 million people. And so why we would want to allocate resources in a wasteful way, that doesn't make sense.

What we said was, let's prioritize who it is that we're really focused on. We're focused on criminals and gang members who are a threat to our community. And we're focused on the border and making sure the people who have just come, that we are making sure that they are in a position where they understand that they've got to come through legal pathways. But for people who've been living here for a long time, they are no longer prioritized for enforcement and deportation.

And so, even as people should be preparing their paperwork so that when the time comes that they can apply, in the meantime, understand that ICE and the border security mechanisms that we have in place, they are instructed to focus on criminals and people who have just crossed the border. If you've been here for a long time and if you qualify, generally, then, during this period, even with legal uncertainty, they should be in a good place.

Enforcement of the President's Executive Actions on Immigration

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And the problem is, Mr. President, that that may be the fact, but in—where the rubber meets the road, that's not happening many times.

The President. Well—

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Many times, people are being deported that have been here, that have kids, that have a process to even become legal, and they're being deported. So one thing is what you're saying, and another thing, a lot of times, is what happens where the rubber meets the road.

The President. Well, I think what you're going to be finding, José, is, is that every time that you have a big bureaucracy and you've changed policy, there's going to be one or two, three instances where people apparently haven't gotten the message. But if you talk to the head of Department of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, he is absolutely committed to this new prioritization. More importantly, I, the President of the United States, am absolutely committed to this new prioritization.

And so families out there need to understand that we are going to be focusing on criminals. We're going to be focusing on potential felons. We are reorganizing how we work with State and local governments to make sure that we are not prioritizing families. And you are going to see, I think, a substantial change, even as the case works its way through the courts.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I want to go to the audience. Eric Narvaez is a war veteran. He was wounded in Afghanistan. He is with us this afternoon.

Eric.

Immigration Reform/President's Executive Actions on Immigration/U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Hey, Eric.

Q. First and foremost, I want to thank you for coming here. There's so many things going on in the world right now, and I just want to thank you for taking your time to come and talk to us, because I know you have to deal with so many things. I can only imagine what you have to deal with every day.

But a little bit about myself. When I was 17, I joined the U.S. Army. Actually, my mom had to sign because I was so young. My 18th birthday, I was—spent in basic training, and my

21st birthday was spent in Afghanistan, and I was actually shot at on my birthday. I came back. I'm a wounded warrior. I was medically discharged from the military in 2011. And I come back home and only to find out that I'm fighting another war with my mother, trying to keep her here.

So I just want to ask you, Mr. President, if there has to be some kind of gray area for a situation like this. Because I put in a lot of time, and I love this country, and I just feel like if it wasn't for her signing those papers, I would never have been able to join this great American Army. So I want to ask you if there's any way that situation could be handled a little better.

The President. Well, first of all, let me just say thank you, Eric, for your incredible service to our country. And you're a great example of why this issue is so important. Our country is strong because of generation after generation of immigrants who embraced the ideals of America and then fought for those ideals and fought in wars to defend our country and built companies that employed people and helped to build the railroads and the highways. And all the things that we take for granted in this country, those were built by immigrants. We're all immigrants. That's who we are. Unless you're one of the first Americans—Native Americans. And so we have to recognize that.

And I'm confident that your mother qualifies under the executive action program that I've put forward. Right now the judge has blocked us initiating the program where she can come and sign up and get registered. But in the meantime, part of the message that I'm sending is, if you qualified for the executive action that I put forward, then we're still going to make sure that your mom is not prioritized in terms of enforcement. And she should feel confident about that. So I just want to assure her, short term.

Long term, we need a situation where she has a pathway to become a legal citizen. And that's why we still have to make sure that we get a bill passed through Congress, and we have to keep the pressure on those who are blocking that bill.

One last point that I think is important: The judge in this case did not reverse DACA that I put forward in 2012. So hundreds of thousands of young people all across the country who have signed up, registered, and are going to school, making something of their lives—you have to understand, that hasn't been affected whatsoever.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Expand on that a little bit, because it's important.

The President. Well, it's important that in 2012, when I made my first announcement about executive actions, that applied to the DREAMers. Basically, if you were—if you had come here before 2007, you were between the ages of 16 and 30, you could register, sign up, you now had a legal status. It was temporary because we hadn't passed a bill yet, but it meant that you could get a work permit, you could go to school, you could do the things that American kids do as they're entering into adulthood.

That has not changed. And so those who have already signed up, you need to understand that has not been challenged and in court. And what's also important is we still have several hundred thousand young people who qualified for that original executive action back in 2012 who have not yet taken advantage of it. And now is the time for all of you to take advantage of that.

The President's Executive Actions on Immigration/U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Eric, thank you for that question.

And, Mr. President, we've been just flooded with questions using our social media hashtags, and this one comes from the hashtag #ObamaResponde. It says:

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart read the question in Spanish, which he translated as follows.*]

It says: “How do you guarantee that an immigrant who is in the middle of legalizing his status that he or she is not going to be deported by ICE? Mr. President, my husband was deported during the process, and this,” she says, “happened just last week.”

The President. I would have to know the details of what exactly happened. But what I can tell you is that until we pass a law through Congress, the executive actions that we’ve taken are not going to be permanent; they’re temporary.

We are now implementing a new prioritization. There are going to be some jurisdictions, and there may be individual ICE officials or Border Patrol who aren’t paying attention to our new directives. But they’re going to be answerable to the head of the Department of Homeland Security, because he’s been very clear about what our priorities should be. And I’ve been very clear about what our priorities should be.

And the—I don’t know what the particular circumstances here are, but what I can tell you is, people who have signed up, for example, under my executive action in DACA—there are seven, 800,000 people who signed up—they haven’t had problems. It’s worked. So we know how to make this work.

Right now we’ve got a judge who’s blocking it from working. And in the interim, until we can actually process all these applications, then what we’re going to do is do what we can in terms of making sure that we’re prioritizing it properly.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. But what are the consequences—

The President. But the challenge is still going to be that not only do we have to win this legal fight, which we are appealing very aggressively, but ultimately, we’re still going to have to pass a law through Congress.

The bottom line is, José, that I’m using all of the legal power vested in me in order to solve this problem. And one of the things about living in a democracy is that we have separation of powers—we have Congress, we have the judicial branch—and right now we’ve got some disagreements with some Members of Con-

gress and some members of the judiciary in terms of what should be done.

But what I’m confident about is, ultimately, this is going to get done. And the reason it’s going to get done is, it’s the right thing to do and it is who we are as a people.

Enforcement of the President’s Executive Actions on Immigration

Mr. Díaz-Balart. But what are the consequences? Because how do you ensure that ICE agents or Border Patrol won’t be deporting people like this? I mean, what are the consequences?

The President. Well, José, look, the bottom line is, is that if somebody is working for ICE and there is a policy and they don’t follow the policy, there are going to be consequences to it. So I can’t speak to a specific problem. What I can talk about is what’s true in the Government, generally.

In the U.S. military, when you get an order, you’re expected to follow it. It doesn’t mean that everybody follows the order. If they don’t, they’ve got a problem. And the same is going to be true with respect to the policies that we’re putting forward.

U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Immigration Reform/2016 Presidential Election

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, people in your own administration, legal experts, predicted for weeks really that the Texas judge could probably rule against you. And this could happen again. I mean, you just mentioned there are more than 25 people who have joined in—and States who have joined in this legal process. Any and all of these other cases or judges could also act the same way that this judge in Texas did. So where was the contingency plan? I mean, did you have a contingency plan? Specifically, what are you going to do going forward as this process continues?

The President. Well, José, the—we’ve got one judge who made this decision. We appeal it to a higher court. We believe that the law is

clearly on our side. This is true in everything that we do.

Look at the Affordable Care Act. We've signed up 11 million people to get coverage through the Affordable Care Act. Over 2.5 million of them are Latino. Because of what we've done, we've seen the percentage of uninsured Latinos drop by almost 7 percent. It's unprecedented. So we know it can work.

Now, that hasn't stopped the Republican Party from suing us constantly, to try to find a judge who may think that what we're doing is in appropriate, despite the fact that it passed through Congress. We've got a Supreme Court that is still ruling on these cases. But that hasn't stopped us from moving forward.

And that's been true historically on every movement of social progress. It's not always a straight line. Sometimes, we're going to get legal challenges, but as long as we're confident—and I am very confident in this circumstance that this is within my power—that ultimately then, it's going to get done.

But the one thing I do want to emphasize is that in order for us to get absolute certainty that it's going to be permanent and not just temporary, that it doesn't just last during my administration and then get reversed by the next President, is, we've got to pass a bill, which means the pressure has to continue to stay on Congress. The pressure has to continue to stay on the Republican Party that is currently blocking the passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

It means that for the next set of Presidential candidates—because I'm term limited; Michelle is happy about that—[laughter]—when they start asking for votes, the first question should be, do you really intend to deport 11 million people? And if not, what is your plan to make sure that they have the ability to have a legal status, stay with their families, and ultimately contribute to the United States of America?

So we're going to have to keep on with the political process on a separate track. But in the meantime, we're going to do everything that we can to make sure that we implement executive actions as we've discussed.

U.S. District Court Opinion in Texas, et al. v. United States/President's Executive Actions on Immigration

Mr. Díaz-Balart. How long could this take? Because a lot of people are asking. They said, we were 24 hours away from registering for the expanded DACA and just months from DAPA. And this happens 12 hours before. What's going to happen now? How long is it going to take? And again, a lot of the questions are, was the President caught by surprise? And why is it taking so long? This is what we're getting, Mr. President.

The President. José—

Mr. Díaz-Balart. You know, because people are affected by this.

The President. What I'm saying is that of course, we weren't surprised. I've got a bunch of lawyers, we saw the judge who was rendering the opinion. The fact that we weren't surprised doesn't mean we can stop the judge from rendering an opinion. It means that we then go forward in the appeal process. That's how the legal system works.

And we have asked—first and foremost, we have asked for a stay. What a stay means, by the way, for the nonlawyers, is simply that whatever the judge thinks, it shouldn't stop us from going ahead and implementing. The first step is to go before that same judge and say: "Judge, what you said is wrong. Rethink it." He may not agree with that.

The next step is to go to a higher court, the Fifth Circuit. That will take a couple of months for us to file that and argue that before the Fifth Circuit. We expect to win in the Fifth Circuit, and if we don't, then we'll take it up from there.

So at each stage, we are confident that we've got the better argument. As I said before, what I've done is no different than what previous Presidents have done. In the meantime, what I can do is make sure—

Mr. Díaz-Balart. The numbers are unprecedented.

The President. Well, the numbers are unprecedented only relatively speaking. I mean, if you look at what George H.W.—George—

Mr. Díaz-Balart. H.W., yes.

The President. —H.W. Bush did, he, proportionally to what was then the immigrant population, was very aggressive in expanding it. The difference is, is that Democrats didn't challenge what he did for largely political reasons.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And there was a bill already underway.

The President. Well, there was a bill underway, but in some ways, you could make an argument that since a bill had passed that didn't solve that problem, Congress had been very direct in saying we don't want to solve that problem. And he went ahead and did it anyway, because it's in his authority to implement, using prosecutorial discretion, the limited resources of Department of Homeland Security.

So we're going to be in a position, I think, of going through the legal process over the next several months. In the meantime, what people who would qualify for executive action should be doing is gathering up your papers, making sure that you can show that you are a long-standing resident in the United States. You should be making sure that you've got the documents so that when we have cleared out all the legal problems and the application process is ready to go, that you're ready to go.

And we've got wonderful advocates who are working with us all across the country, in communities, the churches, civic groups and organizations, civil rights groups, lawyers, advocates. So the community right now, what they can do is prepare so that as soon as the legal process has worked themselves through, we can go forward.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I want to introduce you to Boris Gills. He is a student here at Florida International University. Born in Haiti.

Q. Yes.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Good afternoon.

International Students in the U.S.

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My name is Boris Gills, and I'm an international student. I came from Haiti. And I'm a survivor of the earthquake that badly ravaged my country in 2010.

In 2011, I came here in the U.S. on a student visa. Now, I'm a senior at FIU. I'm graduating next semester with a double major in finance and international business. Like, so many of us, like, international students, we don't know what to do. Like, our back against the wall. Like, we're doing everything by the book, but yet it feels like we're left out of every single reforms, of everything going on. So now my question is, what is it that you can do to help us international student? Like, how can you include us in your Executive orders maybe?

The President. Well, let me just say this. The—it's wonderful to see people—young people, talent—from all across the globe coming to stay in the United States. And I want to congratulate Florida International for the diversity of its class and the great work that it's doing. And we would love more really well educated, ambitious young people to want to stay here and contribute to this country.

If you look at the history of the founders of Intel and Google and so many of our iconic companies, people like Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, they were immigrants. And one of the mistakes that we're making right now is, we're training a lot of incredibly talented young people, they're going to our universities, getting advanced degrees, and then we're sending them back right away, even though they may want to stay and start businesses here and contribute to our community.

So one of the things that we talked about in the comprehensive immigration bill was how can we provide greater incentives and opportunities for young people with great talent and higher degrees to be able to stay here, particularly in areas like math and science and technology, where we know that right now we don't have enough engineers, we don't have enough computer scientists.

But that is not something that we can do aggressively through executive actions. That's something that's going to require legislation for us to do. And frankly, there's going to be a—I want to be very clear: There are a lot of foreign students who come here to study. The fact that they come here to study doesn't automatically qualify them for legal residence or U.S. citizen-

ship. And I don't foresee a circumstance where suddenly, anybody who is going to college here automatically is qualified for legal residence. There will be criteria in terms of who it is that is able to apply, get legal residence, get a work permit, and maybe ultimately go through citizenship. But that's going to be through a legal process of legal immigration. That's not going to be one that is resolved with respect to somebody who has been undocumented. Those are two different circumstances.

And part of what we can do through the comprehensive immigration bill is speed up our legal immigration system. A lot of people end up being forced through the undocumented pool because the legal process is so bogged down, so bureaucratic, so slow, oftentimes, the allocations of quotas from different countries are—don't reflect the modern world. And so one of the things that the Senate bill originally did was really change that in a smart way, and it would have speeded things up. That's why we still have to get this bill passed, and we're still going to have to put pressure on it.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Policy/President's Executive Actions on Immigration/International Students in the U.S.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. On a bigger question that, kind of, Boris brings up, to extrapolate his case, is some people wonder, well, are you focusing mostly on the undocumented population? And through Executive orders, could you not also include those that are here, that are participating already? Folks that came from Haiti, this horrible earthquake that hit 5 years, are you focused at all on that? I think—

The President. We are.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. —Boris's question is, can't you include them as well to streamline in some way?

The President. Here's the thing, I was always very clear about this, even when I made the first announcement about the executive actions. The reason I'm confident about our legal position in what we did with DACA, which was already in place since 2012, what we're now proposing in terms of expanding DACA, and

also for the parents of those who qualified for DACA—the reason I'm confident is that we could take those steps under my powers of prosecutorial discretion.

If in fact we were completely just rewriting the immigration laws, then actually, the other side would have a case, because we can't violate statutes. We can't violate laws that are already in place. What we can do is make choices to implement those laws. That's what we've done with DACA, and that's what we've proposed with the expansion of DACA and DAPA.

In order for us to do most of the work that Boris refers to in terms of expanding opportunities, for example, to say to any young person who has got an advanced degree in math and science and engineering, which we know we're going to need, even as we try to get more and more young Americans to go into those fields—in order for us to do that, we're going to need a congressional law to be passed. I don't have all the authorities that are necessary in order to get some of those things done.

Immigration Reform Efforts in the President's First Term

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I can't tell you the amount of questions that we've received, both on Telemundo and MSNBC, has really been extraordinary. And one I get a lot, over and over and over again, is a question, Mr. President, when you had absolute control of Congress, you really didn't fight for immigration. And then when you had the situation where you lost majorities, then you take action. Is there political implications behind something that affects so many people so close to their hearts?

The President. I don't know if anybody remembers, José, that when I took office and I had a majority, we had the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. The global economy was collapsing. The unemployment rate in the Latino community and the immigrant community had soared. People were losing homes and entire communities were being devastated. So it wasn't as if I was just sitting back, not doing anything. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. No one says you were sitting back not doing anything, but you did do the ACA, for example.

The President. We were moving very aggressively on a whole host of issues. And we moved as fast as we could, and we wanted immigration done. We pushed for immigration to be done. But ultimately, we could not get the votes to get it all done.

Now, this is one of the challenges of being President, is, there are crying needs everywhere. Even within the Latino communities, even within the immigrant communities, there are crying needs. I don't regret having done the ACA. I just described for you, there are millions of people who are not going to go bankrupt because they got sick, because we got that done. So if the question is, would I have loved to have gotten everything done in the first 2 years—absolutely, because then, for the next 6, I could have relaxed. [*Laughter*]

But what we do is, we choose to push——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Let me——

The President. ——as hard as we can on all fronts. Some things are politically easier. Some things are politically more difficult. Some things we're able to get done given the schedule in the Senate or in the House.

One of the biggest challenges that we've had on a lot of these issues was what's called the filibuster in the Senate. Even when we had a majority in the Senate, in order to get things passed, we had to get some Republican votes. And if it were not for that filibuster process where—by the way, it's not in the Constitution, but the habits in the Senate have gotten so bad where you've got to get 60 votes for everything. As a consequence of that, things like immigration reform, that if I had just needed a simple majority of Democrats we could have gotten done, we could not get done in those circumstances.

Immigration Reform Legislation

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And here's another social media question. Benson Owen from Houston says: "Why did Democrats and the GOP play political ping-pong with immigration when

millions of American families suffer as a result?" [*Applause*]

The President. José, wait, wait, wait. I appreciate the applause. Let me just say, that's just not true, the notion that Democrats and Republicans played political ping-pong.

Democrats have consistently stood on the side of comprehensive immigration reform. Democrats have provided strong majorities across the board for comprehensive immigration reform. And you do a disservice when you suggest that, ah, nobody was focused on this, because then you don't know who's fighting for you and who's fighting against you.

And the fact of the matter is that the Democratic Party consistently has, in its platforms, in its conventions, has taken a strong stand that we need to fix a broken immigration system. And the blockage has been very specific on one side.

Now, to their credit, there are Republicans, a handful, who have agreed with us. That's how we got it passed through the Senate. But let's not be confused about why we don't have comprehensive immigration reform right now. It's very simple: The Republican Speaker of the House, John Boehner, refused to call the bill. Had he called the bill, the overwhelming majority of Democrats and a handful of Republicans would have provided a majority in order to get that done.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, I want to kind of—as I look out to the many folks that are here, there are so many DREAMers here. Astrid Silva is here. She has a family member in the process of deportation. You actually highlighted her case when you mentioned your executive action. Erika Andiola is here, and she has a question that many DREAMers have as well.

The President's Executive Actions on Immigration

Q. Hi, Mr. President. I'm a DREAMer from Arizona, the State where Sheriff Arpaio and ICE usually criminalizes our communities. And my sister is here who actually qualifies for DACA extended or would have qualified if it was implemented. And my mom is also here.

She was, unfortunately, left out of your executive actions, and she doesn't have any citizen children; she only has DREAMers as children. And she is also in deportation proceedings. And because of a previous deportation that she did have and came back for us, she's actually a priority in your deportation directive.

And so my question to you is, what's going to happen to my family? Given the fact that immigration reform, it's not going to happen any time soon, and we know that because of the politics in Congress, what's going to happen in the meantime with my mom and my family if Immigration comes to my house once again?

The President. Well, let me just say, I don't know, obviously, the details of every specific case, and I'm happy to have somebody look at the case that you just referred to and what's going on with your mom and your sister. What we've done is, we've expanded my authorities under executive action and prosecutorial discretion as far as we can legally under the existing statute, the existing law. And so now the question is, how can we get a law passed?

Now, that's heartbreaking, because it means that not everybody is immediately helped. But the fact of the matter is that until that law is changed, what we have to do is to prioritize under the existing law. And what we then have to do is try to get this legal case resolved.

But look, this is something that I wrestle with every single day, and that is that there are laws on the books that I think are counterproductive. I think there are laws on the books that I don't think are right in terms of making sure that America is strong. But I have to deal with a Congress that—a big part of which disagrees with me. I've got to deal with judges who may not have been appointed by me and have a different reading of the law. And so what we have to do is just keep on working.

But the one thing that I have to just say to everybody here: Every major social movement, every bit of progress in this country—whether it's been the workers' rights movement or the civil rights movement or the women's rights movement—every single bit of that progress has required us to fight and to push. And you make progress, and then part—you don't get

everything right away, and then you push some more. And that's how the country continually gets better. Precisely because the stories of people like you, that then, hopefully, softens the hearts of people who right now are blocking us from solving some of these problems.

And that is going to be something that we just have to continue to work on. That's the nature of it.

Immigration Reform/Political Participation

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mr. President, a lot of people ask themselves—and this is Astrid's case, and Erika's as well—a lot of DREAMers think the same way: If you have executive actions and judges have to determine at the end if they are legal or not, how come you don't include the parents, the parents of the DREAMers? If the judge says, well, that's not legal, I find it not constitutional, so then you deal with it. But please include them.

The President. Because the theory of prosecutorial discretion is that you have limited resources, and because of that, you can't apply the law of enforcement to everybody. But if I include everybody, then it's no longer prosecutorial discretion, then I'm just ignoring the law. And as I said before, then there really would be a strong basis to overturn everything that we've done.

So that's why ultimately the law itself is going to have to be changed. In the meantime, what we have to do is make sure that we're continually fighting to uphold what we've already done. I mean, we've got 800,000 people who are currently taking advantage of DACA, including the young woman who just spoke, from what I understand. And now we've got to get more. But ultimately, in order to make sure that we don't have any heartbreaking stories with respect to immigration, we're going to have to fix the law.

There are only so many shortcuts. Ultimately, we have to change the law. And people have to remain focused on that. And the way that happens is, by the way, by voting. I mean, I just have to say, in the last election—and I want to speak particularly to young people here—in the last election, a little over one-third of eligible voters voted. One-third.

Two-thirds of the people who had the right to vote—because of the struggles of previous generations, had the right to vote—stayed home. I'm willing to bet that there are young people who have family members who are at risk of the existing immigration system who still didn't vote.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Mixed-status families. There are millions of them.

The President. Who still did not vote. And so my question, I think, to everybody, not just the immigrant community, but the country as a whole: Why are you staying at home? Why are you not participating? If you—there are war-torn countries, people full of poverty, who still vote at 60, 70 percent. If here in the United States of America, we voted at 60 percent, 70 percent, it would transform our politics. Our Congress would be completely different. We would have already passed comprehensive immigration reform. It would have already been done.

So I, as President, have the responsibility to set out a vision in terms of where we need to go. I have the responsibility to execute the laws faithfully, and that includes making sure that what's within my power, I am doing everything I can to make the immigration system smarter. But everybody here and everybody watching also has responsibilities. And one of those responsibilities is voting for people who advocate on behalf of the things that you care about.

And staying home is not an option. And being cynical is not an option. And just waiting for somebody else, whether it's the President or Congress or somebody—José—[laughter]—to get it done, that's not enough.

Immigration Reform/President's Accomplishments/Political Participation

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as fol-*

lows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. What happens, Mr. President, is some people see what's going on in Washington and they see that one party says something and the other party says something else, and they don't do what they say that they're going to be doing. Why am I—this is just a game.

The President. It's not a game. Wait, wait, wait—

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart continued in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. And that happens while people are being deported. Every day. More than 2 million people.

The President. José, let me tell you something. This is not a game.

[*Mr. Díaz-Balart spoke in English.*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. No, I agree with you. But I'm telling you why people feel cynical.

The President. But they shouldn't feel that way, because all kinds of changes happen when people vote. There are people who have health insurance right now because somebody went out there and voted. There are people right now who had their homes saved—otherwise, they would have lost them—because people voted. There are people right now who are going to college because we were able to expand student aid and Pell grant programs. That happened because people voted. All kinds of changes have taken place over the last 6 years that have made this country better because people voted.

Now, the fact that we didn't get a hundred percent of what we want—you never get a hundred percent of what you want. You have to go out there and fight for the rest.

And we've made enormous progress, but we have more to do. And that's what I intend on doing in the remaining 2 years that I've got as President.

Immigration Reform Legislation/Former Governor John E. "Jeb" Bush of Florida/2016 Presidential Election/Political Participation

[Mr. Díaz-Balart asked a question in Spanish, which was translated by an interpreter as follows. The translation could not be verified because no audio of the translation was available.]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. I am very happy that we are discussing this political topic, Mr. President, because one of the main contenders for the 2016 elections is a former Governor from this particular State, Jeb Bush. He said last week that you overstepped your authority, and as a consequence, you hurt the effort to find a solution to the immigration problem, and all the affected families deserve something better.

No matter who wins the White House after the next elections in 2016, what's your main concern? Knowing that you won't be able to fix before you leave in regards to immigration, when you leave office, what would be the message for the next President that will be living in the White House after the 2016 elections?

[Mr. Díaz-Balart spoke in English.]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. I can do this in English.

The President. No, no, no.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. You've got it?

The President. I've got the translation.

[Laughter]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. We're bilingual here. I'm bilingual.

The President. Well, let me make a couple of points. Number one, I haven't given up on passing it while I'm President. We're going to keep on pushing. And although, so far, the Republican Party has been pretty stubborn about this issue, if they start feeling enough pressure, that can make a difference. And so we just have to keep the pressure. Don't suddenly just let up, say, well, we've just got to wait for the

next 2 years or we've got to wait for a judge. We've got to keep on putting pressure on Members of Congress, Republican and Democrat.

If there are Democrats out there who aren't on board on comprehensive immigration reform—although that's not the—the vast majority of Democrats are on board—but if there are some who aren't, go talk to them. Push them. I'm not going to just stand still over the next 2 years. We're going to keep on trying to get something done. So that's point number one.

Point number two: I appreciate Mr. Bush being concerned about immigration reform. I would suggest that what he do is talk to the Speaker of the House and the members of his party. Because the fact of the matter is that even after we passed bipartisan legislation in the Senate, I gave the Republicans a year and a half—a year and a half—to just call the bill. We had the votes. They wouldn't do it. And then, the notion that, well, if you just hadn't taken these executive actions, if you hadn't done DACA, maybe we would have voted for it—well, that doesn't make any sense. That's an excuse.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. Yes, but they're saying—

The President. So that's an excuse. Now, let me get to the broader question that you asked, which is, what would I ask for the next President of the United States? One of the things I've learned in this position is that as the only office in which you are the President of all the people, not just some, you have to be thinking not just in terms of short-term politics, you have to be thinking about what's good for the country over the long term.

Now, over the long term, this is going to get solved, because at some point, there's going to be a President Rodriguez, or there's going to be a President Chin, or there's going to be a—the country is a nation of immigrants, and ultimately, it will reflect who we are, and its politics will reflect who we are. And that's not something to be afraid of. That's something to welcome. Because that's always been how we stay dynamic and stay cutting edge and have energy and we're youthful.

So what I would say to the next President is: Think ahead. Don't say something short term because you think it's politically convenient and then box yourself in where you can't do what's right for the country. Think long term.

And what I—what we know is, long term, if you pass a broad-based, thoughtful, comprehensive immigration reform that makes the legal system smoother, that invites talented young people to stay here and work and invest and start businesses; if we provide a pathway to citizenship for those who have been here a long time; if we strengthen our borders; if we make sure that we're saying to companies, don't take advantage of undocumented workers by not paying them overtime, not paying them minimum wage—if we do all those things, we know the deficit will go down, economic growth will go up. We know that we can then really concentrate our resources effectively on our national security.

Every economist who's looked at this says it's the right thing to do. The vast majority of businesses recognize it's the right thing to do. So think ahead. That's what I'd say to the next President of the United States.

And if you hear people during the course of the future campaigns, over the next several months and into next year, if all they're doing is demagoguing, if all they're saying is, "We have to do something about these illegal immigrants," but then, when you ask them, "Okay, what is it that you want to do?" then they don't have a good answer, or they pretend that we're going to somehow deport 11 million people, even though everybody knows that the economies of Miami, New York, Chicago, the entire Central Valley in California would collapse, so they're not being serious about it—if you hear people not being serious and not being honest about these issues, then you've got to call them on it.

But they'll ignore you if they don't think you're voting.

And so it doesn't do any good to push candidates, but not then back it up with action. And the action, ultimately, is going to be getting engaged and involved in the political process. The

people who are least likely to vote are young people. So, young people, you need to think ahead too. When we work on these issues, most of us—I'm going to include José——

Mr. Díaz-Balart. No, you can say it.

The President. ——in the category of being old.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. We're the same age. And I just look younger than you, but——

The President. He looks a little better because I don't dye my hair. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Díaz-Balart. I know.

The President. I'm messing with him.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. It's called the Obama.

The President. No, no, man, that's natural, that's natural. [*Laughter*]

But the fact is, is that we're going to be okay. The question is, what's happening for the next generation? You have to vote. You have to get involved now. Even if everything seems like it's okay for you now, you've got to be thinking about the future.

And that's part of what has always been the great strength of America—we dream about the future. That's what brings immigrants here, is we're future oriented, we're not past oriented. The people who are interested in looking backwards, they stay where they are. They're comfortable. They don't want change. Even if there's an earthquake in Haiti, they still stay where they are. Even if there's poverty where they live, they stay where they are. Even if their religious faith is being discriminated again, they stay where they are.

But if you come to America, it's because you believe in the future, and that has to be reflected in our politics.

Mr. Díaz-Balart. *Señor Presidente, gracias.*

The President. *Muchas gracias.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. at Florida International University. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew S. Hanen, judge, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas; Esther Alvarado, mother of U.S. Army veteran Eric Narvaez Alvarado; former President George H.W. Bush; Andrew S. Grove, cofounder and former chief executive officer, Intel; and Sergey M. Brin, cofounder and former

president, Google Inc. In his remarks, Mr. Díaz-Balart referred to Maria Arreola, mother of Dream Action Coalition Codirector Erika Andiola.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels February 25, 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 the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency declared on March 1, 1996, with respect to the Government of Cu-

ba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2015.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 25, 2015.

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

Remarks at an African American History Month Reception February 26, 2015

The President. All righty. Hello, everybody!
Audience members. Hello!

The President. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank Saheela for the wonderful introduction. In case you all did not hear properly—

The First Lady. You can say it again. Repeat it one more time.

The President. I'm just going to repeat this just so you understand.

The First Lady. All right, let's listen up.

The President. Saheela got into Harvard at 15.

The First Lady. Yes, she didn't mention that.

The President. I don't know what you all were doing at 15. [Laughter] Speaks four languages. The Arabic is like a major or minor, but has four of them. Is studying neurobiology. Was listed among the "World's 50 Smartest Teenagers." Now—Michelle is, like, "Mmm." [Laughter]

The First Lady. It is. It's just like, "Mmm, mmm, mmm."

The President. Let me just say, there are a lot of teenagers in the world. [Laughter]

The First Lady. Yes.

The President. So if you're, like, one of the 50 smartest ones, that's pretty smart. And she's a wonderful young lady. I mean, she's like the State Department and the National Institute of Health all rolled into one. [Laughter] And we are so proud of your accomplishments and all that lies ahead for you. And you reflect our history. Young people like this inspire our future.

And give a big round of applause to her mom who is here.

The First Lady. Right there.

The President. Mom is just filming the whole thing.

The First Lady. We see you! You're right there!

The President. We can't even see her because she's got her iPad in front of her.