

is a unified and prosperous Europe is because enormous sacrifices were made on behalf of ideals and on behalf of principles. And if those principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty start getting ignored, then that carries a cost for Europe and for the world.

Thank you very much. Thank you, 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 Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece; and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Federi-

ca Mogherini of Italy, in her capacity as European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and H.R. 2, the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015. Prime Minister Renzi referred to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker; Mario Draghi, President, European Central Bank; and U.N. Special Representative in Libya Bernardino León. A reporter referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Remarks on the Observance of National Poetry Month April 17, 2015

Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, first of all, let me thank Madeleine for the wonderful introduction. [Laughter] And Madeleine is going to be going to Princeton next year, so her and Michelle were exchanging how special they were, backstage. [Laughter] And you know, "President" is a cool title, but "former teen poet"—[laughter]—that is a pretty good title as well. And I'm proud to be both. I have to say my poems are not as good as yours, Madeleine. But I was going to recite some poetry, but Michelle said no. [Laughter] She said, don't do that. [Laughter] No.

Anyway, April is National Poetry Month. So Michelle and I figured what better way to celebrate than with some of America's brilliant young poets. And we've invited poetry fans of all ages to join us as well. And we have one of America's most gifted and accomplished poets, my dear friend, Elizabeth Alexander, who's going to share some of work with us. So I'm not going to speak long.

Poetry matters. Poetry—like all art—gives shape and texture and depth of meaning to our lives. It helps us know the world. It helps us understand ourselves. It helps us understand others: their struggles, their joys, the ways that they see the world. It helps us connect. In the beginning, there was the word. And I think it's fair to say that if we didn't have poetry, that

this would be a pretty barren world. In fact, it's not clear that we would survive without poetry. As Elizabeth once wrote, "We encounter each other in words, words spiny or smooth, whispered or declaimed, words to consider, reconsider." That's the power of poetry.

Sometimes, it's only after reading a poem or writing a poem that we understand something that we already went through, that we felt, that we experienced. And that's why we often reach for poetry in the big moments: when we fall in love or lose somebody close to us or leave behind one stage of life and enter into another. A good poem can make hard times a little easier to survive and make good times a lot sweeter.

But poetry does not just matter to us as individuals, it matters to us as a people. The greatness of a country is not just the size of its military or the size of its economy or how much territory it controls. It's also measured by the richness of its culture. And America is America in part because of our poets and our artists and our musicians, all those who have shared their ideas and their stories and helped make us the vibrant and passionate and beautiful country that we are today.

It's not every nation that produces poets like Elizabeth or like Madeleine. There are parts of the world where poets are censored or they are silenced. But that's not how we do it here. That's one of the many reasons why we're such

a special place. If you want to understand America, then you'd better read some Walt Whitman. [Laughter] If you want to understand America, you need to know Langston Hughes. Or it—otherwise, you're missing something fundamental about who we are.

And now, for the very special poet here today. I met Elizabeth when we were professors together at the University of Chicago. She and Michelle and I have been friends ever since. So when we were planning my first Inauguration, we decided we better have a poet, and we thought we should have a poet that we know and we love. And she penned this extraordinary poem called "Praise Song for the Day." You all should read it. On a day full of unforgettable moments, hearing Elizabeth read that poem was one of my favorite moments. And she has just written a amazing book that tech-

nically is not a poem, but is full of poetry, and I could not be prouder of her.

So congratulations to all the young poets. I look forward to reading your work or hearing your work. But right now I want to introduce Ms. Elizabeth Alexander.

[At this point, Elizabeth Alexander, Frederick Iseman Professor of Poetry at Yale University, made brief remarks followed by readings from her work. The First Lady then made concluding remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to 2014 National Student Poet honoree Madeleine LeCesne, student, Lusher Charter School in New Orleans, LA. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

The President's Weekly Address

April 18, 2015

Hi, everybody. Wednesday is Earth Day, a day to appreciate and protect this precious planet we call home. And today, there's no greater threat to our planet than climate change.

Two thousand fourteen was the planet's warmest year on record. Fourteen of the 15 hottest years on record have all fallen in the first 15 years of this century. This winter was cold in parts of our country—as some folks in Congress like to point out—but around the world, it was the warmest ever recorded.

And the fact that the climate is changing has very serious implications for the way we live now: stronger storms, deeper droughts, longer wildfire seasons. The world's top climate scientists are warning us that a changing climate already affects the air our kids breathe. Last week, the Surgeon General and I spoke with public experts about how climate change is already affecting patients across the country. The Pentagon says that climate change poses immediate risks to our national security.

And on Earth Day, I'm going to visit the Florida Everglades to talk about the way that

climate change threatens our economy. The Everglades is one of the most special places in our country, but it's also one of the most fragile. Rising sea levels are putting a national treasure and an economic engine for the South Florida tourism industry at risk.

So climate change can no longer be denied or ignored. The world is looking to the United States—to us—to lead. And that's what we're doing. We're using more clean energy than ever before. America is number one in wind power, and every 3 weeks, we bring online as much solar power as we did in all of 2008. We're taking steps to waste less energy, with more fuel-efficient cars that save us money at the pump and more energy-efficient buildings that save us money on our electricity bills.

So thanks in part to these actions, our carbon pollution has fallen by 10 percent since 2007, even as we've grown our economy and seen the longest streak of private-sector job growth on record. We've committed to doubling the pace at which we cut carbon pollution, and China has committed, for the first