

ken, I should have mentioned him. He stands out. [Laughter] And I just want to say how much I appreciate the outstanding efforts that have been made in both Chambers and by both parties. I hope that we can use this to build even more progress in the future, because we've got a lot more work to do. There's a lot of low-hanging fruit; this is the area where we can have the greatest environmental impact while making sure that we're creating good

jobs and saving businesses and consumers money. So it's a win-win, and I very much appreciate the strong efforts that were made by everybody behind me here today.

With that, I'm going to sign this legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:06 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. S. 535, approved April 30, was assigned Public Law No. 114-11.

Message to the Congress on the Recommendations of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission *April 30, 2015*

To the Congress of the United States:

My Administration fully supports the underlying objectives of the recommendations that the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (the "Commission") offered in January. These recommendations represent an important step forward in protecting the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, improving quality-of-life for service members and their families, and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the military compensation and retirement systems.

As I directed in my letter of March 30, my team has worked with the Commission to further analyze the recommendations and identify areas of agreement. At this time I am prepared to support specific proposals for 10 of the Commission's 15 recommendations, either as proposed or with modifications that have been discussed among the Department of Defense, other agencies, and the Commission. These include the following:

- Survivor Benefit Plan
- Financial Education
- Medical Personnel Readiness
- Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Collaboration
- Child Care
- Service Member Education

- Transition Assistance
- Nutritional Financial Assistance
- Dependent Space-Available Travel
- Report on Military Connected Dependents

In some instances, the Department of Defense is already taking actions to implement these recommendations, and I will direct the Department to develop plans to complete this implementation. In those areas where legislation is required, I expect the Secretary of Defense to transmit to the Congress on my behalf the relevant legislative proposals, which I recommend be enacted without delay.

With respect to the remaining recommendations, given their complexity and our solemn responsibility to ensure that any changes further the objectives above, we will continue working with the Commission to understand how the following proposals would affect the All-Volunteer Force:

- Blended Retirement System
- Reserve Component Duty Statuses
- Exceptional Family Member's Support
- Commissary and Exchange Consolidation

I believe there is merit in all of these recommendations and that they deserve careful

consideration and study. I will ensure that the Congress is kept apprised of this ongoing work.

Finally, I agree with the Commission that we need to continue to improve the military health care system. The health care reforms proposed in my Fiscal Year 2016 Budget are a good first step and offer service members, retirees, and their families more control and choice over their health care decisions. This remains a critical issue, and my Administration

will work with the Commission and interested Members of Congress in the coming months to develop additional reform proposals for consideration as part of my Fiscal Year 2017 Budget.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 30, 2015.

Remarks on World Press Freedom Day and an Exchange With Reporters *May 1, 2015*

Well, as many of you know, Sunday is World Press Freedom Day, a day in which we reaffirm the vital role that a free press plays in democracy and shining a light on the many challenges, cruelties, and also hopeful stories that exist in countries all around the world.

Journalists give all of us, as citizens, the chance to know the truth about our countries, ourselves, our governments. That makes us better. It makes us stronger. It gives voice to the voiceless, exposes injustice, and holds leaders like me accountable.

Unfortunately, in too many places around the world, a free press is under attack by governments that want to avoid the truth or mistrust the ability of citizens to make their own decisions. Journalists are harassed, sometimes even killed. Independent outlets are shut down. Dissent is silenced. And freedom of expression is stifled.

And that's why I really appreciated and valued the opportunity to hear from three journalists who have been incredibly courageous under some very, very difficult circumstances. All three are from countries that severely restrict the freedom of the press. All three have been detained or harassed in the past. All three have sought refuge here in the United States. And we welcome them so that they can continue their important work.

Just very briefly, I want to mention them. We have Fatima Tlisova, who is from Russia. She reported on military operations in the North Caucasus region, as well as disappearances and corruption. She was attacked, kid-

napped, tortured herself. Today, she reports for the Voice of America and most recently has spent time reporting on the Boston trials related to the Boston bombing. So we very much appreciate Fatima being here.

We also have Dieu Cay—that's his pen name—from Vietnam, a blogger who has written on human rights, including religious freedom, is a leading voice for greater press freedom in Vietnam. He spent 6 years in prison and was just released in October.

And finally, we have Lily Mengesha, is from Ethiopia. She helped to shine a light on the outrage of child brides. After her advocacy for a free press, she was harassed and detained. Today, she is with the National Endowment for Democracy.

So I heard firsthand, I think, from all of them the importance of all of us, including the United States Government, speaking out on behalf of the values of the freedom of the press. As I indicated to them, these are countries in which we are engaged and do a lot of business, and we think that engagement and diplomacy is absolutely critical to the national interest of the United States. But what's also important is that we speak out on behalf of the values that are enshrined in our Constitution and our Bill of Rights, because we believe those values are not simply American values, that certain core values like being able to express yourself and your conscience without danger is a human right, a universal right, and ultimately, makes the world better and stron-