

she's committed to working as a partner to leaders with both parties who want to pursue reform that continues the trend of a falling crime rate and a falling incarceration rate.

She understands the importance of protecting our national security while also securing our civil liberties. That's why she will safeguard the programs that are critical to protecting American lives and Americans' privacy. I see our FBI Director, Jim Comey, who's here, and I know he's committed to doing the same thing.

She lives out the words of one of our greatest Attorney Generals, Robert F. Kennedy: "The glory of justice and the majesty of the law are created not just by the Constitution, nor by the courts, nor by the officers of the law, nor by the lawyers, but by the men and women who constitute our society—who are protectors of the law as they are themselves protected by the law."

That's always been the story of our Nation. Our strength does not come from the words we've written on the page or the laws we've put down on the books. It comes from ordinary cit-

izens, generation after generation, who do their part to uphold our founding ideals. It comes from an unshakable faith in our ability to stand up for what is right and to admit where we've fallen short and then choose a better way forward.

That was the cause to which Loretta dedicated her life long before she became America's top law enforcement officer. Today, the American people can have no greater advocate for their right to equality under the law, no greater partner in securing justice for all than our Attorney General, Loretta Lynch.

[At this point, Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia M. Sotomayor administered the oath of office. Attorney General Lynch then made remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. at the Warner Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to Lorine Lynch, mother of Attorney General Lynch. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Lynch.

Statement on the Observance of Ramadan

June 17, 2015

As the new crescent Moon brings in the holy month of Ramadan, Michelle and I send our warmest greetings to all those observing the month of fasting in the United States and around the world. Ramadan is a time in which families and communities come together for iftars and prayers in festive gatherings that demonstrate the rich and diverse traditions of Muslim societies and cultures.

It is also a deeply spiritual time of reflection and renewal meant to increase thankfulness and consciousness of God's mercy. Muslims honor each day of Ramadan as a day of patient endurance through fasting, and each night as a night of gratitude through prayers. It is a time to reinforce faith, compassion and forgiveness, and perseverance through adver-

sity. In this month of giving, Muslims around the globe reach out to assist those afflicted by conflict, hunger, poverty, and disease. And here in the United States, American Muslims join their fellow citizens to serve the less fortunate, hosting interfaith activities that build understanding and remind us that we stand together as one American family. The diversity and patriotism of America's religious communities give strength to all of us, and our freedom to worship reminds us of the values we share.

I once again look forward to welcoming American Muslims to the White House for our annual White House iftar dinner to honor the month of Ramadan and recognize the service of American Muslims from across the country. From my family to yours, *Ramadan Kareem*.

Remarks at the Congressional Picnic June 17, 2015

[As the President approached the podium, he pointed to the Presidential seal.]

The President. That's right. It's the one with the sign on it there. [Laughter]

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. How is everybody doing today? Well, I want to welcome everybody to the South Lawn. And usually, it's broiling hot when we have our congressional picnic, so this is one of those days where we actually welcome a little cloud cover.

I'm going to be very brief because I want to shake as many hands as I can, although I want to warn in advance, I can't do a selfie with everybody. [Laughter]

Audience member. How about a kiss?

The President. A kiss I can give you. [Laughter]

The—my main message is, as is always true at this wonderful event, is just to say thank you. America faces enormous challenges. We face the challenge of making sure that the economy works for everybody and everybody has opportunity. We have international challenges from terrorism to climate change. But the thing that always gives me confidence that we're going to meet these challenges is because the American people are good and they are decent, and we've got a democracy that, as frustrating and messy as it can be sometimes, still represents the best hope for freedom and prosperity for any society.

And we are the longest continuous democracy on Earth. We have set the model and the tone for people around the world who aspire to the values that we cherish so dearly. There's a reason why, from every corner of the globe, striving, hopeful, talented people still want to come to the United States of America. And our job, together—mine as President and those of you who are serving in Congress—is to make

sure that we are true to that commitment and true to those values.

And obviously, democracy can be contentious. There are times where people have deep, principled disagreements. But I hope that events like today remind us that ultimately, we're all on the same team, and that's the American team.

I also want to say thank you to the families, because there is enormous burdens that are placed on the spouses and the children of those who serve in Congress. I know—and Michelle knows really well—the nature of those burdens. And for you to sacrifice in your own ways is the only way that we are able to serve. And so we are very, very grateful for your support and your sacrifice.

And for the members of the staffs who are here, we want to say thank you as well, because you make us look good. And you have all the sacrifices, but you don't always get the attention. And we know that you work really, really hard to make this possible as well. So we are grateful to you.

So I want everybody to have fun. Eat up. And I do want to also say how wildly impressed I was at the quality of baseball when I went out to Nat Stadium the other day. You guys actually looked like you knew what you were doing! [Laughter] Flake, I saw you, man, at bat. You were all right. [Laughter]

So enjoy. Thank you. God bless you guys. Thank you. Oh, and can everybody please give it up for our outstanding Marine Band? They're the best. They can play anything!

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:37 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Jeffrey L. Flake.

Remarks on the Shooting in Charleston, South Carolina

June 18, 2015

Good afternoon, everybody. This morning I spoke with, and Vice President Biden spoke with, Mayor Joe Riley and other leaders of Charleston to express our deep sorrow over the senseless murders that took place last night.

Michelle and I know several members of Emanuel AME Church. We knew their pastor, Reverend Clementa Pinckney, who, along with eight others, gathered in prayer and fellowship and was murdered last night. And to say our thoughts and prayers are with them and their families and their community doesn't say enough to convey the heartache and the sadness and the anger that we feel.

Any death of this sort is a tragedy. Any shooting involving multiple victims is a tragedy. There is something particularly heartbreaking about the death happening in a place in which we seek solace and we seek peace, in a place of worship.

And Mother Emanuel is, in fact, more than a church. This is a place of worship that was founded by African Americans seeking liberty. This is a church that was burned to the ground because its worshippers—worshippers worked to end slavery. When there were laws banning all-Black church gatherings, they conducted services in secret. When there was a nonviolent movement to bring our country closer in line with our highest ideals, some of our brightest leaders spoke and led marches from this church's steps. This is a sacred place in the history of Charleston and in the history of America.

The FBI is now on the scene with local police, and more of the Bureau's best are on the way to join them. The Attorney General has announced plans for the FBI to open a hate crime investigation. We understand that the suspect is in custody. And I'll let the best of law enforcement do its work to make sure that justice is served.

Until the investigation is complete, I'm necessarily constrained in terms of talking about the details of the case. But I don't need to be constrained about the emotions that tragedies

like this raise. I've had to make statements like this too many times. Communities like this have had to endure tragedies like this too many times. We don't have all the facts, but we do know that, once again, innocent people were killed in part because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hands on a gun.

Now is the time for mourning and for healing. But let's be clear: At some point, we as a country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries. It doesn't happen in other places with this kind of frequency. And it is in our power to do something about it. I say that recognizing the politics in this town foreclose a lot of those avenues right now. But it would be wrong for us not to acknowledge it. And at some point, it's going to be important for the American people to come to grips with it and for us to be able to shift how we think about the issue of gun violence collectively.

The fact that this took place in a Black church obviously also raises questions about a dark part of our history. This is not the first time that Black churches have been attacked. And we know that hatred across races and faiths pose a particular threat to our democracy and our ideals.

The good news is, I am confident that the outpouring of unity and strength and fellowship and love across Charleston today from all races, from all faiths, from all places of worship indicates the degree to which those old vestiges of hatred can be overcome. That certainly was Dr. King's hope just over 50 years ago, after four little girls were killed in a bombing in a Black church in Birmingham, Alabama.

He said, "They lived meaningful lives," and "they died nobly." "They say to each of us," Dr. King said, "Black and White alike, that we must substitute courage for caution. They say to us that we must be concerned not merely with [about]^o who murdered them, but about the

^o White House correction.

system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murderers. Their death says to us that we must work passionately and unrelentingly for the realization of the American Dream. . . . And if one will hold on, he will discover that God walks with him, and that God is able to lift you from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope, and transform dark and desolate valleys into sunlit paths of inner peace.”

Reverend Pinckney and his congregation understood that spirit. Their Christian faith compelled them to reach out not just to members of their congregation or to members of their own communities, but to all in need. They opened their doors to strangers who might enter a church in search of healing or redemption.

Mother Emanuel church and its congregation have risen before—from flames, from an earthquake, from other dark times—to give hope to generations of Charlestonians. And with our prayers and our love, and the buoyancy of hope, it will rise again now as a place of peace.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to South Carolina State Sen. Clementa C. Pinckney, who was killed in the June 17 shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC; Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the shooting; and Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Beverly Hills, California

June 18, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello! Hello, hello! Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. I’m going to see a whole bunch of you and take pictures in a second. [*Laughter*]

First of all, I just want to say that Tyler has got a lot of responsibilities, but I think one of the responsibilities we’re going to add is to have him travel with me and introduce me everywhere I go. [*Laughter*] You know, he’s got that nice voice and that soothing, authoritative manner, and I’m thinking that this will really work. [*Laughter*] So we’ll work around your schedule. But thank you so much, Tyler, for your friendship and your grace and everything that you’ve done for so many people and being such a good role model for so many folks coming up.

Tyler’s story is a singular story, but it’s also a vindication of what’s possible in America. And this idea sometimes that at times is betrayed, that at times we lose sight of, but this basic tenet that if you work hard and are serious about your responsibilities, that no matter where you start, no matter what you look

like, where you come from, you can make it in America—I can’t imagine anybody embodying that better than Mr. Tyler Perry. So we’re really proud of him, really proud of him.

Plus, his baby is so cute! [*Laughter*] I was holding that baby and saying, my, my, my. [*Laughter*] That’s a cute baby. Now, everybody’s baby is somewhat cute. [*Laughter*] But objectively speaking, this is a really cute baby. So—got a cute mama—[*laughter*—which make for—I know about that because I employed the same strategy, to improve your gene pool. [*Laughter*] But what a blessing.

And we were talking about how I remember holding Malia and Sasha like that and them drooling on my lapel. Oh, it’s okay. Nobody noticed. There wasn’t any milk in it, so—[*laughter*]. And then they’re 17, and they still love you, but don’t find you that interesting. [*Laughter*] But that’s part of the process.

Obviously, this is a challenging day for the country and for me and for the people of Charleston. I spoke earlier today and don’t

want to repeat myself, but the folks in that historic church were people I know. And Tyler talked about how he grew up in an AME church, so he knows what Wednesday Bible study is all about. He's been one of those 9 or 10 or 15 people studying Scripture and having fellowship and welcoming people and inviting them in to spread the Good News.

And to see such a horrific event unfold like that is particularly shocking. And it's a reminder that we've got a lot of work to do.

Tyler is right: When I came into office, we were going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We were still in the midst of two wars. And I could not be prouder of the work that we have steadily done over the last 6½ years to pull us out of that hole.

By almost every economic measure, Americans are better off today than they were when I came into office. The unemployment rate has gone from 10 percent to 5.5 percent. People who had lost their savings in 401(k)s have seen them not just restored, but exceeding where they were. The auto industry, which was flatlining with the potential loss of a million jobs, now is thriving, even stronger than it was before the crisis. Housing has begun to recover.

We produce more energy than ever before. We doubled the production of clean energy—wind power 3 times as much as when I came into office, solar 10 times as much—and as a consequence, we've actually been able to reduce our carbon emissions that cause climate change more than any other nation on Earth.

High school graduations are up. College attendance is up. Reading scores are up. Sixteen million people have health insurance that didn't have it before. The uninsured rate has never been lower in America.

We've done all this and cut the deficit by two-thirds. And so there's almost no measure by which one could argue that we have not made significant progress over these last 6½ years. But we've got so much work to do. There's so much that's left undone. We still live in a country in which the idea of equal opportunity is not felt, is not experienced, is not lived for too many young people. Too many in our middle class

have seen their incomes and wages flatline even as their expenses go up. Too many young people are still priced out of college, and if they do go to college, are burdened with extraordinary debt.

[At this point, a baby screamed.]

Yes! [Laughter] I think your folks are going to be able to pay for your college, but there are a lot of people who won't—[applause]. Worried about it.

Too many of our young people see the path to prison much more clearly than they do the path to a college education. Too many of our kids still go hungry in this country.

I was looking at some statistics, because we're looking at policies around hunger and the SNAP program, and the performance of children in lower-income communities in school dips at the end of the month in a statistically significant way, in part because they start getting hungry as their food stamps for their family start running out which then affects how they perform in school.

There's so much to do to grow this economy in a way that's broad based. We could be investing in roads and bridges and airports and a new electric grid and put people to work right now and lay the foundation for growth for years to come. We should be investing more money in research and development to cure diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

We should be reforming our criminal justice system in such a way that we are not incarcerating nonviolent offenders in ways that renders them incapable of getting a job after they leave office—or after—[laughter]—little slip of the tongue there. [Laughter] Little Freudian slip. [Laughter] Tyler is going to give me a job once I leave. [Laughter] It is true—I think it was Bill Clinton who said—the White House is the crown jewel of the Federal penitentiary system. [Laughter]

And here's the thing. Here's the thing. On all these issues, we actually know what the solutions are. The problem is not the absence of proven strategies to increase opportunity. We know early childhood education works; that if it's well designed and you've got teachers who

have been trained in early childhood development and you take low-income kids and you give them those opportunities, we know that they are going to perform better in school, that they're more likely to read at grade level when they enter into third grade, which means that they're less likely to drop out, which means they're less likely to get into the criminal justice system, which means they're more likely to graduate and attend college, which means they are more likely to get a job, which means that they are more likely to be productive, taxpaying citizens. We know that. We know that a dollar we invest in that, we get \$7 back.

We know that infrastructure spurs on economic development and that our future depends on how we invest in research to keep at the cutting edge of technology in this knowledge-based economy. We know it.

We know immigration reform would not only bring millions of people out of the shadows that we could not practically or in good conscience deport and that they would then make contributions, they would pay taxes, it would actually reduce the deficit, increase entrepreneurship. We know that. It's one of our strengths as a country.

We know that our kids have to be able to afford a college education and that those States and cities and communities where they've got a well-educated workforce, that's where companies want to move to.

The problem is not that we don't know what works. The problem is, is that too often the political system doesn't reflect the common sense and decency of the American people.

I got a letter a while back from a gentleman living in Colorado and clearly an intelligent guy, and he had taken a lot of time to write this letter. And he said, you know, I voted for you twice, but I'm feeling disillusioned. And the good news—I get 10 letters a day out of the 40,000, and I read those 10 each night. And I've given strict instructions to the Correspondence Office, I do not just want the nice letters, and they have followed my instructions. [Laughter] And I get letters, people say, you are an idiot—[laughter]—and here's what you didn't do, and here's the program that is terri-

ble, and all kinds of stuff. But this gentleman, he said, I voted for you twice, but I'm deeply disappointed. And it went on and on, chronicling all the things that hadn't gotten done.

And most of what he said I responded to, I think, pretty effectively—[laughter]—because he seemed to have forgotten everything that had happened and how he had benefited. But the core, I think, of his concern, the core of his complaint was that he thought that when I got to Washington I could bring people together and make them work more effectively. And the fact of the matter is, is that Washington is still gridlocked and still seems obsessed with the short term and the next election instead of the next generation.

And on that issue, I had to tell him, you're right. I am frustrated, and you have every right to be frustrated, because Congress doesn't work the way it should. Issues are left unattended. Folks are more interested in scoring political points than getting things done, not because any individual Member of Congress is a bad person—there are a lot of good, well-meaning, hard-working people out there—but because the incentives that have been built into the system reward short term, reward a polarized politics, reward being simplistic instead of being true, reward division.

And as mightily as I have struggled against that, I told him, you're right. It still is broken. But I reminded him that when I ran in 2008, I, in fact, did not say I would fix it; I said we could fix it. I didn't say, yes, I can; I said—what?

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can. And so I said to him, if in fact you are dissatisfied, then writing a letter to me is nice, but I need you. If you're dissatisfied that every few months we have a mass shooting in this country, killing innocent people, then I need you to mobilize and organize a constituency that says this is not normal and we are going to change it and put pressure to elect people who insist on that change.

If you're concerned about racial polarization in this country, it's nice to have dialogues around race, but me making a good speech—and I've made some good speeches on the

subject—[laughter]—that’s not going to solve the problem. What are you doing to reach out in your own community to make sure that that child who does not look like your child has the same opportunities that your child does? How are you voting when a referendum comes up about an early childhood education program? A program to encourage college attendance? What kind of mentorship are you involved with?

If you don’t think that we’ve done enough to deal with climate change, what are you willing to give up to make sure that we have a breathable, functioning planet for our children and our grandchildren?

Sometimes, I feel like people forgot the essence of my pledge when I ran for President. What I promised—I said to people, I said, I am not a perfect man, I will not be a perfect President, but I promise you I will wake up every single day and I will go to bed every single night thinking about how to make sure that ordinary Americans have a chance. And I will fight as hard as I can, and I’ll be as honest and straightforward as I can about what I believe can open up the doors of opportunity to everybody. That pledge I’ve kept.

But what I also said was that the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And that’s true for the President of the United States, but that will be just as true for me when I leave this office. And it’s true for all of you.

And I raise this because you being part of this even is, part of the process of breaking out of what is a comfortable cynicism that we too often fall back on, and we just say, oh, that place, Washington, doesn’t work, and everybody is dysfunctional, or that side of the aisle is crazy. And then we just throw up our hands and give up. We can’t afford that, because we’ve got more work to do.

So part of what I hope you leave here with is not just a cool picture with me—[laughter]—because I look out in the crowd, a lot of you already have pictures with me. [Laughter] But I

hope what you leave with is that sense that the unfinished business we’ve got does not just depend on me, does not just depend on the next President we elect, does not just depend on any particular Member of Congress. It depends on you.

And in these final 18 months, one of my biggest messages is that if we want the change we believe in, then we’re going to have to work harder than ever in our own communities and in our own places of worship and in our own workplaces and reflect those values and ideals and then push this society and ultimately push Congress in the direction of change.

The good news is, we can do it. When I stood at the Edmund Pettus Bridge with John Lewis to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the march there, I reminded people of the fact that change is never easy. It takes decades of work sometimes just to make a little bit of progress. Sometimes, it takes a century to make a little bit of progress. But because somebody took on that work, successive generations took on that work, America is better than it was.

And so now we receive the baton and we run our race, and then we’ve got to hand it off to that beautiful baby of Tyler’s and that beautiful baby right behind Tyler right now. And if we keep that faith and fight off cynicism, then 20 years from now, 50 years from now, 100 years from now, people are going to say, okay, they ran the good race, and we’re further along, and America is better and more just, and opportunity is more real for more people. And that’s why we do what we do. That’s the only reason to do it.

Thank you for being part of that process. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:31 p.m. at the residence of Tyler Perry. In his remarks, he referred to Gelila Bekele, girlfriend of Mr. Perry, and their son Aman T. Bekele-Perry. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Pope Francis's Encyclical on Climate Change

June 18, 2015

I welcome His Holiness Pope Francis's encyclical and deeply admire the Pope's decision to make the case—clearly, powerfully, and with the full moral authority of his position—for action on global climate change.

As Pope Francis so eloquently stated this morning, we have a profound responsibility to protect our children and our children's children from the damaging impacts of climate change. I believe the United States must be a leader in this effort, which is why I am committed to taking bold actions at home and abroad to cut carbon pollution, to increase clean energy and energy efficiency, to build resilience in

vulnerable communities, and to encourage responsible stewardship of our natural resources. We must also protect the world's poor, who have done the least to contribute to this looming crisis and stand to lose the most if we fail to avert it.

I look forward to discussing these issues with Pope Francis when he visits the White House in September. And as we prepare for global climate negotiations in Paris this December, it is my hope that all world leaders—and all God's children—will reflect on Pope Francis's call to come together to care for our common home.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors in San Francisco, California

June 19, 2015

The President. Thank you, mayors! Thank you so much. I love being with mayors. [Laughter] It is great to be here, although I did worry a little bit that Dennis Johnson would introduce me again. At the White House, he had the old Bulls theme song, and it set a very high bar, as if I was Michael Jordan coming out. [Laughter] And he is a great friend, and I very much appreciate him, as I do so many of the mayors here. I saw a lot of you in Washington in January. I thought, I had such a good time, let's meet this summer as well. And this time, I thought I'd come to you.

I want to thank our host, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee. He was just in the White House for the San Francisco Giants' championship visit. I know how excited the Bay Area is over the Golden State Warriors' championship.

I want to thank two outstanding public servants, Governor Jerry Brown and Leader Nancy Pelosi, who are here with us today. And I want to thank this year's leaders of the Conference of Mayors: Kevin Johnson, Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett.

I also want to mention a few outstanding mayors who are getting ready to step down: Michael Nutter of Philadelphia has done outstanding work; Greg Ballard of Indianapolis, an outstanding mayor, doing great work with "My Brother's Keeper"—thank you; Annise Parker of Houston, I love Annise; and my dear, old friend, Michael Coleman of Columbus, Ohio.

And finally, a great mayor, one of my favorite people, and I know one of the people all of you admire so much, a great mayor, Joe Riley of Charleston. Joe is back home doing one of a mayor's sadder, more important duties today.

Obviously, the entire country has been shocked and heartbroken by what happened in Charleston. The nature of this attack—in a place of worship, where congregants invite in a stranger to worship with them, only to be gunned down—adds to the pain. The apparent motivations of the shooter remind us that racism remains a blight that we have to combat together. We have made great progress, but we have to be vigilant because it still lingers. And when it's poisoning the minds of young people, it betrays our ideals and tears our democracy apart.

But as much as we grieve this particular tragedy, I think it's important, as I mentioned at the White House, to step back and recognize, these tragedies have become far too commonplace.

Few people understand the terrible toll of gun violence like mayors do. And whether it's a mass shooting like the one in Charleston or individual attacks of violence that add up over time, it tears at the fabric of a community. It costs you money, and it costs resources. It costs this country dearly.

More than 11,000 Americans were killed by gun violence in 2013 alone—11,000. If Congress had passed some commonsense gun safety reforms after Newtown, after a group of children had been gunned down in their own classroom, reforms that 90 percent of the American people supported, we wouldn't have prevented every act of violence, or even most. We don't know if it would have prevented what happened in Charleston. No reform can guarantee the elimination of violence. But we might still have some more Americans with us. We might have stopped one shooter. Some families might still be whole. You all might have to attend fewer funerals.

And we should be strong enough to acknowledge this. At the very least, we should be able to talk about this issue as citizens, without demonizing all gun owners who are overwhelmingly law abiding, but also without suggesting that any debate about this involves a wild-eyed plot to take everybody's guns away.

I know today's politics makes it less likely that we see any sort of serious gun safety legislation. I remarked that it was very unlikely that this Congress would act. And some reporters, I think, took this as resignation. I want to be clear: I am not resigned. I have faith we will eventually do the right thing. I was simply making the point that we have to move public opinion. We have to feel a sense of urgency.

Ultimately, Congress will follow the people. And we have to stop being confused about this. At some point, as a country, we have to reckon with what happens. It is not good enough simply to show sympathy.

You don't see murder on this kind of scale, with this kind of frequency, in any other advanced nation on Earth. Every country has violent, hateful, or mentally unstable people. What's different is, not every country is awash with easily accessible guns. And so I refuse to act as if this is the new normal or to pretend that it's simply sufficient to grieve and that any mention of us doing something to stop it is somehow politicizing the problem.

We need a change in attitudes among everybody: lawful gun owners, those who are unfamiliar with guns. We have to have a conversation about it and fix this.

And ultimately, Congress acts when the public insists on action. And we've seen how public opinion can change. We've seen it change on gay marriage. We've seen it beginning to change on climate change. We've got to shift how we think about this issue. And we have the capacity to change, but we have to feel a sense of urgency about it. We, as a people, have got to change. That's how we honor those families. That's how we honor the families in Newtown. That's how we honor the families in Aurora.

Now, the first time I spoke at this conference, in 2008, I said that American cities shouldn't be succeeding despite Washington, they should be succeeding with some help from Washington. And as President, I've made it a priority to partner with mayors like you. That's why I've named three former mayors to my Cabinet. That's why I asked a former president of this conference, Jerry Abramson, to be one of my top advisers. That's why my staff and I work with mayors across the country just about every day, on just about every issue under the sun, from school reform to community policing, from business development to veterans homelessness.

Because mayors have to get the job done. If you're a mayor, it's not sufficient to just blather on. [*Laughter*] You actually have to do something. [*Laughter*] It's not enough to figure out how do I position myself on a particular issue to minimize the possibility that I might get in trouble or criticized, because people expect you to trim the trees and pave the roads and

pick up the garbage and educate our kids and police our streets.

Whatever the problem, large or small, you got to do everything you can to solve it. You don't let partisanship stop you. You don't let cynicism stop you. You're always in the hunt for good ideas, no matter where they come from.

And I'm going to embarrass Jerry for a second. He took his wife to Paris a few years after they got married. And she took in all the splendor of the Champs-Élysées. And he took photos of garbage cans. [*Laughter*] That's a mayor for you. [*Laughter*] So she teased him about it. She said, there's the Eiffel Tower. There's the Seine. And he said, "Those are some beautiful garbage cans!" [*Laughter*] And soon enough, downtown Louisville had garbage cans that looked a lot like the Parisian garbage cans. [*Laughter*]

That's a mayor, right there! [*Laughter*] Somebody who's always thinking about how to make his or her city better—even on vacation in Paris—[*laughter*—and stops at nothing to get it done.

Now, as President, I'm constantly thinking about how we, together, can keep growing the economy and growing new pathways of opportunity for the American people to get ahead. And across the country, the good news is, we're making progress. And you're seeing it in your cities. More than 12 million new private sector jobs in the past 5 years; more than 16 million Americans who have gained health insurance; more jobs creating more clean energy. Here in California, solar is growing crazy. We're producing 10 times as much solar power today as we did when I came into office—10 times; 3 times as much wind power, double the amount of clean energy. More kids graduating from high school and college than ever before.

I'm proud of that record. And by the way, we've done it while reducing the deficit by two-thirds. You don't hear that that much, but let me just point that out. And I'm proud of it particularly when it's so hard to get anything through Congress, even when we're talking about issues that most Americans outside of Washington agree on.

But that's also why we've partnered with many of you over the past couple of years: to make real progress on the economic priorities that matter to middle class Americans. We're working with many of you to help working families make ends meet and feel more secure in a changing economy. So far, 19 cities have enacted paid sick leave—sick days; 5 States enacted paid sick days or paid family leave. Oregon is set to join them soon. Seventeen States have raised their minimum wage; 27 cities and counties have taken action to raise the wage as well.

We're working with many of you to help working families earn higher wages down the road with skills and education they need. Seattle, a city with a Democratic mayor, Ed Murray, just passed universal pre-K. Indianapolis, a city with a Republican mayor, Greg Ballard, is starting citywide preschool scholarships. Thirty-four States have increased funding for preschool as well, which means even more young people getting the early enrichment that can pay off over a lifetime.

Three months ago, I launched an initiative called TechHire to help train workers for the high-skill, high-wage jobs of tomorrow. Twenty-one communities have signed up for TechHire so far, and we're looking to double that number. So if your town has tech jobs that need filling, the people who want to fill them, come join us.

We're working with many of you to generate more high-wage jobs for our workers to fill. Eleven cities have joined a new initiative called Startup in a Day to help entrepreneurs apply for all the licenses and permits they need to start a business in just one day. Cut the redtape.

We're working with cities to create a network of high-tech manufacturing hubs to keep America at the forefront of innovation. The first hub in Youngstown, Ohio, is doing cutting-edge research in 3-D printing and has already attracted tens of millions of dollars in investment to the region.

So we're creating jobs, we're training folks for jobs. We're also working with many of you to make our streets safer and our communities

stronger. More than 230 local and tribal leaders have joined the “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative and are taking meaningful steps to change the odds for young people in tough circumstances. Together, you’re working to curb juvenile arrests, reduce absenteeism, and you’re helping these kids imagine a bigger future for themselves.

Today, at the Lawrence Livermore National Lab just down the road, more than a hundred students from Oakland and San Francisco are participating in the first “MBK Day at the Lab,” where they can learn about STEM careers.

And meanwhile, from police holding impromptu town hall meetings in barbershops in Charlotte to Boston Police Academy improving how it trains cops to deal with young people on the job, cities like yours are striving to rebuild trust between law enforcement and communities, making sure police have the resources they need to do their job and making sure that every police officer who has an incredibly tough job is trained in making the kinds of connections with communities that engender trust and ensure that everybody is treated equally under the law, which makes for smart law enforcement and vindicates our values.

So these are just a few of the examples of the work that’s being done. And I’d name every single way that we’re working together to open new doors of opportunity for the American people, but we’d be here all day. So here is the bottom line. On America’s most important economic priorities—from supporting working families to improving education, to creating good new jobs, to getting people to those new jobs, to improving affordable housing, to dealing with homelessness—cities are not standing still. You are moving forward.

So I want to say two things to you. Number one, thank you. Thank you for your leadership and your vision. And I particularly want to thank you because more than just about any other office in the land, those who occupy the office of mayor are approaching it in a practical way. Democrats aren’t clinging to dogmas and are partnering with businesses anywhere they can. And Republicans aren’t clinging to their

dogmas; they’re recognizing that government has a role to play in helping make for a vibrant city and expanding opportunity.

And that commonsense, problem-solving, can-do attitude, that’s what the American people are looking for. That’s what they need. So I want to say thank you to all of you. You’re setting a good example.

Now, second, I also want to say, don’t stop now, because we’ve still got a lot more work to do. We’ve got to keep pushing to grow our economy so that more Americans who work hard feel like their hard work is paying off, which is why I’m working with Congress to pass new 21st-century trade agreements with higher standards and tougher protections than past agreements. And I appreciate the help of many of the mayors here to get that done, because you know it’s important to your cities. I believe it’s the right thing to do for American workers and families, or I would not be doing it. I want to thank all of you who helped me make that case: that this matters to your cities.

We’ve got to keep pushing to put people to work rebuilding our infrastructure. There’s not a mayor here who can’t reel off 10 infrastructure projects right now that you’d love to get funding for and that would put people to work right away and improve your competitiveness and help businesses move their products and help people get to their jobs. We can keep paying the costs of patching over our existing infrastructure: more expensive, less efficient, leading to higher commute times, more waste. That’s an option. Or we can create tens of thousands of jobs right now building a 21st-century infrastructure that makes us competitive well into the 21st century. That’s what we need to do. We’ve just got to convince Congress to make it happen. And I need mayors to help, from all across the country. Put some pressure on Congress to get this done.

We’ve got to keep pushing to prepare for the impacts of climate change, because it’s science. It’s a fact. It’s like gravity. [Laughter] I—

Audience member. Yes, it is.

The President. It is!

A lot of cities have gone far ahead on this issue, along with States. You’re making a

difference right now. You're not waiting for Congress. Mayor Roy Buol is here from Dubuque, Iowa. They've set a target to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent from 2003 levels by the end of the next decade. Just met with Governor Jerry Brown. He's talking about how California, which so often has been a leader on environmental issues, is looking to partner and make a difference internationally.

Today my administration proposed new fuel standards for buses and tractor trailers and other heavy-duty vehicles, another important step towards reducing harmful carbon pollution and protecting our planet.

But a lot of this does come down to Congress. I know many of you are worried about Congress cutting programs that are important to your city's economic growth. But the battle we should be having with Congress isn't just about individual programs. It's about the foolish, self-destructive cuts that in Washington are known as the sequester, because with the sequester, the whole pie is smaller, so protecting one program means cutting another one.

That's why you're facing cuts that don't make any sense to things like TIGER grants, which are—you all know are so important to putting our people to work rebuilding our infrastructure. That's the reason why it's so hard for us to get the funding we need to get homeless assistance grants, which help some of our most vulnerable neighbors and get them off the streets. That's why it's been so difficult to fund the preschool development grants, which help educate our children, which we know if we make that investment will pay off for your cities, your States, and for our country.

I've been clear: I will not sign bills at sequestration levels. I will not sign bills that seek to increase defense spending before addressing any of our needs here at home.

And I need your help. I need your help, Mayors, to talk to your Members of Congress to get rid of the sequester once and for all, because it is harming our cities and harming our country. There is no business—no successful business—that if it needed to reduce spending, would simply lop off 10 percent of everything

or 15 percent of everything. That's not how any of us would run our household budget. You'd cut out things you don't need, but you'd still keep the college fund going. You'd still pay your health insurance bill and your mortgage note. There are things we have to do as a country to stay ahead.

Once again, mayors understand that if there's a conflict between ideology and reality, you should opt for reality. Don't—[laughter]—reality is a stubborn thing: facts, evidence, reason. [Laughter]

So thanks for your partnership. I want you to know that as long as I'm in the White House, I've got your back. I love the country, I love the suburbs, but I'm a city guy. [Laughter] And I know that when cities thrive, suburbs thrive. And when cities thrive, farmlands thrive. And when cities thrive, States thrive. And when cities thrive, America thrives.

You guys are making it happen. I enjoy working with each and every one of you. And I know that each of you takes pride in what makes your hometown unique. You may be proud of your pizza or your hoagies or your barbecue—even though everybody knows Chicago has the best pizza. [Laughter] You may be proud of your city's victory parades, even though we've got a Blackhawk parade that's pretty good. [Laughter] I'm sure you're all very proud of your parks. We've got nice parks. Or the number of sunny days you've got, which we enjoy half the year. [Laughter] Chances are you've got a few superlatives ready when—in case somebody asks, "What makes your city so special?" That's what mayors do. You're boosters.

Yet as unique as your cities are, as proud of—as you should be of your cities, we always remind ourselves we're also Americans. And we all want an America to be a place where our ZIP Code does not determine our destiny, where every kid, in whatever city, whatever hamlet, whatever town, has an equal shot at life when they grow up. No matter who you are or where you come from, you can make it if you try.

That's what's America is about. That's what you're fighting for every day. And I'm going to

fight right there alongside with you. Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kevin M. Johnson of Sacramento, CA; Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; Dylann S. Roof, suspect-

ed gunman in the June 17 shooting in Charleston, SC; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro, in his former capacity as mayor of San Antonio, TX; Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx, in his former capacity as mayor of Charlotte, NC; Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack, in his former capacity as mayor of Mount Pleasant, IA; and Jerry E. Abramson, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco

June 19, 2015

Thank you. Well, first of all, I think the Bay Area generally has been a little greedy when it comes to championships. Fortunately, the Blackhawks—[laughter]—just had their parade, so we kind of wedged our way in between the Giants and the Warriors.

But let me just say that it is actually really impressive. The Warriors played basketball the way basketball should be played and are a class organization. I had a chance to talk to Steve Kerr, who I will eternally be fond of because he was a Bull who, receiving a pass from Michael Jordan, hit a series-winning shot. That's right. And I talked to Steph as well. Steph had come by the White House because, some of you may be aware, every time he makes a 3-point shot, he makes a contribution to purchase malaria nets. And so he was doing something with the State Department, and he stopped by, and could not be a finer young man and a better representative of the sport as well as the Bay Area.

And so you guys deserve to win. [Laughter] This year. [Laughter] And I will welcome them to the White House, and I will be pleasant, and I will say nice things about them. [Laughter] But understand, the Bulls are coming. The Bulls are coming. [Laughter] White Sox. [Laughter] Although, Cubs, that's fine too. [Laughter]

I want to obviously start by thanking Tom and Kat. They are incredible friends. They are incredible community leaders, national and international leaders on issues that matter not

just to America, but matter to the world. And they appear to have done an outstanding job with their children. I just had a chance to meet them, and they are all smart and good looking and well mannered. [Laughter] And I think that—well, Tom is denying they're well mannered. Look, the important thing is how they act outside of the house. [Laughter] If they put on a good show for everybody else, that's fine. And so—yes, right, happy Father's Day because you've done a good job, although I know it was mostly Kat. [Laughter] But I can't thank them enough for everything they've done not just to support me, but to support the issues that matter to everybody in this room.

I want to thank Nancy Pelosi. When Tom gave that list of things that we've accomplished, the fact of the matter is that none of those things would have been accomplished had it not been for an extraordinary partner in Congress, and Nancy Pelosi has been that partner, and I could not be prouder to work with her.

Nancy could not be such a good partner if it weren't for the incredible Members of Congress who constitute the Democratic Caucus. And I brought my list here because nothing is worse than you missing somebody in the acknowledgments; you will never live it down. [Laughter] So I'm just going to make sure that I see everybody here. First of all, we've got Barbara Lee. We love Barbara. I've got Anna Eshoo right there. Love Anna. We've got John

Garamendi. Where's John? He's a big guy so he's hard to miss. There you go. The outstanding Ami Bera is here, down from Sacramento. And our a DCCC chair, Ben Ray Luján. And I want to thank Kev Choice, who apparently is pretty talented. There you go, thank you, Kev.

So in addition to basketball, I've been thinking about a few other things. [*Laughter*] Obviously, over the last couple of days, the thing I've been thinking about most is what happened in Charleston. I won't repeat the comments that I've been making about this issue because I suspect I'm preaching to the choir here, but in addition to heartbreak and wanting to extend love and prayer and support to the families who have been affected; in addition to marveling at the statements that those family members of those victims made today to this suspect; and for them to find the strength to be able to say, "We forgive you," an expression of faith that is unimaginable, but that reflects the goodness of the American people; in addition to all those things, I think it's important for us to acknowledge that this stuff happens way too often.

These mass shootings like this do not happen in other advanced countries around the world. They are unique, in their frequency, to America. And it's not because there aren't violent people or racist people or crazy people in other countries; it's that a 21-year-old kid can't just walk in and buy a firearm and, oftentimes, through gun shows, avoid background checks, and then act on this hatred. And we've got to change that. And it's not enough for us to express sympathy. We have to take action. And it is not going to happen in this Congress, but we have to stay on it so that it does.

And that leads me, I guess, to a broader reflection on where we are as a country. I could not be prouder of the progress that, with the help of Democrats in Congress, and most importantly, due to the resilience of the American people, the progress we've been able to accomplish over these last 6½ years. And you heard some of the statistics. Unemployment down from 10 percent to 5.5 percent. Stock market and 401(k)s recovered. The housing market back almost to normal. People regain-

ing a sense of stability in their own finances. The deficit down by two-thirds. Close to 13 million jobs created over a 5-year stretch.

Millions of people getting coverage for the first time. But perhaps less noticed, but just as important, people who did—do have health insurance having protections they didn't have before. There was a gentleman here that I won't point out, but as we were taking a picture said: "My daughter has a congenital heart disease, 8 years old. And her life is going to be better because she can't be discriminated against because of a preexisting condition." That's also part of what we accomplished.

We have been able to increase high school graduation rates to record levels. College attendance rates to record levels. We're starting to see improvements in early—elementary school reading scores. We have doubled the production of clean energy; increased solar energy by about 10 times, by a factor of 10. We have increased wind power, tripled it, since I came into office. Doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars. I could go on.

The point is, there's almost no economic measure by which we are not better off than when I came into office. We've ended two wars. We have, by and large, been able to protect the American homeland, and we have been able to conduct operations against terrorist organizations while staying true to the law and our Constitution and our values. We've expanded protections and not just tolerance, but embraced our LGBT community in ways that might have seemed unimaginable 10 years ago. I'm really proud of this record.

And the reason I've been able to do it is, I've had partners in Congress. As difficult and frustrating as the legislative process can sometimes be, I've had people who have been willing to stand up and work with me and sometimes compromise, sometimes take half a loaf, sometimes suffer attacks from our own base as much as from the other side. We've done the right thing, and it's paid off.

But the amount of work left undone is remarkable. The challenges, but also the opportunities to continue to grow this economy so that everybody gets a shot, our ability to make

sure that the next generation inherits not just a better America, but a better planet from this generation. The opportunities are there, and the challenges are significant. And there are two things in particular that these days I'm spending a lot of time thinking about.

The first is the changing nature of the economy. We were talking earlier with a smaller group, and I think Tom asked me, why is it that the country may not fully appreciate how remarkable our recovery has been compared to the historical standard after a major financial crisis? And I said, well, part of it is we've had a 20-, 30-year trend in which the middle class has seen its incomes and wages flatlined. And the ladders of upward mobility have been reduced. And so even though we have overperformed, relative to other countries and the historical standard, what we haven't yet done is reverse that trend of growing inequality, a stressed and static middle class. And until we tackle that, people aren't going to feel better. They're not going to feel a sense of optimism.

And the good news is, there are things we know can make a difference there. If we invest in early childhood education, and if we do infrastructure, and if we invest in basic science and research, and if we make sure that our trading practices with other countries are fair and are of high standards, and if we don't shy away from this new economy, but we lean into it and embrace it—because this new economy is all about knowledge and innovation, and that's who we are as Americans—if we take some basic steps, then we can give people that sense of upward mobility and optimism and opportunity. It's there. This is not a technical problem, this is a problem of political will. So that's something that I spend a lot of time thinking about.

And the second thing I spend time thinking about is climate change, because if we don't get this right, then no matter how good we do on the other stuff, we're still going to have some big problems. John Holdren, physicist and professor at Harvard, is the head of my Office of Science and Technology—OSTP. And John, every couple of days, sometimes once a week, will send out a missive from the world of

science. And sometimes, he'll circulate among our staff the latest picture from the Hubble of some cluster in a galaxy, and it will evoke wonder and remind us of what Americans can do when they put their minds to it.

But a while back, I guess a couple weeks ago, he put out the new report, new information about what the climate science is telling us. And I have to say, it wasn't something I should have read right before I went to bed. [Laughter] Because the basic estimates were that by 2050, well within our children's lifetimes, on our current pace, the oceans go up maybe 2, maybe 3, maybe 4 feet. By 2300, which is not in our children's lifetimes—although the science is moving pretty quick—but certainly, within the lifetimes of grandchildren or great-grandchildren, it could be 10 feet, 16 feet. The magnitude of the changes that could be taking place if we don't get a handle on this are irreversible. And just like is true in our economy, where if we take some basic steps now—some of them tough, some of them common sense—we can reverse some of these trends and really make a difference, the same is true on climate.

This is not a situation as if we have to turn off the lights and go back and live in caves. This is a matter of us taking some basic steps to increase efficiency and expand clean energy production and change our grid and develop new technologies. And it's well within reach, and we still have time to do it. Part of what's sometimes, I think, a problem for those who care about this is we paint such a bleak picture that people start throwing up their hands and thinking, well, I guess there's nothing we can do about it. And it ends up being self-defeating. But the truth is, here there is something we can do.

If we can double the fuel efficiency standards of our auto fleet, then lo and behold, we can do it with our truck fleet. If Japan is 20-percent more efficient in terms of energy use in its buildings and its schools and its hospitals, well, that's existing technology; we can adapt it here. If we know that how we produce power is unsustainable, we have the tools or we'll

figure out the tools to generate power in cleaner ways if the right incentives are in place.

So the good news is, is that we've actually, as Tom said, made extraordinary progress in a pretty short time with not a lot of political support. Imagine what we could do if Congress actually started moving with us, as opposed to against us. And we're not going to move the rest of the world unless we move too. The reason we were able to get movement from China on this issue is because we showed our own commitment. We showed our own cards. And the way we're going to get India invested in this is because they see us and China doing something. And the way we then get Brazil and other countries is because it starts being something that is gaining international momentum. But it always starts with us. It's frustrating sometimes that it has to start with us; it would be nice if things happened without us, but they don't.

So the bottom line is that when I talk to interns—we usually have about a 6-month program, and I take a picture at the—and I do some Q&A, and they ask me, you know, what was your favorite book, and what advice do you have? [*Laughter*] And they're spectacular, amazing young people—they really make you optimistic—from all across the country. But the most important piece of advice, I think, I give them is, don't get cynical. Don't get cynical. I tell them that if there was any time in human history where you'd want to be born and you didn't know who you were going to end up being, it would be now. Because this planet has never—the people of this planet have never been healthier, have never lived longer, have never been better educated. The world has, surprisingly enough, never been less violent, has never been more tolerant than today. What you can't do is give into this notion that nothing can change because things change all the time, and they change remarkably.

When you look at something like Charleston, it's heartbreaking. But I have told people, guard against this notion that somehow things aren't any different than they were 50 years ago, because you weren't living in Charleston, South Carolina, 50 years ago if you say that.

Dr. King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." It's true. The trend lines are good. But it bends only because people put their shoulder to the wheel and folks like Tom and Kat and Nancy Pelosi and Barbara Lee and all the Members of Congress who are here who know what we need to do, we put our shoulder against the wheel, and we make some progress.

And I guarantee you, we never make as much progress as we should. We're always falling a little bit short. We're always a little bit battered and bruised. We're always a little bit frustrated. But we make it better. And I tell these interns, you know what, better is good. Better is good. And one of the challenges of our politics today is, is that we forget that. People think if we don't get 100 percent of what we want right now, to date, without a single compromise, without having to tack north or south or east, unless we are immediately gratified, then somehow, the whole system is broken. Well, that's not true. It's just hard, because we live in a democracy, and we get in arguments.

But we can make it better. And by making it better, we add our little bit to this journey towards progress and more justice and more equality and more empathy and more compassion. And then, we leave some work for our amazing kids to do, because we wouldn't want to solve all their problems for them. [*Laughter*] But the reason we've got to start now is because on at least a couple things—on climate change and I believe on the growing trends towards inequality—if we don't get those right now, then it may be very difficult for them to fix in the future. Some of these patterns get irreversible if we don't get them right now.

So let me just close by saying this: If we're going to make things better, then you've got to have a Congress that cares and is willing to do tough stuff. As I think some of you may have noticed, it's not like I agree with my Democratic Caucus on everything. [*Laughter*] But on 98 percent of things, they're moving in the right direction, and I know where their heart is, and I know what their values are, and I know what they care about.

We're not going to be able to do this because you get one President elected. That President has to have some help, and you've got to make sure that you are as invested in our congressional races, our Senate races, as you are in the upcoming Presidential race.

Ultimately, the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And Nancy can't do it without you. I can't do it without you. My successor will not be able to do it without you. So I need you to feel the same sense of urgency. And if you do, put your shoulder to the wheel alongside all of us, then there's cause for optimism, and things are going to get better, and all this work will have been worthwhile.

Statement on World Refugee Day *June 19, 2015*

Tomorrow, on World Refugee Day, we will pause to reflect on the millions around the world who have been displaced from their homes: the hardships they face, the courage and resilience they demonstrate, and the dedication of those who come to their aid.

This year's commemoration comes as worldwide displacement reaches record levels, with nearly 60 million people uprooted by wars, violence, and persecution. From Syria to Iraq, from Burma to Burundi, from South Sudan to eastern Ukraine, the number of displaced and vulnerable has escalated. The struggles of some are captured in searing images—of people waiting at border crossings, housed in endless lines of tents, and crammed into rickety boats at sea—while those of others, crowded into the shadows of large cities, may go unobserved.

World Refugee Day is a solemn occasion for the United States to join our partners in the in-

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. at the residence of Thomas F. Steyer and Kathryn A. Taylor. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen D. Kerr, coach, and W. Stephen Curry II, guard, National Basketball Association's Golden State Warriors; Michael Jordan, former guard, NBA's Chicago Bulls; Sam, Gus, Evi, and Henry Steyer, children of Mr. Steyer and Ms. Taylor; musician Kev Choice; and Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the June 17 shooting in Charleston, SC. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

ternational community in recognizing the dignity, value, and potential of every one of these lives. It is a time to recall this Nation's proud tradition of providing support to those who are most vulnerable and a moment to challenge ourselves to continue being as generous and resourceful as we can in meeting their needs.

As the largest global donor of humanitarian aid, the United States supports programs that provide food, water, shelter, and medical care to refugees and other displaced persons. We thank the aid workers who deliver this assistance, sometimes at great personal risk, and we offer our gratitude to the many families who open their homes to those in need. All the while, we express our appreciation for the millions of men and women who, having endured the struggles of displacement, have contributed so much to the life of this Nation.

Statement on the Observance of Juneteenth *June 19, 2015*

On this day 150 years ago, more than 2 years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the slaves of Galveston, Texas, finally received word that the Civil War

was over. They were free. A century and a half later, Americans still recognize this occasion, Juneteenth, as a symbolic milestone on our journey toward a more perfect Union. At

churches and in parks, lined up for parades and gathered around the barbecue pit, communities come together and celebrate the enduring promise of our country: that all of us are created equal.

Yet this year, our celebrations are tinged with sorrow. Our prayers are with the nine members of the Mother Emanuel community—nine members of our American family—whose God-given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were so cruelly snatched away. Our hearts go out to their families, their friends, and the entire city of Charleston.

We don't have to look far to see that racism and bigotry, hate and intolerance, are still all too alive in our world. Just as the slaves of Galveston knew that emancipation is only the first step toward true freedom, just as those who crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge 50

years ago knew their march was far from finished, our work remains undone. For as long as people still hate each other for nothing more than the color of their skin—and so long as it remains far too easy for dangerous people to get their hands on a gun—we cannot honestly say that our country is living up to its highest ideals. But Juneteenth has never been a celebration of victory, or an acceptance of the way things are. Instead, it's a celebration of progress. It's an affirmation that despite the most painful parts of our history, things do get better. America can change.

So no matter our color or our creed, no matter where we come from or who we love, today is a day to find joy in the face of sorrow, to count our blessings, and hold the ones we love a little closer. And tomorrow is a day to keep marching.

The President's Weekly Address *June 20, 2015*

Hi, everybody. As President, I spend most of my time focused on what we can do to grow the economy and grow new pathways of opportunity for Americans like you to get ahead.

And we've made progress: more than 12 million new private sector jobs in the past 5 years, more than 16 million Americans who have gained health insurance, more jobs creating more clean energy, more kids graduating from high school and college than ever before.

But in a relentlessly changing economy, we've still got more work to do. And one of the things we should be doing, for example, is rewriting the rules of global trade to benefit American workers and American businesses. I think we should write those rules before China does. That's why I've been working with Congress to pass new, 21st-century trade agreements with standards that are higher and protections that are tougher than any past trade agreement.

I believe it's the right thing to do for American workers and families, or I wouldn't be doing it. I believe it's what will give us the competitive edge in a new economy, or I would not be doing it. Now, several Members of Con-

gress disagree. That's why it's still tied up there, along with a lot of other good ideas that would create jobs. And eventually, I'm optimistic we'll get this done.

But America doesn't stand still. And that's why, on issue after issue where Congress has failed to act, my administration has partnered with mayors and Governors across the country to advance economic priorities that most working families in America are in favor of doing right now.

And we've had success. Over the past couple years, 17 States and 6 major cities have raised the minimum wage for their workers, 19 cities have enacted paid sick days, and 5 States have enacted paid sick days or paid family leave. Thirty-four States increased funding for quality pre-K, and 19 cities and States have signed up for our new TechHire initiative to train workers for the high-wage, high-skill jobs of tomorrow, the kind of jobs that new trade deals would help create.

Some of these victories have been small. Some have been quiet. But they've added up to a big difference for working families across America. And that's what matters to me the

most, because it matters to you. On Friday, I talked about these initiatives and more in a speech to the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Check it out at whitehouse.gov. Some of it might matter to your city.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 10:55 a.m. on June 18 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on June 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 20.

Statement on the Rhode Island Legislature's Passage of Legislation To Raise the Minimum Wage

June 22, 2015

I commend the Rhode Island Legislature and Governor Raimondo for once again taking action to raise their State's minimum wage. Since I first called on Congress to increase the Federal minimum wage in 2013, 17 States have acted on their own, which will grow the paychecks of millions of American workers. Many private companies have acted as well, recognizing that paying workers fairly is both

good for business and the right thing to do. This year, more than half of our States guarantee their workers a wage higher than the Federal minimum. But despite this progress, we still have work to do. I continue to encourage States, cities, counties, and companies to lift their workers' wages, and I urge Congress to finally do the right thing and give America a raise.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans

June 22, 2015

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

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 with respect to the Western Balkans that was declared in Executive Order 13219 of June 26, 2001, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2015.

The threat constituted by the actions of persons engaged in, or assisting, sponsoring, or supporting (i) extremist violence in the Republic of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans region, or (ii) acts obstructing implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia or United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of

June 10, 1999, related to Kosovo, has not been resolved. In addition, Executive Order 13219 was amended by Executive Order 13304 of May 28, 2003, to take additional steps with respect to acts obstructing implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 relating to Macedonia.

Because the acts of extremist violence and obstructionist activity outlined in these Executive Orders are hostile to U.S. interests and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the Western Balkans.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

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

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea June 22, 2015

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

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 with respect to North Korea that was declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, expanded in scope in Executive Order 13551 of August 30, 2010, addressed further in Executive Order 13570 of April 18, 2011, and further expanded in scope in Executive Order 13687 of January 2, 2015, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2015.

The existence and risk of proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean

Peninsula; the actions and policies of the Government of North Korea that destabilize the Korean Peninsula and imperil U.S. Armed Forces, allies, and trading partners in the region; and other provocative, destabilizing, and repressive actions and policies of the Government of North Korea, continue to constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to North Korea.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

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

Remarks at the Iftar Dinner June 22, 2015

You don't have to all be this serious. [Laughter] Welcome to the White House. Now, I know that these are the longest days of the year, which is why I'm so glad that they put the first course down right away. [Laughter] I know you're hungry, and I promise to be brief.

I want to thank the members of our diplomatic corps who are here today, as well as our Members of Congress and all those serving across Government who are joining us. And I especially want to recognize all the inspiring young people who are here today, many of whom I've put at my table. [Laughter] To all of you and to Muslim Americans across the country, *Ramadan Kareem*.

Our annual White House iftar recognizes the sacredness of Ramadan to more than 1.5 billion Muslims around the world. It's a time

when Muslims recommit themselves to their faith, following days of discipline with nights of gratitude for the gifts that God bestows. It's a time of spiritual renewal and a reminder of one's duty to our fellow man: to serve one another and lift up the less fortunate. The Koran teaches that God's children should tread gently upon the Earth and, when confronted by ignorance, reply, "Peace." In honoring these familiar values together—of peace and charity and forgiveness—we affirm that, whatever our faith, we're all one family.

Our iftar is also a reminder of the freedoms that bind us together as Americans, including the freedom of religion: that inviolable right to practice our faiths freely. That's what Samantha Elauf represents. She was determined to defend the right to wear a hijab, to have the

same opportunities as everybody else. She went all the way to the Supreme Court, which I didn't do at her age. [Laughter] And she won. So, Samantha, we're very proud of you.

When our values are threatened, we come together as one Nation. When three young Muslim Americans were brutally murdered in Chapel Hill earlier this year, Americans of all faiths rallied around that community. And obviously, tonight our prayers remain with Charleston and Mother Emanuel church. As Americans, we insist that nobody should be targeted because of who they are or what they look like, who they love, how they worship. We stand united against these hateful acts.

These are the freedoms and the ideals and the values that we uphold. And it's more important than ever, because around the world and here at home, there are those who seek to divide us by religion or race or sect. Here in America, many people personally don't know someone who is Muslim. They mostly hear about Muslims in the news, and that can obviously lead to a very distorted impression.

We saw this play out recently at a mosque in Arizona. A group of protesters gathered outside with offensive signs against Islam and Muslims. And then, the mosque's leaders invited them inside to share in the evening prayer. One demonstrator, who accepted the invitation later, described how the experience changed him, how he finally saw the Muslim American community for what it is: peaceful and welcoming. That's what can happen when we stop yelling and start listening. That's why it's so important always to lift up the stories and voices of proud Americans who are contributing to our country every day. And we have a lot of inspiring Americans here today.

They're Muslim Americans like Ziad Ahmed. As a Bangladeshi American growing up in New Jersey, he saw early on that there was not enough understanding in the world. So 2 years ago, he founded Redefy, a website to push back against harmful stereotypes by encouraging teens like him—he's only 16, I think our youngest guest tonight—to share their stories. Because, in Ziad's words, "ignorance can be defeated through education." He wants to

do his part to make sure that "Muslims can be equal members of society and still hold onto their faith and identity." So we're very proud of you, Ziad.

They're Muslim Americans like Munira Khalif. And Munira is the daughter of Somali immigrants; she started an organization to support girls' education in East Africa. She just graduated from high school in Minnesota. She's already lobbied Congress to pass the Girls Count Act so that girls in the developing world are documented at birth, a bill I was proud to sign into law last week. She's even spoken at the United Nations. I was also not doing this at her age. [Laughter] This fall, Munira is heading to Harvard to continue her education in public service, which was a tough choice, because of course she was accepted to all the Ivy League schools she applied to. [Laughter] But we are very, very proud of you, and I know your community is as well.

They're Muslim Americans like Batoul Abu-harb, who was born in a refugee camp in Gaza, and when she was an infant her family moved to Houston. After graduating from Rice University, she spent a summer in Gaza working with the U.N. health clinic. After seeing people line up whenever new stocks of vaccines arrived, she started Dunia Health to improve the distribution of vaccines and tell families when to come in, all over text message. They've started with Palestinian refugees in Jordan, but the program has been so successful that the U.N. is looking to expand Dunia's work to more countries across the Middle East. Batoul, we're very proud of you. Congratulations.

So, Ziad, Munira, Batoul—they all talk about how much they value the opportunities they've had to succeed here in the United States. And they also remind us that our obligations to care for one another extend beyond our immediate communities, beyond our borders. So tonight we keep in our prayers those who are suffering around the world, including those marking Ramadan in areas of conflict and deprivation and hunger: the people of Iraq and Syria as they push back on the barbarity of ISIL; the people of Yemen and Libya, who are seeking an end to ongoing violence and

instability; those fleeing war and hardship in boats across the Mediterranean; the people of Gaza, still recovering from last year's conflict; the Rohingya in Myanmar, including migrants at sea, whose human rights must be upheld.

We're proud, by the way, to have Wai Wai Nu with us tonight, a former political prisoner who's working on human rights issues for the Rohingya and equal rights for women. So we're glad to have you here with us tonight.

So these challenges around the world and here at home demand the very qualities you summon every day during Ramadan: sacrifice, discipline, patience. A resilience that says we don't simply endure, but we overcome. That together, we can overcome ignorance and prejudice. Together, we will overcome conflict and injustice, not just with words, but with deeds. With what a hero of mine, the civil rights icon John Lewis, calls using our feet: getting out in the real world to organize and to create the change that we seek. That's what so many of

you do every single day. And that's what we have to continue to do together, here in America and around the world. As the Koran teaches, let us answer with "Peace."

May God bless you all. Have a wonderful Ramadan. And get back to dinner. [Laughter] All right? Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Samantha Elauf, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc.*; Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, and Deah Shaddy Barakat, who were killed in Chapel Hill, NC, on February 10. He also referred to S. 802, which was approved June 12 and assigned Public Law No. 114-24; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on the United States Government's Hostage Recovery Policy June 24, 2015

Good afternoon. Since 9/11, more than 80 Americans have been taken hostage by murderous groups engaged in terrorism or privacy. For these innocent men and women—tourists, journalists, humanitarians—it's a horror and cruelty beyond description. For their families and for their friends, it's an unrelenting nightmare that the rest of us cannot even begin to imagine.

As a Government, we should always do everything in our power to bring these Americans home safe and to support their families. Dedicated public servants across our Government work tirelessly to do so. Our military personnel risk their lives in dangerous missions, such as the operation I authorized last year that attempted to rescue Americans held in Syria and Yemen. And there have been successes, such as the rescue of Captain Richard Phillips, held by Somali pirates, and Jessica Buchanan, rescued from Somalia.

Of these more than 80 Americans taken hostage since 9/11, more than half have ultimately

come home, some after many years. Tragically, too many others have not. And at this very moment, Americans continue to be held by terrorist groups or detained unjustly by foreign governments. For them, the nightmare goes on, and so does our work, day and night, to reunite them with their loved ones.

As I've said before, the terrorist threat is evolving. The world has been appalled by ISIL's barbaric murder of innocent hostages, including Americans. Moreover, the families of hostages have told us—and they've told me directly—about their frequent frustrations in dealing with their own Government: how different departments and agencies aren't always coordinated, how there's been confusion and conflicting information about what the Government is prepared to do to help, how they've often felt lost in the bureaucracy, and how, in some cases, families feel that they've been threatened for exploring certain options to bring their loved ones home.

That's totally unacceptable. Now, as I've gotten to know some of these families and heard some of these stories, it has been my solemn commitment to make sure that they feel fully supported in their efforts to get their families home and that there is a syncing up of what I know to be sincere, relentless efforts within Government and the families who obviously have one priority and one priority only, and that's getting their loved ones back.

These families have already suffered enough, and they should never feel ignored or victimized by their own Government. Diane Foley, whose son Jim was killed by ISIL last year, said, "As Americans, we can do better." I totally agree. We must do better. And that's why I ordered a comprehensive review of our hostage policy.

I want to thank everybody who contributed to this review, inside and outside of Government, some of whom are here today. I especially want to thank the former hostages and families who contributed. I've come to know some of these families, often under the most heartbreaking of circumstances. When her son Peter, also known as Abdul-Rahman, was being held in Syria, his mother Paula Kassig wrote me a letter. And in it, she described how on clear nights she and her husband would look up at the stars and the Moon and wonder if, perhaps, their son might be able to see them too, a reminder of the bond they might still share.

I've called these families to offer our condolences after they've received gut-wrenching news no parents ever want to hear. I've visited with them. I've hugged them. I've grieved with them. I just spent time with some of the families, as well as some former hostages here at the White House. And needless to say, it was a very emotional meeting. Some are still grieving.

I thanked them for sharing their experiences and their ideas with our review team. In fact, many of the changes we're announcing today are a direct result of their recommendations. I acknowledged to them in private what I want to say publicly: that it is true that there have been times where our Government, regardless

of good intentions, has let them down. I promised them that we can do better. Here's how.

Today I'm formally issuing a new Presidential policy directive to improve how we work to bring home American hostages and how we support their families. I've signed a new Executive order to ensure our Government is organized to do so. And we're releasing the final report of our review, which describes the two dozen specific steps that we're taking. Broadly speaking, they fall into three areas.

First, I'm updating our hostage policy. I'm making it clear that our top priority is the safe and rapid recovery of American hostages. And to do so, we will use all elements of our national power. I am reaffirming that the United States Government will not make concessions, such as paying ransom, to terrorist groups holding American hostages. And I know this can be a subject of significant public debate. It's a difficult and emotional issue, especially for the families. As I said to the families who are gathered here today, and as I've said to families in the past, I look at this not just as a President, but also as a husband and a father. And if my family were at risk, obviously, I would move heaven and earth to get those loved ones back.

As President, I also have to consider our larger national security. I firmly believe that the United States Government paying ransom to terrorists risks endangering more Americans and funding the very terrorism that we're trying to stop. And so I firmly believe that our policy ultimately puts fewer Americans at risk.

At the same time, we are clarifying that our policy does not prevent communication with hostage takers: by our Government, the families of hostages, or third parties who help these families. And when appropriate, our Government may assist these families and private efforts in those communications, in part, to ensure the safety of family members and to make sure that they're not defrauded. So my message to these families was simple: We're not going to abandon you. We will stand by you.

Second, we're making changes to ensure that our Government is better organized around this mission. Every department that is

involved in our national security apparatus cares deeply about these hostages, prioritizes them, and works really hard. But they're not always as well coordinated as they need to be. Under the National Security Council here at the White House, we're setting up a new Hostage Response Group, comprised of senior officials from across our Government who will be responsible for ensuring that our hostage policies are consistent and coordinated and implemented rapidly and effectively. And they will be accountable at the highest levels; they'll be accountable to me.

Soon, I'll be designating as well a senior diplomat as my Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, who will be focused solely on leading our diplomatic efforts with other countries to bring our people home.

At the operational level, we're creating for the first time one central hub where experts from across Government will work together, side-by-side, as one coordinated team to find American hostages and bring them home safely. In fact, this fusion cell, located at the FBI, is already up and running. And we're designating a new official in the intelligence community to be responsible for coordinating the collection, analysis, and rapid dissemination of intelligence related to American hostages so we can act on that intelligence quickly.

Third, and running through all these efforts, we are fundamentally changing how our Government works with families of hostages. Many of the families told us that they at times felt like an afterthought or a distraction, that too often the law enforcement or military and intelligence officials they were interacting with were begrudging in giving them information. And that ends today. I'm making it clear that these families are to be treated like what they are: our trusted partners and active partners in the recovery of their loved ones. We are all on the same team, and nobody cares more about bringing home these Americans than their own families, and we have to treat them as partners.

So, specifically, our new fusion cell will include a person dedicated to coordinating the support families get from the Government. This coordinator will ensure that we communi-

cate with families better, with one clear voice, and that families get information that is timely and accurate. Working with the intelligence community, we will be sharing more intelligence with families.

And this coordinator will be the families' voice within Government, making sure that when decisions are made about their loved ones, their concerns are front and center. Everyone who deals with these families on a regular basis will be given additional training to ensure families are treated with the dignity and compassion that they deserve. In particular, I want to point out that no family of an American hostage has ever been prosecuted for paying a ransom for the return of their loved ones. And the last thing that we should ever do is to add to a family's pain with threats like that.

So the bottom line is this: When it comes to how our Government works to recover Americans held hostage and how we work with their families, we are changing how we do business. After everything they've endured, these families are right to be skeptical, and that's why it's so important, as I told them today, that we will be setting up mechanisms to ensure accountability and implementation. I've directed my national security team to report back to me, including getting feedback from the families to make sure that these reforms are being put in place and that they are working.

In the course of our review, several families told us they wanted to spare other families the frustrations they endured. Some have even created new organizations to support families like theirs or to honor their loved ones, such as the memorial foundation for Steven Sotloff, who wrote: "Everyone has two lives. The second one begins when you realize you only have one." As a Government, and as a nation, we can learn from the example and the strength of their lives, the kind of strength we've seen in all these held hostages, including Kayla Mueller.

Kayla devoted her life to serving those in need around the world. To refugees in Syria who had lost everything, she was a source of comfort and hope. Before her tragic death, she was held by ISIL in Syria for a year and a half.

And during her captivity, Kayla managed to smuggle a letter to her family. She said: “None of us could have known it would be this long, but I know I am also fighting from my side in the ways that I am able, and I have a lot of fight left in me. I am not breaking down, and I will not give in no matter how long it takes.”

Today my message to anyone who harms Americans is that we do not forget. Our reach is long. Justice will be done. My message to every American being held unjustly around the world who is fighting from the inside to survive another day, my message to their families who long to hold them once more, is that the United States of America will never stop working to

reunite you with your family. We will not give up, no matter how long it takes.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Diane Foley, mother of James W. Foley, a freelance journalist who was killed by members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization on August 19, 2014; and Paula Kassig, mother of Abdul-Rahman Kassig, who was killed by members of ISIL on November 16, 2014. He also referred to Executive Order 13698, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Directive on United States Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts

June 24, 2015

Presidential Policy Directive/PPD–30

Subject: U.S. Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts

The 21st century has witnessed a significant shift in hostage-takings by terrorist organizations and criminal groups abroad. Hostage-takers frequently operate in unstable environments that challenge the ability of the United States Government and its partners and allies to operate effectively. Increasingly, hostage-takers target private citizens—including journalists and aid workers—as well as Government officials. They also utilize sophisticated networks and tactics to derive financial, propaganda, and recruitment benefits from hostage-taking operations. The United States Government’s response to hostage-takings must evolve with this ever-changing landscape.

This Presidential Policy Directive (PPD), including its classified annex, supersedes and revokes NSPD–12, *United States Citizens Taken Hostage Abroad*, dated February 18, 2002, along with Annex 1 and Appendix A to NSPD–12, dated December 4, 2008. The policy directs a renewed, more agile United States Government response to hostage-takings of

U.S. nationals and other specified individuals abroad. It establishes processes to enable consistent implementation of the policies set forth in this directive, to ensure close interagency coordination in order to employ all appropriate means to recover U.S. hostages held abroad, and to significantly enhance engagement with hostages’ families. It also reaffirms the United States Government’s personnel recovery policy, which seeks to prevent, prepare for, and respond to hostage-takings and other circumstances in which U.S. nationals are isolated from friendly support. This policy will thereby further important national security and foreign policy interests by strengthening the protections for U.S. nationals outside the United States.

1. Policy

The United States is committed to achieving the safe and rapid recovery of U.S. nationals taken hostage outside the United States. The United States Government will work in a coordinated effort to leverage all instruments of national power to recover U.S. nationals held hostage abroad, unharmed.

The United States Government will strive to counter and diminish the global threat of hostage-taking; reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage; and enhance United States Government preparation to maximize the probability of a favorable outcome following a hostage-taking.

The United States will use every appropriate resource to gain the safe return of U.S. nationals who are held hostage. But the United States Government will make no concessions to individuals or groups holding U.S. nationals hostage. It is United States policy to deny hostage-takers the benefits of ransom, prisoner releases, policy changes, or other acts of concession. This policy protects U.S. nationals and strengthens national security by removing a key incentive for hostage-takers to target U.S. nationals, thereby interrupting the vicious cycle of hostage-takings, and by helping to deny terrorists and other malicious actors the money, personnel, and other resources they need to conduct attacks against the United States, its nationals, and its interests. However, this policy does not preclude engaging in communications with hostage-takers. For example, when appropriate the United States may assist private efforts to communicate with hostage-takers, whether directly or through public or private intermediaries, and the United States Government may itself communicate with hostage-takers, their intermediaries, interested governments, and local communities to attempt to secure the safe recovery of the hostage.

The taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad is a violation of Federal law, and the United States Government is committed to prosecuting and punishing individuals and groups responsible for hostage-taking and related crimes committed against U.S. nationals.

The United States Government will endeavor to work closely with a hostage's family in a coordinated manner and will proactively share as much information as possible with the family, mindful of the need to protect the safety of the hostage, the integrity of any recovery efforts, any ongoing criminal investigation, and intelligence sources and methods. The United

States Government will also provide assistance and support services to help hostages and their families cope with the effects of the hostage-taking during the period of captivity, through the resolution of the hostage event, and throughout any prosecution of the hostage-takers.

2. Prevention and Preparation

The United States Government will take steps to decrease the likelihood that U.S. nationals will be taken hostage abroad. To that end, the Department of State shall continue to assess the threat and security risk for travel outside of the United States and provide safety and security information for U.S. nationals and U.S. organizations operating abroad. Departments and agencies shall also support engagements with private entities that raise awareness of the risk of hostage-taking and identify best practices for preventing hostage-takings abroad.

The United States Government will lead international efforts to counter, marginalize, and deter hostage-taking by increasing the costs to hostage-takers and eliminating the benefits of hostage-taking. This shall include engagement with foreign governments, international organizations, and other relevant nongovernmental organizations to encourage them to adopt and implement no-concessions policies and statements and to seek commitments to defeat and punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors. The United States Government shall also seek to deter the practice of hostage-taking through aggressive interdiction, investigation, and prosecution of hostage-taking and related violations of U.S. law, as well as through sanctions designations, as appropriate.

The safe conduct of Federal business and duties abroad requires both an effective personnel recovery infrastructure and a coordinated response capability to resolve hostage-takings and similar events. The United States Government will leverage educational and training resources to help decrease the vulnerability of United States Government officials and employees working abroad. Each department and agency with overseas responsibilities shall inform its employees of U.S. policy re-

garding hostage-takings, and provide personnel recovery preparation, education, and training programs to help their employees understand the risk environment, evade capture, survive captivity, minimize their vulnerability to exploitation, and enable their recovery from a threat environment. Departments and agencies shall also implement individual and organizational protective security measures and ensure there are interoperable systems of communications and support for the accountability of United States Government employees. Each department and agency shall leverage existing programs or develop new ones to offer tailored training for those employees who will participate in response management when U.S. nationals are taken hostage abroad.

Under the direction of the Chief of Mission, United States Government officials shall establish and strengthen relationships and information-sharing with partner nations, including their respective diplomatic, military, intelligence, and law enforcement counterparts, to pursue opportunities to build hostage and personnel recovery capacity through security cooperation. The United States Government shall establish dialogues with foreign counterparts about hostage and personnel recovery training and local capabilities. The United States will also work with international organizations and the private sector, as appropriate, to resolve ongoing hostage events and to prevent future hostage-takings.

When appropriate, the United States may provide training, equipment, advice, and intelligence support to foreign governments to aid them in achieving the capability to safely recover, or to assist in the safe recovery of, U.S. nationals held hostage and to hold perpetrators accountable. Unless otherwise directed by the President, all such efforts and activities will be coordinated among the relevant Federal departments and agencies and with the Department of State. This assistance may be provided by appropriate departments and agencies through existing programs, within and consistent with existing legal authorities.

3. United States Government Coordination in Support of Hostage Recovery

The United States Government shall work diligently to achieve the safe recovery of U.S. nationals held hostage abroad. The United States Government's response—which may include diplomatic outreach, intelligence collection, and investigations in support of developing further options, recovery operations, and the use of any other lawful and appropriate tools—will depend on many factors. When considering how to respond to a hostage situation, the United States Government shall undertake those options that are most likely to secure the hostage's safe release; deter future hostage-taking of U.S. nationals and combat the financing of terrorist and other criminal enterprises; and protect other U.S. national security interests. The United States Government shall endeavor to work with the nation in which a U.S. national is being held hostage, including supporting that nation's efforts to recover the hostage. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the United States Government may also act unilaterally to protect its nationals and national interests.

The taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad requires a rapid, coordinated response from the United States Government. The Hostage Response Group (HRG), in support of the National Security Council (NSC) Deputies and Principals Committees, and accountable to the NSC chaired by the President, shall coordinate the development and implementation of United States Government policy and strategy with respect to U.S. nationals taken hostage abroad. The interagency Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC), in support of the HRG, shall coordinate United States Government efforts to ensure that all relevant department and agency information, expertise, and resources are brought to bear to develop individualized strategies to secure the safe recovery of U.S. nationals held hostage abroad.

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, who shall report to the Secretary of State, shall lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy as well as coordinate all

diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts, in coordination with the HRFC and consistent with policy guidance communicated through the HRG. United States Embassies that have established Personnel Recovery Working Groups or other inter-agency bodies to coordinate overseas activities in response to a hostage-taking shall ensure that those bodies operate pursuant to policy guidance provided by the HRG and in coordination with the HRFC and with the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs.

a. Hostage Response Group (HRG)

The HRG shall be chaired by the Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Counterterrorism and shall convene on a regular basis and as needed at the request of the National Security Council. Its regular members shall include the director of the HRFC, the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator, and senior representatives from the Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and such other executive branch departments, agencies, or offices as the President, from time to time, may designate.

In support of the Deputies Committee chaired by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, the HRG shall: (1) identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the National Security Council; (2) coordinate the development and implementation of U.S. hostage and personnel recovery policies, strategies, and procedures, consistent with the policies set forth in this directive; (3) receive regular updates from the HRFC on the status of U.S. nationals being held hostage abroad and measures being taken to effect the hostages' safe recovery; (4) coordinate the provision of policy guidance to the HRFC, including reviewing recovery options proposed by the HRFC and resolving disputes within the HRFC; and (5) where higher-level guidance is required, make recommendations to the Deputies Committee.

b. Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC)

The HRFC shall serve as the United States Government's dedicated interagency coordinating body at the operational level for the recovery of U.S. national hostages abroad. The HRFC shall: (1) identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the NSC; (2) coordinate efforts by participating departments and agencies to ensure that information regarding hostage events, including potential recovery options and engagements with families and external actors (to include foreign governments), is appropriately shared within the United States Government to facilitate a coordinated response to a hostage-taking; (3) assess and track all hostage-takings of U.S. nationals abroad and provide regular reports to the President through the NSC on the status of such cases and any measures being taken toward the hostages' safe recovery; (4) provide a forum for intelligence sharing and, with the support of the Director of National Intelligence, coordinate the declassification of relevant information; (5) coordinate efforts by participating departments and agencies to provide appropriate support and assistance to hostages and their families in a coordinated and consistent manner and to provide families with timely information regarding significant events in their cases; (6) make recommendations to executive departments and agencies in order to reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage abroad and enhance United States Government preparation to maximize the probability of a favorable outcome following a hostage-taking; and (7) coordinate with departments and agencies regarding congressional, media, and other public inquiries pertaining to hostage events.

Upon receipt of credible information that a U.S. national has been taken hostage or has been reported missing in a region where hostage-taking is a significant threat, any department or agency with such information shall report that information, along with any action already taken or anticipated in response, to the HRFC and the relevant Chiefs of Mission. If,

at any point in a given hostage event, the HRFC has reason to believe that a U.S. national is being held hostage by an entity or individual designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization or designated for sanctions by the President, Secretary of State, or Secretary of the Treasury, the HRFC Director shall promptly inform the HRG of the designated individual or entity involved and the circumstances of the hostage-taking.

c. Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (Special Envoy) shall report to the Secretary of State and shall: (1) lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy; (2) coordinate all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts, in coordination with the HRFC and consistent with policy guidance communicated through the HRG; (3) coordinate with the HRFC proposals for diplomatic engagements and strategy in support of hostage recovery efforts; (4) provide senior representation from the Special Envoy's office to the HRFC and in the HRG; and (5) in coordination with the HRFC as appropriate, coordinate diplomatic engagements regarding cases in which a foreign government confirms that it has detained a U.S. national but the United States Government regards such detention as unlawful or wrongful.

4. Family and Hostage Engagement

The United States Government will treat all families and hostages equitably and fairly while respecting their dignity and privacy. All interactions with the family should be undertaken with the utmost professionalism, empathy, and sensitivity to the psychological and emotional disruption the family is experiencing and should be informed by the family's needs, wishes, and rights.

The HRFC, through the Family Engagement Coordinator, shall ensure that all interactions with a hostage's family occur in a coordinated fashion and that the family receives consistent and accurate information from the

United States Government. The Family Engagement Coordinator shall ensure that all communications between United States Government officials and a hostage's family are coordinated to ensure consistent follow-up on questions and requests, and to ensure that any relevant background regarding the family's particular needs is taken into consideration.

The United States Government shall provide the hostage and his or her family with appropriate assistance and support services, including legally mandated crime victims' rights and services, to help them cope with the physical, emotional, and financial impact of a hostage-taking. United States Government officials shall, subject to the family's wishes, maintain regular contact with the family and ensure continuity of care. As appropriate to meet individual needs, United States Government officials may refer hostages and their families to nongovernmental assistance organizations.

The United States Government will share with a hostage's family as much information as possible, mindful of the reliability and credibility of information provided and the need to protect the safety of the hostage, the integrity of any recovery efforts, any ongoing criminal investigation, and intelligence sources and methods. United States Government officials shall communicate to the family, to the greatest extent possible, information about the circumstances of the hostage's abduction and captivity, what options for the safe recovery of the hostage the United States Government is pursuing, information about relevant law and policy, and the roles and responsibilities of United States Government departments and agencies involved in recovering the hostage. When consistent with each family's preferences and the circumstances of the hostage event, the HRFC shall coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that the family receives a full informational briefing. The United States Government shall share with the family relevant information, including by making proactive efforts to declassify relevant information or providing unclassified summaries.

The United States Government shall continue to offer appropriate assistance and support services to a hostage and the hostage's family after recovery and through any prosecution of the hostage-takers, consistent with the policies set forth in this directive. The HRFC shall coordinate the delivery of such support services by relevant departments and agencies, including proactive planning for any post-recovery support services that will be provided to a hostage, as appropriate. In the event of a hostage's death in captivity or in the course of a recovery effort, the HRFC shall also coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that they provide coordinated assistance and support services to the hostage's family.

5. Intelligence Support

The Director of National Intelligence shall provide for centralized management of hostage-related intelligence in order to coordinate the Intelligence Community's efforts on hostage-takings and provide synchronized intelligence support to the HRFC. The Intelligence Community shall make proactive efforts to declassify relevant and reliable information or provide unclassified summaries to a hostage's family.

The Intelligence Community shall maintain the capability to provide intelligence collection and analysis support to allow the United States Government to respond to hostage-takings of U.S. nationals abroad. Moreover, the collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence related to hostage-taking incidents shall be a priority for the Intelligence Community when such an incident occurs. In order to improve the United States Government's response capability, departments and agencies shall leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking. Consistent with other provisions in this policy, United States Government departments and agencies may work with private entities to further United States Government interests to locate and recover Americans held hostage abroad, including entities that may as-

sist in gathering or establishing sources of information.

6. Prosecution

The investigation and prosecution of hostage-takers is an important means of deterring future acts of hostage-taking and ensuring that hostage-takers are brought to justice. The United States shall diligently seek to ensure that hostage-takers of U.S. nationals are arrested, prosecuted, and punished through a due process criminal justice system in the United States or abroad for crimes related to the hostage-taking.

The United States has jurisdiction over the taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad, as well as over other criminal acts that may be committed against the hostage, and the Department of Justice will seek to prosecute hostage-taking of U.S. nationals and related violations of U.S. law in the U.S. court system whenever possible. The Federal Bureau of Investigation shall investigate violations of U.S. law and shall collect evidence and conduct forensics in furtherance of a potential prosecution, consistent with its statutory authorities and, where applicable, the permission of the foreign government in whose territory it is operating.

The HRFC shall coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that all relevant material and information acquired by the United States Government in the course of a hostage-taking event is made available for use in the effort to recover the hostage and, where possible and consistent with that goal, is managed in such a way as to allow its use in an ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution.

The United States Government shall work with foreign governments to apprehend hostage-takers in their territory. In coordination with one another, the Department of State, Department of Justice, and Department of the Treasury shall engage with foreign governments to seek commitments to punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors. In coordinating with the Department of State, relevant departments and agencies should also work to develop the capacity of partner nations,

through technical assistance and training in best practices, to collect intelligence for use in hostage recovery efforts while preserving, when possible, opportunities for a criminal prosecution by the United States or the relevant nation.

7. General Provisions

For the purposes of this directive, hostage-taking is defined as the unlawful abduction or holding of a person or persons against their will in order to compel a third person or governmental organization to do or abstain from doing any act as a condition for the release of the person detained. This directive applies to both suspected and confirmed hostage-takings in which a U.S. national, as defined in either 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22) or 8 U.S.C. 1408, or a lawful permanent resident alien with significant ties to the United States is abducted or held outside of the United States. This directive shall also apply to other hostage-takings occurring abroad in which the United States has a national interest, such as (but not limited to) hostage-takings of individuals who are not U.S. nationals but who have close links through family, employment, or other connections to the United States, as specifically referred to the HRFC by the Deputies Committee. This directive does not apply if a foreign government confirms that it has detained a U.S. national; such cases are handled by the Department of State in coordination with other relevant departments and agencies. In dealing with such cases, however, the Department of State may draw on the full range of experience and expertise of the HRFC as appropriate, includ-

ing the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator's proficiency in providing and ensuring professionalism, empathy, and sensitivity to the psychological and emotional distress experienced by families in such cases. Additionally, the U.S. response to the detention of U.S. military personnel by non-state forces in the context of armed conflict should, in appropriate circumstances, be informed by the law of war.

This directive does not alter the authorities or requirements applicable to Federal departments and agencies under the Constitution, Federal statutes, or Executive Orders or, except as set forth herein, alter any existing Presidential Directives. This directive does not expand the scope of services otherwise available to lawful permanent resident aliens pursuant to departments' and agencies' existing authorities.

This directive is consistent with and intended to be guided by the NSC process, as described in Presidential Policy Directive/PPD 1 of February 13, 2009, or any successor to PPD 1.

Each department or agency shall review this directive and ensure that its own policies and procedures are consistent with the policies set forth herein.

This directive is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this directive. The related Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month Reception June 24, 2015

The President. Hey! Hey! Hey! So this is rowdy crowd. I don't want you guys to break anything while you're here now. [Laughter] Thank you, Megan, for the wonderful introduction and, more importantly, the great work that you are doing. We've got some outstanding Members of Congress here today, includ-

ing Leader Nancy Pelosi. Give Nancy a big round of applause. I want to thank all of you—advocates, organizers, friends, families—for being here today.

Over the years, we've gathered to celebrate Pride Month, and I've told you that I'm so hopeful about what we can accomplish. I've