

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 actions of the Government of Syria declared in Executive Order (E.O.) 13338 of May 11, 2004—as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in E.O. 13399 of April 25, 2006, E.O. 13460 of February 13, 2008, E.O. 13572 of April 29, 2011, E.O. 13573 of May 18, 2011, E.O. 13582 of August 17, 2011, E.O. 13606 of April 22, 2012, and E.O. 13608 of May 1, 2012—is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2016.

The regime's brutal war on the Syrian people, who have been calling for freedom and a representative government, not only endangers the Syrian people themselves, but could yield greater instability throughout the region. The Syrian regime's actions and policies, including pursuing chemical and biological weapons, supporting terrorist organizations, and obstructing the Lebanese government's ability to function effectively, are fostering the rise of extremism and sectarianism and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and

economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions to address this national emergency.

In addition, the United States condemns the Asad regime's use of brutal violence and human rights abuses and calls on the Asad regime to stop its violent war, uphold the Cessation of Hostilities, enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and allow a political transition in Syria that will forge a credible path to a future of greater freedom, democracy, opportunity, and justice.

The United States will consider changes in the composition, policies, and actions of the Government of Syria in determining whether to continue or terminate this national emergency in the future.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Following a Meeting on the Federal Government's Water Crisis Response Efforts in Flint, Michigan May 4, 2016

*The President.* All set? All right. Well, I just had the opportunity to meet with the Federal responders who have been on the ground here in Flint, joined by Governor Rick Snyder and Mayor Karen Weaver. And our discussion underscored how important it was for us to mount a whole-of-government effort across agencies and across levels of government to meet one core mission, and that is make sure that the people of Flint are healthy; that they've got safe water to drink and to use; that we are ensuring that we have a plan for the system to work over the long term; and that we

are certain that our kids here in Flint are going to be able to take advantage of their talents and opportunities well into the future.

So we've got a short-term challenge, which is water, but we've also got a long-term challenge, which is making sure that the city of Flint can prosper going forward.

I want to thank everybody who's participating. Everybody here has been working hard on the ground for months now to respond to this crisis. It's an all-hands-on-deck approach. And just to give you some examples of the work that's being done—FEMA is expanding its ac-

cess—is expanding access to water and filters by providing water commodities to the State of Michigan. The EPA has been actively testing and monitoring the city’s water and is providing technical assistance to the city to make sure that the water distribution system is safe again. The CDC is investigating concerns that we’ve heard from people about health symptoms that may have been connected to the water.

Some good news: We’re hoping that if it hasn’t already happened, that it’s going to happen shortly, that legislation is being passed by the State of Michigan that allows the Federal Government, in partnership with the State, to expand access to Medicaid and provide additional services to individuals under 21. So making sure that our kids are covered and have these additional services, as well as pregnant women. And I want to thank the State of Michigan, working with us, to develop that plan.

Thanks to the USDA, and Debbie Stabenow has been outstanding in guiding this. And obviously, the rest of the Michigan congressional delegation have worked hard on this as well. USDA is making sure that infants get the formula that they need and that children are getting access to healthy food.

There are a couple of things that I want to address to the press directly. I’m going to have a chance after this meeting to meet with a number of Flint families so that they can address directly to me their fears and concerns, as well as their hopes, and then I’ll have a chance to speak to a larger audience after that. But a couple of things that I want to focus on right now. Number one is that it is really important, particularly with this expansion of Medicaid, that any parent in the city of Flint takes the time to check to make sure that their kids aren’t affected, that they don’t have elevated lead levels. And I know that that can be hard. Sometimes, folks have difficulty accessing the system. One of the things that we spent a lot of time talking about is, how do we make sure that there is enough community outreach so that people know that there are doctors out there and health providers who will see their children?

But I want everybody in the city of Flint to just know that you should have your child checked, because although lead poisoning or lead impacts can be serious, what is also true is, is that there are a lot of ways to address whatever concerns are raised and to make sure that those kids are healthy and are thriving. So the key is to know, like any other situation where your kid might get sick or have some sort of environmental impact, you’ve got to know what’s going on and then take the steps that are needed to make sure that they get the treatment or the help that they need. And if you don’t know, then that could end up leading to problems.

So we’re really going to emphasize parents accessing the expanded health care providers that are going to be available here in the city of Flint. That’s point number one.

Point number two. I know that there is a lot of suspicion about whether or not the water coming out of people’s taps in their homes are safe or whether they are still contaminated and still a problem. And I want to emphasize that the EPA has looked at this very carefully, and they are very confident that if you use a filter, then it is safe for kids over 6. We’re still, out of an abundance of caution, recommending bottled water for children who are under the age of 6 or pregnant women. But if you’re over 6, then, in fact, filtered water is safe, and it works. And that’s not just the opinion of Federal agencies. A lot of independent studies have been done to confirm that the water is safe.

So, working with the State and the city, filters are now available for everybody in this city. And the key is for people to go ahead and access them and use them. And I’m going to emphasize this when I’m speaking to the larger audience: I understand why people might be mistrustful and concerned. But right now it is safe for you to install a filter in your home or to use a standalone filter and to go ahead and drink that water. But you’ve got to use it. And it’s available to you for free. But people have to have confidence that will work.

That doesn’t mean that we still don’t have to replace a number of the pipes in this city. And the mayor is working hard on a plan to fast-track getting pipe replacement. And the

Governor is budgeting dollars to expand that program. And the congressional delegation of Michigan is working hard so that we get additional funds to help replace those pipes that pose a threat. But that may be a long-term process. It may take a year. It may take 2 years. It might take more to get all the pipes replaced. And in the meantime, folks have to be able to use water. So trust that the tests have been done and the filter system works.

Third point: In order for us to clean out the system, to flush out the contaminants and to have confidence that, as we fix the system, it's actually going to be safe for all the households in Flint, we need everybody in Flint to start helping us flush out that system. And so I guess there's a program called Flush—

*Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Regina McCarthy.* Flush for Flint.

*The President.* Flush for Flint. [Laughter] It's not the most elegant name. [Laughter] But the concept is pretty simple if you think about it, and that is, we need everybody to turn on their tap in the kitchen, in the tub, for 5 minutes a day so that the water is running and whatever contaminants are sitting in there start getting pushed out.

And what that allows us to do is then to go back after some water has been running and the flushing has taken place, then the EPA can go back and test some more and see, all right, where are the levels now? How are we doing in terms of coating the pipes? Is—what steps being taken, are they being effective or do additional steps need to be taken? But we're not going to know that if people just let the water sit there.

Now, I understand if people are scared and they're not using their water, that they may wonder why is it up to me to be part of this process of fixing it. But the bottom line is, if you're not doing your part, then these outstanding folks around the table who want to help can't do theirs.

So I'm urging everybody in Flint to participate in this flushing program. Again, it's a matter of turning on your tap in the kitchen, in the bathroom, 5 minutes a day, just to get that water flowing, getting some of the contaminants

out. It will then be retested after that. All right?

Now, these are all short-term issues. And one of the things that we all emphasized here is that the city of Flint had suffered from some hard times and neglect long before this particular crisis. And what I'm encouraged by is, I think, a recognition at every level of government that we have to take what has been a crisis and see if we can turn this into an opportunity to rebuild Flint even better than before.

The problems of water were a symptom of a broader issue, and that is a city that had lost a lot of resources, lost a lot of its tax base, was cutting a lot of services, and increasingly, didn't have capacity. And so our goal here is to use this moment in which everybody's attention is focused to see if we can start rebuilding and moving Flint in a better direction.

I'm confident that we can do that if we're all working together. And I emphasized to the Governor and I emphasized to the mayor that my job here today is not to sort through all the ins and outs of how we got to where we are, but rather to make sure that all of us are focused on what we need to do moving forward on behalf of the children of Flint. That's my priority. And that's got to be all of our priorities.

And there are times for politics, and there are times for turf battles. This is not one of those times. This is where everybody locks arms and is focused on getting the job done. And I'm very proud of the team: Gina McCarthy at the EPA, Secretary Burwell at Health and Human Services, and everybody who is represented around this table. That's their commitment, and that's their order from me. And Dr. Lurie, who's been heading up the Federal response, I think, has been doing a great job in coordination here.

But all of us are going to have to really keep our eye on the ball, even when the cameras go away. That's what we owe to the people of Flint, and that's what we owe to their kids.

Last point: I think people are understandably scared when they hear that their child may have ingested some lead, it may have gotten into their system, and that that may have some

long-term impacts or create particular challenges for kids. But it is really important for all of us to remember that kids are resilient. And every kid in Flint is special and has capacity and can do great things. And the fact that they may have had some drinking water that was contaminated doesn't automatically mean somehow that they're going to have huge problems or that they're not going to be able to reach that potential.

And so for the parents who are out there, I want to emphasize: Get your child checked, but be confident that your child can thrive and will be fine as long as you know what they need and know how to access the resources that they need. It's useful to remember, just to keep things in perspective, that the laws banning lead paint in homes and reducing the lead that was in our environment, those laws really were put in place just a generation ago.

When I was 5 or 6 or 7, a lot of homes still had lead paint in it. I might have ingested some lead paint when I was 2 or 3 years old, because at the time, people didn't know it. So we've got an entire couple of generations of Americans who have done really well despite the fact that they may have had something that is not optimal. And how lead interacts with any particular child is going to be different, and what each child needs is going to be different. And some kids are going to be fine, and they're not going to be affected. Some kids may have more of an—it might have more of an effect.

But the bottom line is, is that we now know what to do. We know how to mitigate these effects. But parents and communities have to be proactive in order to assure that we're doing the right thing by our kids. We can't just sit back and feel panicked and feel scared. Those

emotions are understandable. But if we want to make sure that our kids are properly taken care of, then we've got to be proactive and get out of—ahead of this thing.

All right? Thank you again, everybody, for the great work that you guys have done. Thank you, press. I will see you again in the larger rally.

#### *Safety of Filtered Water*

*Q.* Is that water there from Flint, sir?

*The President.* It is. There you go. Generally, I have not been doing stunts here, but you know—[laughter].

[At this point, the President sipped from a glass of water.]

*The President.* And this used a filter. The water around this table was Flint water that was filtered. And it just confirms what we know scientifically, which is that if you're using a filter, if you're installing it, then Flint water at this point is drinkable. That does not—I want to repeat—negate the need for us to go ahead and replace some of these pipes, because ultimately, you want a system in which you don't have to put a filter on it in order to be assured that it's safe.

But as a short-term measure, this is the right thing to do. And, frankly, it's going to be a lot more convenient than people traveling long distances to try to lug back a bunch of bottled water. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. at the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan.

## Remarks in Flint May 4, 2016

*The President.* Hello, Flint! How's it going, Wildcats? Well, it is good to be back in Flint, Michigan.

*Audience member.* Obama!

*The President.* That's me! Yes. All right, settle down, everybody. [Laughter]

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. All right, let me do some business here. Let me begin by recognizing some of the guests who are here. Your mayor, Karen Weaver, is here. I know Governor Rick Snyder is here.