

The President's Weekly Address *August 20, 2016*

Hi, everybody. Earlier this summer, Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and I headed west to the national parks at Carlsbad Caverns and Yosemite. And I've got to say, it was a breath of fresh air. We explored hundreds of feet of underground, standing beneath dripping stalactites in New Mexico. We hiked up a misty trail next to a waterfall in California. And I even took a few pictures of my own, which I thought were pretty good.

But the truth is, no camera—especially one with me behind it—can fully capture the beauty and majesty of America's national parks. From Glacier and Denali to Gettysburg and Seneca Falls, our more than 400 parks and other sites capture our history and our sense of wonder. As FDR once said: "There is nothing so American as our national parks. . . . The fundamental idea behind the parks . . . is that the country belongs to the people."

This month, we're celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. And I want to encourage all of you to "Find Your Park" so that you and your family can experience these sacred places too. If you're a military family, you can even get in free through Michelle and Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative. And if you've got a fourth grader in your family, you can get a free pass too, by going to everykidinapark.org.

I hope you do. Because all across the country, the National Park Service is preparing for a big year. We're revitalizing a grove of giant Sequoias in Yosemite, repairing the Lincoln Memorial, and enhancing the iconic entrance to our first national park at Yellowstone.

As President, I'm proud to have built upon America's tradition of conservation. We've protected more than 265 million acres of public lands and waters, more than any administra-

tion in history. We've recovered endangered wildlife species and restored vulnerable ecosystems. We've designated new monuments to Cesar Chavez in California and Pullman porters in Chicago and the folks who stood up for equality at Stonewall in New York to better reflect the full history of our Nation. And we've got more work to do to preserve our lands, culture, and history. So we're not done yet.

As we look ahead, the threat of climate change means that protecting our public lands and waters is more important than ever. Rising temperatures could mean no more glaciers in Glacier National Park, no more Joshua trees in Joshua Tree National Park. Rising seas could destroy vital ecosystems in the Everglades, even threaten Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty.

So, in the coming years and decades, we have to have the foresight and the faith in our future to do what it takes to protect our parks and protect our planet for generations to come. Because these parks belong to all of us. And they're worth celebrating, not just this year, but every year.

Thanks, everybody. Have a great weekend. And see you in the parks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:45 a.m. on July 29 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on August 20. In the address, the President referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 20. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Tour of Flood Damage and an Exchange With Reporters in Zachary, Louisiana August 23, 2016

The President. Well, to begin with, I just want to say thank you to the outstanding officials behind me who have been on the ground, working 24/7 since this flood happened. It begins with outstanding leadership from the top with Governor John Bel Edwards. And we very much appreciate all the outstanding work he's done. His better half, the First Lady of Louisiana, I know has been by his side every step of the way, and we are grateful for her. I know they've got their own cleaning up to do because the Governor's Mansion was flooded as well.

In addition, I want to acknowledge Senator Bill Cassidy, Senator David Vitter, Representative Garret Graves, and Representative Cedric Richmond; the mayor of Baton Rouge, Kip Holden; and somebody who I can't brag enough about, one of the best hires I made as President, the Administrator of FEMA, Craig Fugate, who has done such an outstanding job not just in dealing with this particular incident, but has really rebuilt FEMA so that there's a change of culture. And everybody knows that when the disaster happens, FEMA is going to be there on the ground, cooperating with State and local officials rapidly and with attention to detail, and keeping the families who've been affected uppermost in their minds. So we very much appreciate everything Craig's done.

It's hard, by the way, for Craig to be here because he's a Florida Gator—*[laughter]*—and he's been seeing a lot of LSU T-shirts as we've been passing by.

I just had a chance to see some of the damage from the historic floods here in Louisiana. I come here, first and foremost, to say that the prayers of the entire Nation are with everybody who lost loved ones. We are heartbroken by the loss of life. There are also people who are still desperately trying to track down friends and family. We're going to keep on helping them every way that we can.

As I think anybody who can see just the streets, much less the inside of the homes

here—people's lives have been upended by this flood. Local businesses have suffered some terrible damage. Families have, in some cases, lost homes. They've certainly lost possessions, priceless keepsakes. I was just speaking to a young woman whose husband died shortly after the birth of her second child, and she was talking about how her daughter was trying to gather all the keepsakes that she had in her bedroom that reminded her of her father. And that gives you some sense that this is not just about property damage. This is about people's roots.

You also have a situation where there are a lot of kids who are supposed to start a new school year, and they're going to need some special help and support for a while.

Sometimes, when these kinds of things happen, it can seem a little bit too much to bear. But what I want the people of Louisiana to know is that you're not alone on this. Even after the TV cameras leave, the whole country is going to continue to support you and help you until we get folks back in their homes and lives are rebuilt.

And the reason I can say that with confidence is because that's what Americans do in times like this. I saw it when I visited displaced Louisianans when I came down here as a Senator after Katrina. I saw it when I visited New Orleans for the 10th anniversary last year. I know how resilient the people of Louisiana are, and I know that you will rebuild again. And what I've seen today proves it.

I want to thank all the first responders, the National Guard, all the good neighbors who were in a boat going around and making sure people were safe, showing extraordinary heroism and in some cases risking their own lives. Governor Edwards, the State of Louisiana, the city, the parish governments, they've all stepped up under incredibly difficult circumstances.

I just want to thank the people on this block. As I was walking down, one woman at the end,