

decision is consistent with my fiscal year 2017 Budget and it will not materially affect the Federal Government's ability to attract and retain well-qualified members for the uniformed services.

The adjustments described above shall take effect on January 1, 2017.

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.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Pay Plan for Civilian Federal Employees

August 31, 2016

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

I am transmitting an alternative plan for pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule and certain other pay systems in January 2017.

Title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement alternative pay plans for pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule and certain other pay systems if, because of "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare," I view the adjustments that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate.

Accordingly, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority under 5 U.S.C. 5303(b) and 5304a to set alternative January 2017 across-the-board and locality pay adjustments. Specifically, I have determined that for 2017, across-the-board pay increases will be 1.0 percent. Also, I will make a decision by November 30,

2016, regarding an alternative plan for locality payments under 5 U.S.C. 5304a. The alternative plan for locality payments will be limited so that the total combined cost of the 1.0 percent across-the-board base pay increase and the varying locality pay increases will be 1.6 percent of basic payroll, consistent with the assumption in my 2017 Budget. These decisions will not materially affect our ability to attract and retain a well-qualified Federal workforce.

The adjustments described above shall take effect on the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2017.

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.

Remarks at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress in Honolulu, Hawaii

August 31, 2016

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, welcome to Hawaii. [*Laughter*] It's a—

Audience members. Aloha!

The President. Aloha! [*Laughter*] You know, it's not often I get to welcome folks to my home State. But it's always wonderful to be here, even if it's only for a day. It's even rarer that not one but two hurricanes are set to pass through the is-

lands over the next few days. [*Laughter*] So we've been working with the Governor and FEMA to make sure Hawaii's got everything it needs to keep our folks safe. And in the meantime, I'd just ask the people of Hawaii to listen to your State and local officials, and make sure you and your families are prepared for the storms. But the Governor says he's got it all taken care of. He's pushing them all south. And—[*laughter*].

I want to thank East-West Center President Charles Morrison for hosting all of us this evening. I want to recognize, in addition to the Governor, we also have Senator Brian Schultz—Schatz here. Where is Brian? There he is. I want to thank the 8,000 delegates from more than 180 countries who will share their expertise here at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, including President Zhang Xinsheng and Director General Andersen. To the world leaders and ministers who are here from the Pacific Island Conference of Leaders, thank you for joining us tonight. And I know many of you will be in Washington next month when Secretary Kerry hosts our 2016 Our Oceans Conference.

But today the United States is proud to host the IUCN Congress for the first time. I just came here from another beautiful place: Lake Tahoe, Nevada. And in my address there, I talked about climate change and conservation and how those two things are inextricably linked. Few people understand, I think, the stakes better than our Pacific Island leaders because they're seeing already the impact. Rising temperatures and sea levels pose an existential threat to your countries. And while some Members of the U.S. Congress still seem to be debating whether climate change is real or not, many of you are already planning for new places for your people to live. Crops are withering in the Marshall Islands. Kiribati bought land in another country because theirs may someday be submerged. High seas forced villagers from their homes in Fiji.

And no nation, not even one as powerful as the United States, is immune from a changing climate. I saw it myself last year in our northernmost State of Alaska, where the sea is already swallowing villages and eating away at shorelines; where the permafrost thaws and the tundra is burning; where glaciers are melting at a pace unprecedented in modern times. And it was a preview of our future if the climate keeps changing faster than our efforts to address it.

And that's why I've devoted so much of my time and my energy to making sure that we get this right while we still have time. I spoke

about this at length in a speech earlier today, but over the past 7½ years, America has worked to generate more clean energy, use less dirty energy, and waste less energy overall. And it's made a difference. Our investments have tripled wind power, multiplied solar power thirtyfold, and in many places, helped clean energy become cheaper than dirty energy. And we did all of this while fueling the longest uninterrupted streak of job growth on record.

So there's no conflict between a healthy economy and a healthy planet. And that's why I've committed, along with Canada and Mexico, to get 50 percent of U.S. electricity from clean sources by 2025. And with many of our biggest businesses switching to clean energy, I'm absolutely confident that we can meet that goal.

But that's not all. I've also made sure we're better prepared for the impacts of climate change, because even as we need to hit the brakes so that we don't go over the cliff, we're not going to come to an immediate stop. We know that there is still going to be an inevitable impact as a consequence of rising temperatures. And that means conservation has been a cornerstone of my Presidency.

Since taking office, I've protected more than 548 million acres of our lands and waters for our children and our grandchildren. I have to say that Teddy Roosevelt gets the credit for starting the National Parks system, but when you include a big chunk of the Pacific Ocean, we now have actually done more acreage—*[laughter]*—than any other President. We've designated national monuments from Maine to Ohio to California. And just last week, thanks to the hard work of many people in this room, including Senator Schatz, I created the world's largest marine preserve, quadrupling the size of our monument at Papahānaumokuākea. This is an area twice the size of Texas that's going to be protected, and it allows us to save and study the fragile ecosystem threatened by climate change.

Tomorrow I'm going to travel to the Midway Atoll to see it for myself. Seven thousand species live in its waters, a quarter of which are not found anywhere else in the world. Ancient

islanders believed it contained the boundary between this life and the next. Hundreds of brave Americans gave their lives there in defense of the world's freedom. So this is a hallowed site, and it deserves to be treated that way. And from now on, it will be preserved for future generations.

So I'm very proud of these achievements, but we always have to remind ourselves no nation can do this alone. We're going to have to tackle climate change together. Nations like many of yours obviously feel a special urgency about this. The biggest emitters, like my country and China, have a special responsibility to act to make sure that countries willing to do their part move past the dirty phase of development to move into a clean energy strategy. That was a key principle in the Paris Agreement. And I was mentioning to the leaders here, we could not have gotten a Paris Agreement without the incredible efforts and hard work of the island nations. They made an enormous difference, and we're very proud of the work that they did.

And this is why we've been working to accelerate public-private clean energy innovation, making sure that resources will be there for countries that need help preparing for the impacts of climate change that we can no longer avoid. It's also why tonight I can announce more than \$30 million in new commitments for our friends in the Pacific: funding for investments like stronger infrastructure, more sustainable development, and safer drinking water. So—[*applause*].

From here I'm going to be traveling to China, where we'll be meeting for the G-20 summit, and climate will be a centerpiece of our agenda. Joint U.S.-Chinese leadership on climate was part of the reason that we were able to get Paris done, and I'm going to push to build on that record as long as I occupy this office and probably even after I leave it.

There's an old Hawaiian proverb that loosely translates to "Unite to move forward." It seems simple enough, but the natives used it as a reminder that if you want to row a canoe, every oar has to be moving in unison; otherwise, I don't know, you go in circles. [*Laughter*] You just go around and around. Your pace slows.

You drift. You get caught up in the currents, and you get off course.

Well, when it comes to climate change, there is a dire possibility of us getting off course, and we can't allow that to happen. That's why our united efforts are so important. Government has a role to play but so do scientists and inventors and investors, all working to revolutionize clean energy production. Entrepreneurs and academics and leaders in this room are collaborating across continents. And everyday citizens of the world are going to have to push their own communities to adopt smarter practices and to push those of us in positions of power to be less concerned with special interests and more concerned about the judgment of future generations.

And that's why we're all here. That's what this is all about. And for me, this is especially meaningful. I was telling my staff, a lot of my life started about a mile radius around here. [*Laughter*] My mother and father met probably a couple hundred yards from here. [*Laughter*] It's true. I went to school about a mile from here. I was actually born about a mile from here. [*Laughter*] My grandmother and my grandparents lived most of their lives a short way away from here.

And so, since Malia was born, since my oldest child was born, I've brought them here every Christmas for the last 18 years now. And I want to make sure that when they're bringing their children here or their grandchildren here, that they are able to appreciate the wonders and the beauty of this island and of the Pacific and every island.

So I know you have the same feeling, and that's why we've got to unite to move forward. We have to row as one. If we do, we might just save the one planet that we've got.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:37 p.m. in the Conference Hall at the East-West Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. David Y. Ige of Hawaii. He also referred to Proclamation 9478, signed August 25, which expanded the existing Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument on Midway Atoll

September 1, 2016

Well, let me start by saying that this is hallowed ground. As I said before, the Battle of Midway was a turning point in the battle for the Pacific and World War II. An incredible number of young men lost their lives here protecting our freedom. And for us to be able to visit this monument and remind ourselves of the sailors and airmen and everyone involved who were able to rebuff a Japanese force that vastly outnumbered them is a testament to their courage and their perseverance.

It is also spectacular as an ecosystem. And our ability to not just designate, but build on, this incredible natural beauty, which is home to 7,000 marine species, that sees millions of birds, many of them endangered, sea turtles, the Hawaiian monk seal, black coral—all sorts of species that in many other places we no longer see—for us to be able to extend that 550,000 miles in the way that we've done ensures not only that the Midway Atoll is protected, but that the entire ecosystem will continue to generate the kind of biodiversity. It allows us to study and research and understand our oceans better than we ever have before.

It's also critically important for us to examine the effects that climate change are taking here in the Pacific Ocean, the world's largest body of water. And as I said yesterday, there are countries that now are at risk and may have to move as a consequence of climate change.

There are enormous effects on the human presence in the ocean that creatures are having to adapt to and, in some cases, cannot adapt to.

And so, for us to be able to protect and preserve this national monument, to extend it and, most importantly, to interact with native Hawaiians and other stakeholders so that the way we protect and manage this facility is consistent with ancient traditions and the best science available, this is going to be a precious resource for generations to come. And it's an example of the kind of visionary conservation measures that, although I'm the one who ultimately signs it, reflects the work of a lot of people and a lot of organizations and a lot of participation.

So we've very, very proud of what they've done. And I look forward to knowing that 20 years from now, 40 years from now, 100 years from now, this is a place where people can still come to and see what a place like this looks like when it's not overcrowded or destroyed by human populations.

All right? Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. at Turtle Beach. In his remarks, he referred to Proclamation 9478, signed August 25, which expanded the existing Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Final Report of the Commission on Care

September 1, 2016

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

My Administration is committed to the ongoing transformation of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and I strongly support many of the recommendations and the underlying objectives offered by the Commission on Care (Commission) in its final report transmit-

ted on July 6, 2016. These recommendations underscore the fundamental challenges that face the VA health care system, and the reforms needed to provide America's veterans with the high quality health care they need and deserve—both now and in the future. We have made great strides in delivering improved care to our veterans over the past 8 years, and we