

All right. Now we've actually got to give them medals. [Laughter] So please be patient. We are going to have my military aide read the citations. Each one of them will come up and receive the medals, and then we'll wrap up the program.

Okay? Let's hit it.

[At this point, Lt. Col. Andrew C. Steadman, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals, assisted by Lt. Col. Wesley N. Spurlock III, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President.]

*The President.* So, just on a personal note, part of the reason that these events are so special to me is because everybody on this stage has touched me in a very powerful, personal way, in ways that they probably couldn't imagine. Whether it was having been inspired by a song or a game or a story or a film or a monument or in the case of Newt Minow introducing me to Michelle—[laughter]—these are folks who have helped make me who I am and think about my Presidency, and what also makes them special is, this is America.

And it's useful when you think about this incredible collection of people to realize that this is what makes us the greatest nation on Earth. Not because of what we—not because of our differences, but because, in our difference, we

find something common to share. And what a glorious thing that is. What a great gift that is to America.

So I want all of you to enjoy the wonderful reception that will be taking place afterwards. Michelle and I have to get back to work, unfortunately, but I hear the food is pretty good. [Laughter] And I would like all of you to give one big rousing round of applause to our 2016 honorees for the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Give it up.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Elaine Amerland French, mother of Melinda French Gates, cofounder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; *Apollo 11* crewmember Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr.; Sen. Alan S. Franken; musicians Ringo Starr, Mary Wilson, William "Smokey" Robinson, Steven Van Zandt, and Patti Scialfa; actor Meg Ryan; Rita Wilson, wife of medal recipient Thomas J. Hanks; former National Basketball Association players William T. Walton III, Robert J. Lanier, Joel C. Ehlo, Byron D. Russell, and Larry J. Bird; Berry Gordy, Jr., founder, Motown Records; and Chudney, Evan, and Tracee Ellis Ross, Rhonda Ross Kendrick, and Ross Arne Naess, children of musician Diana Ross. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

## Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony November 23, 2016

*The President.* Hey! Thank you so much, everybody. Please have a seat, have a seat.

For generations, Presidents have faithfully executed two great American traditions: issuing a proclamation that sets aside a Thursday in November for us to express gratitude, and granting pardons that reflect our beliefs in second chances. And this week, we do both. [Laughter]

Of course, Thanksgiving is a family holiday as much as a national one. So, for the past 7 years, I've established another tradition: embarrassing my daughters with a "corny-copia" of dad jokes about turkeys. [Laughter] This year, they had a scheduling conflict. [Laugh-

ter] Actually, they just couldn't take my jokes anymore. [Laughter] They were "fed" up.

*Audience members.* Ooh!

*Audience member.* Hey!

*The President.* Fortunately, I have by my side here today two of my nephews, Austin and Aaron Robinson, who, unlike Malia and Sasha, have not yet been turned cynical by Washington. [Laughter] They still believe in bad puns. They still appreciate the grandeur of this occasion. They still have hope. [Laughter]

Malia and Sasha, by the way, are thankful that this is my final Presidential turkey pardon. What I haven't told them yet is that we are going to do

this every year from now on. [Laughter] No cameras. Just us. Every year. No way I'm cutting this habit cold turkey. [Laughter]

Good one, yes? That was pretty funny. Yes? [Laughter]

Thanksgiving is a chance—[laughter]—to gather with loved ones, reflect on our many blessings, and after a long campaign season, finally turn our attention from polls to poultry. [Laughter] This year, we're honored to be joined by two of the lucky ones, who were raised by the Domino family in Iowa: Tater and Tot.

Now, Tater is here in a backup role, just in case Tot can't fulfill his duties. So he's sort of like the Vice Turkey. [Laughter] We're working on getting him a pair of aviator glasses. [Laughter]

And it is my great privilege—well, it's my privilege; actually, let's just say it's my job—[laughter]—to grant them clemency this afternoon. As I do, I want to take a moment to recognize the brave turkeys who weren't so lucky, who didn't get to ride the gravy train to freedom—[laughter]—who met their faith—fate with courage and sacrifice and proved that they weren't chicken. [Laughter]

[At this point, a baby cried.]

*The President.* Oh, it's not that bad now. Come on. [Laughter]

Of course, we have a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving: 6 straight years of job creation, the longest streak ever; low unemployment. Wages are rising again. Inequality is narrowing. The housing market is healing. The stock market has nearly tripled. Our high school graduation rate is at an alltime high. And our uninsured rate is at an alltime low, thanks to the 20 million more Americans, including millions of children, who finally know the security of health insurance. Proud families—[applause]—that's worth gobbling about. [Laughter]

Proud families across the country are finally complete now that marriage equality is the law of the land. And there are many families of servicemembers who had empty chairs at the table in recent years, but who on this Thanksgiving can celebrate with our brave troops and veterans who we've welcomed home.

Thanksgiving is also a reminder of the source of our national strength: that out of many, we are one; that we're bound not by any one race or religion, but rather by an adherence to a common creed, that all of us are created equal. And while accepting our differences and building a diverse society has never been easy, it has never been more important. We are a people that look out for one another and get each other's backs. We keep moving forward, defined by values and ideals that have been a light to all humanity.

We have to see ourselves in each other, because we've all got families we love, and we all have hopes for their better future. And we lose sight of that sometimes, and Thanksgiving is a good time for us to remember that. We have a lot more in common than divides us.

The holidays are also a time when it's even more important to reach out to those who need a helping hand. I believe we're judged by how we care for the poor and the vulnerable, the sick and the elderly, the immigrant, the refugee, everybody who's trying to get a second chance. I believe that in order to truly live up to those ideals, we have to continually fight discrimination in all its forms and always show the world that America is a generous and giving country.

We should also make sure everyone has something to eat on Thanksgiving—of course, except the turkeys, because they're already stuffed. [Laughter] So, later today the—

*Audience members.* Ooh!

*The President.* [Laughter] So, later today the Obama family will participate in our traditional Thanksgiving service project. And when somebody at your table tells you that you've been hogging all the side dishes and you can't have any more, I hope that you respond with a creed that sums up the spirit of a hungry people: Yes, we cran. [Laughter] That was good. [Laughter] You don't think that's funny? Look, I know there are some bad ones in here, but this is the last time I'm doing this, so we're not leaving any room for leftovers. [Laughter]

Let me just say—how am I doing? Good?

*Austin Robinson.* Good.

*The President.* Thumbs up?

Let me just say one last thing before I spare these turkeys' lives. On this Thanksgiving, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the American people for the trust that you've placed in me over these last 8 years and the incredible kindness that you've shown my family. On behalf of Michelle and my mother-in-law and our girls, we want to thank you so very, very much.

And now, from the Rose Garden, Tater and Tot will go to their new home at Virginia Tech, which is admittedly a bit Hokie. [Laughter] They'll get to live out their natural lives at a new facility called Gobblers Rest, where students and veterinarians will care for them. And so let's get on with the pardoning, because it's Wednesday afternoon, and everyone knows

that Thanksgiving traffic can put people in a "fowl" mood.

*Audience members.* Ooh! [Laughter]

*The President.* Happy Thanksgiving, everybody. Let's go pardon these turkeys. Come on, guys! Come on! Come on!

[*The President pardoned the turkeys, accompanied by his nephews Austin and Aaron L. Robinson.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Storm Lake, IA, turkey farmers Chris and Nicole Domino. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## The President's Weekly Address November 24, 2016

Hi, everybody. On behalf of the Obama family—Michelle, Malia, Sasha, Grandma, Bo, and Sunny—I want to wish you a very happy Thanksgiving. Like so many of you, we'll spend the day with friends and family, turkey and touchdowns. We'll give thanks for each other and for all that God has given us. And we'll reflect on what truly binds us as Americans.

That's never been more important. As a country, we've just emerged from a noisy, passionate, and sometimes divisive campaign season. After all, elections are often where we emphasize what sets us apart. We face off in a contest of us versus them. We focus on the candidate we support instead of some of the ideals that we share.

But a few short weeks later, Thanksgiving reminds us that no matter our differences, we're still one people, part of something bigger than ourselves. We are communities that move forward together. We're neighbors who look out for one another, especially those among us with the least. We are always, simply, Americans.

That's why, through the fog of Civil War, President Lincoln saw what mattered most: the unalienable truths for which so many gave

their lives and which made possible "a new birth of freedom." And so, precisely when the fate of the Union hung in the balance, he boldly proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving, when the Nation's gifts "should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people."

Today we continue to give thanks for those blessings and to all who ensured that they would be our inheritance. We remember the determined patriots who landed at the edge of the world in search of freedom. We give thanks to the brave men and women who defend that freedom in every corner of the world. And we honor all people—from the First Americans to our newest arrivals—who continue to shape our Nation's story, enrich our heritage, and give meaning to our founding values, values we must never take for granted: that in America, we are bound not by any one race or religion, but rather an adherence to a common belief, that all of us are created equal; that we may think and worship and speak and love as we please; that the gift of democracy is ours—and ours alone—to nurture and to protect.

Never doubt, that is what makes us American: not where we come from, what we look