

that ended in January 2014. Since the pay freeze ended, annual adjustments for civilian Federal employees have also been lower than private sector pay increases and statutory formulas for adjustments to the General Schedule for 2014 through 2016. However, we must maintain efforts to keep our Nation on a sustainable fiscal course. This is an effort that continues to require tough choices under current economic conditions.

Under current law, locality pay increases averaging 28.49 percent and costing \$26 billion would go into effect in January 2017. Federal agency budgets cannot sustain such increases. In my August 31, 2016, alternative pay plan submission, I noted that 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. Accordingly, I have determined

that under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, locality-based comparability payments for the locality pay areas established by the President's Pay Agent, in the amounts set forth in the attached table, shall become effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2017.

The locality-based comparability payments for the locality pay rates in the attached table are based on an allocation of 0.6 percent of payroll as indicated in my August 31, 2016, alternative pay plan for adjustments to the base General Schedule. These decisions will not materially affect our ability to attract and retain a well-qualified Federal workforce.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,  
November 29, 2016.

## Remarks During a Meeting With the 2016 United States Nobel Prize Recipients *November 30, 2016*

Well, as we near the end of the year, as many of you know, I've spent a lot of time promoting science and trying to encourage young people to get involved in those disciplines that have driven American innovation and American progress, as well as driven human progress. And one of the best ways for us to be able to do that is to recognize the achievements of some Americans who have received an extraordinary honor: These are our American Nobel Prize winners for this year.

They have done amazing work that for laypersons are sometimes hard to explain. But they are delving into the deepest aspects of matter. They are exploring our ability to manipulate molecules. We also have an economist who is helping to make sure that our market system and our contracts operate in ways that are fair and just, and help us to organize our economic system in ways that are more efficient, but also produce good results for everybody.

So we are incredibly proud of them. And I think it's just a reminder that one of the things

that makes America unique is our ability to attract talent from all around the world to study at some of our greatest universities, and for us to, in very practical, reasoned, fact-based, empirical ways, figure out how we can make the world a slightly better place. And the work that's being done here is going to result in progress, some of which we can't anticipate yet, but will lead to new products, new materials, new technologies. And, most importantly, the work that these gentlemen have done are going to inspire a whole new generation of scholars and scientists and researchers so that we know that this will continue into future generations.

And I'm very, very proud of them. And I'm hopeful that they have a wonderful time at the ceremony. I want to thank the Nobel Committee and the Ambassador of Sweden and all that they do to help to recognize outstanding human achievement, not just in our country, but around the world.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

And I will see you guys at the Christmas Party, all right? So get ready. *[Laughter]* Start jogging now. All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his re-

marks, he referred to 2016 U.S. Nobel Prize winners J. Fraser Stoddart for chemistry, F. Duncan M. Haldane and J. Michael Kosterlitz for physics, and Oliver Hart for economic sciences; and Sweden's Ambassador to the U.S. Björn Olof Lyrvall.

## Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree December 1, 2016

Hello, everybody. Happy holidays to all of you. Eva Longoria, thank you for the wonderful hosting. Kelly Clarkson, we love. To everybody who is here tonight and everybody watching at home, it is now officially the time to light this tree. *[Applause]* Are you guys ready to count down? We're going to start from five. You ready? You sure? Ok, let's go. Five, four, three, two, one! *[Applause]* Hey! Merry Christmas, everybody!

*[At this point, the President exited the stage as the event continued. He later returned and made additional remarks as follows.]*

Merry Christmas, everybody! Well, thank you, Dylan, for that introduction and for all that you do for our parks down in Texas. I also want to thank Reverend Haggins for her beautiful invocation. And as we continue to celebrate the centennial of our national parks, I want to recognize our tremendous Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell; our National Park Service Director, Jonathan Jarvis; and all the rangers and staff from the Park Service and the National Park Foundation. Here's to another 100 years.

Let's give it up for Eva Longoria and this star-studded group we have here performing tonight: gold medalist Simone Manuel, Kelly Clarkson, Yolanda Adams, Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood, Chance the Rapper, the Lumineers, Marc Anthony, James and Kim Taylor. It's like a Christmas edition of Lollapalooza. *[Laughter]*

And this is just another example of why the holidays here at the White House are so special. Last week, I pardoned a turkey. *[Laughter]* Tonight we're lighting the National Christ-

mas Tree. This one is easier because a tree does not move. It does not gobble. *[Laughter]* You just push a button, and it's electrified, which is exactly what you don't want to have happen at a turkey pardon. *[Laughter]* I thought that was funny, Michelle. *[Laughter]* Thankfully, both events have gone off without a hitch.

Along with celebrations like these, the holidays also offer us a time for reflection and perspective. And over these next few weeks, as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, as we retell the story of weary travelers, a star, shepherds, Magi, I hope that we also focus ourselves on the message that this child brought to this Earth some 2,000 years ago, a message that says we have to be our brother's keepers, our sister's keepers; that we have to reach out to each other, to forgive each other; to let the light of our good deeds shine for all; to care for the sick and the hungry and the downtrodden; and of course, to love one another, even our enemies, and treat one another the way we would want to be treated ourselves.

It's a message that grounds not just my family's Christian faith, but that of Jewish Americans, Muslim Americans, nonbelievers, Americans of all backgrounds. It's a message of unity and a message of decency and a message of hope that never goes out of style. And it's one that we all need very much today.

After 8 years as your President, I still believe that there's so much more that unites us than divides us. I've seen it in parents from every corner of this country just trying to give their kids a better shot. I've seen it in communities that come together and find common ground even in times of trial and times of tragedy. We see it in immigrants and refugees striving for