

and I take a picture with them, and it was the last time that I was going to take a picture with my Marine Corps Band after an event, and I got a little choked up. Now, I was in front of marines, so I had to, like, tamp it down. [*Laughter*]

But it was just one small example of all the people who have contributed to our success. I'm responsible for where we've screwed up. The successes are widely shared with all the amazing people who have been part of this administration. Okay?

Thank you, everybody. *Mele Kalikimaka.*

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:40 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; former Counselor to the President John D. Podesta, in his capacity as campaign chairman for 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee Clinton; and Physician to the President and Chief White House Physician Ronny L. Jackson. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Reporters referred to Rex W. Tillerson, chairman and chief executive officer, ExxonMobil; and President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan.

Statement on Signing the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act

December 16, 2016

Today I am signing the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act into law. It authorizes vital water projects across the country to restore watersheds, improve waterways and flood control, and improve drinking water infrastructure. The law also authorizes \$170 million for communities facing drinking water emergencies, including funding for Flint, Michigan, to recover from the lead contamination in its drinking water system. That help for Flint is a priority of this administration. WIIN also includes four Indian water rights settlements that resolve longstanding claims to water and the conflicts surrounding those claims, address the needs of native communities, fulfill the Federal trust responsibility to American Indians, and provide a sound base for greater economic development for both the affected tribes and their non-Indian neighbors.

Title III, subtitle J, of the law has both short-term and long-term provisions related to addressing the continuing drought in California. In the long term, it invests in a number of water projects to promote water storage and supply, flood control, desalination, and water recycling. These projects will help assure that California is more resilient in the face of growing water demands and drought-based uncertainty.

Title III, subtitle J, also includes short-term provisions governing operations of the Federal and State water projects under the Endangered Species Act for up to 5 years, regardless of drought condition. Building on the work of previous administrations, my administration has worked closely with the State of California and other affected parties to address the critical elements of California's complex water challenges by accommodating the needs and concerns of California water users and the important species that depend on that same water. This important partnership has helped us achieve a careful balance based on existing State and Federal law. It is essential that it not be undermined by anyone who seeks to override that balance by misstating or incorrectly reading the provisions of subtitle J. Consistent with the legislative history supporting these provisions, I interpret and understand subtitle J to require continued application and implementation of the Endangered Species Act, consistent with the close and cooperative work of Federal agencies with the State of California to assure that State water quality standards are met. This reading of the short-term operational provisions carries out the letter and spirit of the law and is essential for continuing the cooperation and commitment to accommodating

the full range of complex and important interests in matters related to California water.

NOTE: S. 612, approved December 16, was assigned Public Law No. 114–322.

Statement on the 80th Birthday of Pope Francis *December 16, 2016*

As he marks his 80th birthday tomorrow, I join the American people in extending our best wishes to His Holiness Pope Francis. In both word and deed, Pope Francis has inspired people around the world with his message of compassion, hope, and peace. He has called on us to see ourselves in one another, reach out to those who are at the margins of society, extend mercy, and care for the planet we all share. It was my great honor to wel-

come His Holiness to the White House last year and to work together on common causes. I remain especially grateful for his invaluable support for our work to normalize relations between the United States and Cuba, which I announced on December 17, 2 years ago. Guided by his humble example, may the people of the world move forward together toward true justice and peace for all God’s children.

Statement on Signing the Ensuring Access to Pacific Fisheries Act *December 16, 2016*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 6452, the “Ensuring Access to Pacific Fisheries Act,” which implements the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean, the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean, and the amendments to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries. I recommended that the Senate give its advice and consent to the ratification of all of these treaties because they will help promote sound fishery management; enable us to better combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing; and prevent destructive fishing practices and contribute to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources on the high seas. I appreciate the efforts of the Congress to ensure that the United States can contribute to these international efforts.

The bill provides that the United States will be represented on the North Pacific Fisheries Commission by five commissioners—two appointed by the President, and the three chair-

persons of the North Pacific, Pacific, and Western Pacific Fishery Management Councils, who are selected by the members of those Councils. Because the commissioners have the authority to speak on behalf of the United States before an international body, they are diplomatic officers. The Constitution grants the President the exclusive authority to represent and to decide who else will represent the United States in foreign relations. Allowing the regional fishery management chairpersons to represent the United States on the North Pacific Fisheries Commission would raise constitutional concerns. The executive branch will develop an approach to treat this provision of the statute in a manner that mitigates the constitutional concerns while adhering closely to the intent of the Congress.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
December 16, 2016.

NOTE: H.R. 6452, approved December 16, was assigned Public Law No. 114–327.