

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.

The President's Weekly Address *December 17, 2016*

Hi, everybody. If you've ever played a game of basketball in a gym or entered a contest in school or started a small business in your hometown, you know that competition is a good thing. It pushes us to do our best. And you know that a fight is only fair when everybody has a chance to win, when the playing field is level for everybody and the rules are clear and consistent.

That's important to our consumers, our workers, our employers, and our farmers. You deserve a fair shake, even though there might be much bigger players in the market. Without a truly competitive marketplace, those big companies can raise costs or slack off on offering good service or keep their workers' wages too low. And in an era when large corporations often merge to form even larger ones, our leaders have an even greater responsibility to look out for us as consumers.

To keep America's economy growing and America's businesses thriving, we need to protect the principle of fair competition. That's not, by the way, a Democratic idea or a Republican idea, it is an American idea, because it's the best way to make sure the best ideas rise to the top.

My administration has done a lot to keep the marketplace fair. We defended a free, open, and accessible Internet that doesn't let service providers pick winners and losers. We cracked down on conflicts of interest by making sure professionals who give your retirement advice do so in your best interests, not in theirs. And in the last few months, we've made even more progress.

This week, my Department of Agriculture took major steps to protect farmers from unfair treatment by bigger processors. These rules will help swine, beef cattle, and especially poultry growers who have fewer choices in where they sell their products.

This month, the FDA started taking steps to make hearing aids more affordable for more than the nearly 30 million Americans suffering from the frustration of hearing loss. We think people with moderate hearing loss should be

able to buy a hearing aid over the counter as easily as you can buy reading glasses at your local pharmacy.

This year, we also addressed two other problems that keep workers and wages down: the overuse of noncompete agreements that hurt workers in the job market and the unfair practices of companies that collude to set wages below the market rate. And we backed new steps, including a law I just signed to fight robot scalpers that artificially drive up ticket prices and a rule that requires airlines to reimburse your baggage fees if your bags don't make it to your destination when you do.

Finally, it's this principle of competition that's at the very heart of our health reform. In fact, it's the reason we call it the Affordable Care Act; it makes insurance companies compete for your business, which is helping millions afford the care that helps them get and stay healthy. By the way, it's open enrollment season right now. You can still sign up on healthcare.gov until January 31 and get covered for 2017.

Our free market economy only works when there's competition. And competition only works when rules are in place to keep it fair and open and honest. Whether you're building the next big thing or just want to be treated right as a customer, that's good for you, and it's good for the country.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:30 p.m. on December 16 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on December 17. In the address, the President referred to S. 3183, the Better Online Ticket Sales Act of 2016, which was approved December 14 and assigned Public Law No. 114–274. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 17. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.