

My Administration strongly supports the bill's structural reform of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which streamlines BBG operations and reduces inefficiencies, while retaining the longstanding statutory firewall, protecting against interference with and maintaining the professional independence of the agency's journalists and broadcasters and thus their credibility as sources of independent news and information. Section 1288 would elevate the current Chief Executive Officer of the Broadcasting Board of Governors to the head of the agency and reduce the current members of the Board, unless on expired terms, from serving as the collective head of the agency to serving as advisors to the Chief Executive Officer. While my Administration supports the empowerment of a Chief Executive Officer with the authority to carry out the BBG's important functions, the manner of transition prescribed by section 1288 raises constitutional concerns related to my appointments and removal authority. My Administration will devise a plan to treat this provision in a manner that mitigates the constitutional concerns while adhering closely to the Congress's intent.

Several other provisions in the bill also raise constitutional concerns.

First, section 507 of the bill would authorize certain cabinet officials to "drop from the rolls" military officers without my approval. The Constitution does not allow Congress to authorize other members of the executive branch to re-

move presidentially appointed officers, so I will direct my cabinet members to construe the statute as permitting them to remove the commission of a military officer only if the officer accepts their decision or I approve the removal.

Second, section 553 of the bill would establish a commission, composed primarily of members appointed by the Congress, in the executive branch. Because the commission contains legislative branch appointees, it cannot be located in the executive branch consistent with the separation of powers. My Administration will therefore treat the commission as an independent entity, separate from the executive branch.

Finally, section 1263(d) purports to require me to determine whether a foreign person has committed a sanctionable human rights violation when I receive a request to do so from certain members of Congress. Consistent with the constitutional separation of powers, which limit the Congress's ability to dictate how the executive branch executes the law, I will maintain my discretion to decline to act on such requests when appropriate.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
December 23, 2016.

NOTE: S. 2943, approved December 23, was assigned Public Law No. 114-328.

The President's Weekly Address

December 24, 2016

The President. Merry Christmas, everybody! One of the best parts of the holiday season is spending time with the special people in your life. And for me, that means getting some help from my best friend for our annual Christmas Weekly Address.

The First Lady. Now, given how our first Christmas Weekly Address went, I realized that Barack needed all the help he could get. [Laughter]

[At this point, an outtake from the President's December 24, 2009, Weekly Address video recording was shown, in which the First Lady spoke as follows.]

The First Lady. This is our first Christmas in the White House, and we—

[In the outtake, the President began to laugh, and the First Lady continued as follows.]

The First Lady. What? Stop. What? You know—what? You’ve got to stop it. All right?

[*The President continued to laugh.*]

The First Lady. You’ve got to get it together. You’re going to have to pull it together, POTUS.

[*The outtake concluded, and the First Lady spoke as follows.*]

The First Lady. [Laughter] Celebrating the holidays in the White House over these past 8 years has been a true privilege. We’ve been able to welcome over half a million guests. Our outstanding pastry chefs have baked 200,000 holiday cookies—

The President. That’s a lot of cookies.

The First Lady. —and Barack has treated the American people to countless dad jokes.

The President. They’re great jokes.

The First Lady. Not so funny.

The President. Although a few got a “Frosty” reception.

The First Lady. The last one.

The President. Ha-ha-ha.

The First Lady. This year’s White House holiday theme is “The Gift of the Holidays,” and our decorations reflect some of our greatest gifts as a nation: from our incredible military families to the life-changing impact of a great education.

The President. And the greatest gift that Michelle and I have received over the last 8 years has been the honor of serving as your President and First Lady. Together, we fought our way back from the worst recession in 80 years and got unemployment to a 9-year low. We secured health insurance for another 20 million Americans and new protections for folks who already had insurance. We made America more respected around the world, took on the mantle of leadership in the fight to protect this planet for our kids, and much, much more.

By so many measures, our country is stronger and more prosperous than it was when we first got here. And I’m hopeful we’ll build on the progress we’ve made together in the years to come.

Tomorrow, for the final time as the First Family, we will join our fellow Christians

around the world to rejoice in the birth of our Savior. And as we retell His story from that Holy Night, we’ll also remember His eternal message, one of boundless love, compassion, and hope.

The First Lady. The idea that we are our brother’s keeper and our sister’s keeper. That we should treat others as we would want to be treated. That we care for the sick, feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, no matter where they come from or how they practice their faith.

The President. Those are values that help guide not just my family’s Christian faith, but that of Jewish Americans and Muslim Americans, nonbelievers and Americans of all backgrounds. And no one better embodies that spirit of service than the men and women who wear our country’s uniform and their families.

The First Lady. As always, many of our troops are far from home this time of the year, and their families are serving and sacrificing right along with them. Their courage and dedication allow the rest of us to enjoy this season. That’s why we’ve tried to serve them as well as they’ve served this country. Go to joiningforces.gov to see how you can honor and support the servicemembers, veterans, and military families in your community, not just during the holidays, but all year round.

The President. So, as we look forward to the new year, let’s resolve to recommit ourselves to the values we share. And on behalf of all the Obamas—Michelle, Malia, Sasha, Bo, and that troublemaker Sunny—Merry Christmas, everybody.

The First Lady. And we wish you and your family a happy and healthy 2017. Thanks, and God bless.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:25 p.m. on December 16 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on December 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 24. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii December 25, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Merry Christmas!

Audience members. Merry Christmas!

The President. Aloha! *Mele Kalikimaka!*

Audience members. Aloha!

The President. Thank you so much. Well, I just want to, first of all, thank Colonel Killeen and General Cavanaugh and Sergeant Major Hall and all of you for the unbelievable service that you have rendered our country. This is one of our favorite things to do, because it's one of those circumstances where we get a chance to not just say thank you to our incredible men and women in uniform, but oftentimes, we also get a chance to see some families.

And as Michelle and Jill Biden have worked so diligently to tell the rest of the country, not only do our troops serve, but their families serve alongside them.

[*At this point, the First Lady applauded and cheered.*]

See—[*applause*—]—that's what she just said.

And yesterday, during Christmas, something that I've been doing during Christmas in—

The First Lady. Today is Christmas.

The President. Or yesterday, during Christmas Eve, thank you, but it was Christmas—

The First Lady. He's on vacation. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, no, no, hold on. There's a reason for that slight error, because my time was off. Yesterday I called—as I do every Christmas—some of our folks that are stationed overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan and some in some very remote spots; some of them who, as we speak, are carrying out missions to defeat ISIL, carrying out missions to protect us from all manner of threat.

And just to remind them that, as tough as it is to be deployed, the people here in America, back home, understand that every single day that you're serving, you're fighting for our free-

dom and fighting to keep us safe and fighting to maintain our way of life. It's impossible for us to fully repay what you've done and the sacrifices you make. But at least, it's important to hear from us that what you do matters and that we know about it and that we're grateful and that we'll stay grateful even when many of you end up being out of uniform and are veterans and that we make sure that we're serving you as well you served us.

So I just want all of you to know that it has been the privilege of my life to serve as your Commander in Chief. I know Michelle feels the same way when it comes to being able to stand alongside our military families and our veterans. And although this will be my last time addressing you as President, I want you to know that, as a citizen, my gratitude will remain and our commitment to standing by you every step of the way, that won't stop.

So thank you so much for everything that you've done. I hope you guys have had a wonderful Christmas. Young people, I hope Santa was okay. [*Laughter*] And we look forward to seeing you for many years to come, because I understand that I still have a little bit of rank as ex-President. [*Laughter*] So I still get to use the gym on base—[*laughter*—]—and, of course, the golf course. [*Laughter*]

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. We'll see you taking pictures. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:28 p.m. in the mess hall. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Sean C. Killeen, USMC, commanding officer, and Sgt. Maj. Gregory L. Hall, USMC, sergeant major, Marine Corps Base Hawaii; Brig. Gen. Brian W. Cavanaugh, USMC, deputy commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.