

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2011*

**Statement on the Death of Former President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic**

*December 18, 2011*

I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing today of Vaclav Havel, a playwright and prisoner of conscience who became President of Czechoslovakia and of the Czech Republic. Having encountered many setbacks, Havel lived with a spirit of hope, which he defined as "the ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed." His peaceful resistance shook the foundations of an empire, exposed the emptiness of a repressive ideology, and proved that moral leadership is more powerful than any weapon. He played a seminal role in the Velvet Revolution that won his people their freedom and inspired generations to reach for self-determination and dignity in all parts of the world. He also embodied the aspirations of half a continent that had been cut off by the Iron Curtain and helped unleash tides of history that led to a united and democratic Europe.

Like millions around the world, I was inspired by his words and leadership and was humbled to stand with the Czech people in a free and vibrant Hradcany Square as President. We extend our condolences to President Havel's family and all those in the Czech Republic and around the world who remain inspired by his example. Vaclav Havel was a friend to America and to all who strive for freedom and dignity, and his words will echo through the ages.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : Deaths :: Havel, Vaclav.

*Names:* Havel, Vaclav.

*Subjects:* Czech Republic : Democracy efforts; Deaths : Havel, Vaclav.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201100954.