

mocracy, for the future of our region, that has been absolutely decisive and key in all different directions.

Obviously, there's a very good understanding at a number of levels. We are grateful for your support for our NATO aspirations. We are very grateful for elevating our defense cooperation further and talking about Georgia's self-defense capabilities and developing it, because that's also, of course, an important message back to my nation.

It's very important that you mentioned, obviously, the prospect of a free trade agreement with Georgia, because that's going to attract lots of additional activity to my country and basically helping our nation-building process.

Thank you again for complimenting us on our reforms. Obviously, the reform process is never over, but these reforms would not have happened without strong commitment and support and advice from your administration and from the United States and your people on the ground. We deeply appreciate all this.

Obviously, next—this year we have parliamentary elections which will mark also bring-

ing in another political system, constitution system, with more parliamentary government. And as you rightly mentioned, there is—well, there will be—next year a new President will be elected in Georgia. And that's also important because that's also—will move our democracy forward and will generally get much more to a diversified and pluralistic political scene.

And obviously, I will continue to cooperate with you in all these directions that these gains get solidified, irreversible. And nothing can take Georgia away from this track of progress. Nothing can bring us back to a less democratic, corrupt, retrograde political system or political actors.

And obviously, this was very, very—from my point of view, I'll be—again, my personal gratitude. I'll be leaving this office very happy because we basically got what we wanted to get. Thanks so much.

President Obama. Thank you.

President Saakashvili. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:59 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters January 31, 2012

The President. Hello, everybody. This is our first Cabinet meeting after my State of the Union Address, and it gives me an opportunity to share my ideas and initiatives with my Cabinet, but also to get some feedback from them.

One of the top priorities that I mentioned during the State of the Union was the need for us to small—promote small business. And I'm very pleased that we've got Karen Mills here, who has participated in our meetings before, but is now an official member of the Cabinet. It is a symbol of how important it is for us to spur entrepreneurship, to help startups, to move aggressively so that we can assure more companies that create the most jobs in our economy are getting a leg up from the various programs that we have in our Government.

I mentioned at the State of the Union that there have been discussions, bipartisan discussions between Republicans and Democrats,

about a whole set of measures that can accelerate financing to startup companies, can provide tax breaks to startups and small businesses that are interested in either hiring more workers or increasing their wages, that looks at innovative ways for them to raise capital. And my expectation and hope is, is that they will get a bill together quickly, that they will pass it and get it on my desk. I will sign it right away, and I would like to see that bill signed this year.

In addition, we've got all the Cabinet agencies who are here represented; they are putting forward their own initiatives to enhance the ability of entrepreneurs to get up and running. So, for example, the Department of Homeland Security, my understanding is we're going to be talking about how we can improve the visa process for those who are interested in investing in the United States and starting businesses here in the United States.

I know that the Department of Commerce, Energy, and Education, as well as the SBA, are all launching complementary initiatives to support entrepreneurship as well. And so what we want to do is to make sure that every single agency, even as they're tending to their energy initiatives or providing homeland security or transportation or defense, that we're also thinking about how are we advancing the cause of giving small businesses and entrepreneurs opportunities to start creating the next Google or the next Apple or the next innovative company that's going to create jobs and improve our economy.

It's that kind of all-hands-on-deck approach that is really going to make a difference. And we're looking forward to hearing additional ideas from our Business Council and from

those who are involved in startups that can help to promote these—this agenda.

So thank you all for participating. I'm looking forward to hearing your ideas, and I will see you guys later.

Housing Market

Q. Will we get details on your housing plan tomorrow?

The President. I will talk to you then about it. I wouldn't want to use up all my good stuff now. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks at the Washington Auto Show *January 31, 2012*

Let me just say, when you look at all these cars, it is testimony to the outstanding work that's been done by workers: American workers, American designers. The U.S. auto industry is back. The fact that GM is back, number one, I think shows the kind of turnaround that's possible when it comes to American manufacturing.

And it's good to remember that—the fact that there were some folks who were willing to let this industry die. Because of folks coming together, we are now back in a place where we

can compete with any car company in the world. And these are not only selling here in the United States, they also serve as a platform for us to sell product all around the world.

So I'm just very proud of what we're seeing here. That Camaro with the American eagle and the American flag, that helps tell the story.

So thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser *January 31, 2012*

Thank you so much, Rob, for the introduction. And it's wonderful to see all of you. I'm going to be very brief at the top because I want to spend most of this time in a dialogue.

As Rob said, I see a lot of friends here, people who supported me since way back when, before people could say my name. And as I look around the room, folks from all across the country, I am mindful of the fact that not only

have you done so much to help me be in a position where I can make a difference in America, but separate and apart from my election, so many of you have supported good causes that are making a difference day in and day out. And so I just want to say thank you for that.

As Rob said, the last 3 years, we've obviously gone through historic times, a set of historic challenges: the worst economic crisis and fi-