

ranking passing defense in the country. Asher Clark led the Nation's third-best rushing attack. Tim Jefferson will graduate as the winningest Air Force quarterback of all time and the first quarterback in service academy history to lead his team to four consecutive bowl games.

So these young men have a lot to be proud of. And if the past couple of seasons are any indication of what is to come, Coach Calhoun, we expect the Air Force will be back here this time next year. [*Laughter*] Now, I know Army and Navy will have something to say about that. [*Laughter*] But I know that the next year will take these young men from the Cadet Field House to pilot training, to air bases around the world, in defense of our country. Ultimately, these seniors understand that shut-outs and bowl games and trophies are not nearly as important as the solemn obligation, the solemn oath that they will take in just a few weeks as the newest officers in the world's finest Air Force.

So, gentlemen, I have no higher privilege and no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief, and I look forward to joining you for that important ceremony.

Today we honor the success that these outstanding young men had on the playing field. And we look forward to their continuing excellence on behalf of the Nation. And, cadets, as you look to trade the proud uniform of your team for the proud uniform of your country, I want you to know that this country will stand by you and do everything possible to help you succeed and come home safe.

So God bless all those who serve, and God bless the United States of America, and God bless Air Force.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jon Davis, defensive back, Alex Means, linebacker, Timothy Jefferson, Jr., quarterback, Brady Amack, linebacker, and Asher Clark, running back, U.S. Air Force Academy football team.

## Statement on the Presidential Election in Timor-Leste *April 23, 2012*

I congratulate Taur Matan Ruak on his victory in Timor-Leste's Presidential election and the people of Timor-Leste for successfully participating in a peaceful, free, and transparent election. I also recognize with deep appreciation President Jose Ramos Horta for his close friendship with the United States during his Presidency and look forward to continuing that productive relationship with Taur Matan Ruak.

Our partnership with Timor-Leste is fundamental and enduring. It is based on shared values of democracy, freedom, and human rights. The United States remains steadfast in its support of Timor-Leste's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and consolidate peace and security in the country.

NOTE: The statement referred to President-elect Jose Maria "Taur Matan Ruak" Vasconcelos of Timor-Leste.

## Statement on Department of Defense Initiatives To Combat Sexual Assault in the Military *April 23, 2012*

I applaud the initiatives that Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta and General Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff, have announced to further combat sexual assault in the military. The men and women of the United States military deserve an

environment that is free from the threat of sexual assault and in which allegations of sexual assault are thoroughly investigated, offenders are held appropriately accountable, and victims are given the care and support they need. Elevating these cases to a higher

level of command review is a very important step. I believe that sexual assault has no place in our military. I thank Secretary Panetta and Chairman Dempsey and look forward to seeing continued progress on this important issue.

## Remarks Honoring the National and State Teachers of the Year April 24, 2012

*The President.* Wow, thank you, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Welcome to the White House.

Before we get started, I want to recognize one of our greatest advocates for education and for teachers, our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, is here. Give him a big round of applause.

Now let's face it, a lot of important people visit the White House. [Laughter] But to young people in classrooms around the country, nobody is more important than the men and women that we honor here today, the State and National Teachers of the Year.

These are the kind of teachers who change lives forever. I wouldn't be here today if it were not for teachers like these who challenged me and pushed me and put up with me and inspired me and set me straight when they had to. And I think everybody here can say the exact same thing.

Teachers matter. That's why I often tell young people: If you want a guarantee that you're making a difference every single day, become a teacher. A teacher is the key to a child reaching their potential. And if we need more proof—

[At this point, a baby chattered.]

*The President.* Yes, it's true. [Laughter] Yes. She agrees. [Laughter]

And if we need more proof that teachers matter, all we've got to do is look around this room. I'm honored to be here with teachers like Gay Barnes, from Madison, Alabama, one of the four finalists for this award. There's Angela Wilson, who teaches children of military families at Vicenza Middle School in Italy. Not

a bad place to hang out. [Laughter] There is Alvin Aureliano Davis, who teaches music in Florida.

And there is our 2012 National Teacher of the Year, Rebecca Mielivocki, from Burbank, California. So give Rebecca a big round of applause. And this is Rebecca's crew right here—[laughter]—who are very proud. Auntie and cousins and—[laughter].

*Rebecca Mielivocki.* My boss.

*The President.* Oh, boss. [Laughter] Even more important. [Laughter]

Now, you might say that teaching is in Rebecca's DNA, because both her parents taught in public schools. She saw how hard they worked, how much time and energy they devoted to their jobs, how much they gave to their students.

But when she was 18, of course, the last thing she wanted to be was a teacher. What teenager wants to do what their parents are doing? [Laughter] So, in college, she really rebelled and went to law school. [Laughter]

Now, she then tried a few different careers after that. After studying to become a lawyer, she went into publishing and floral design and event planning. But ultimately, she found herself drawn back to the classroom, and her students are so lucky that she did.

She's got high expectations for her seventh graders and for herself, but she also knows that school can be fun. And that fits a personality that she describes as "a 12-year-old goofball dying to get out." [Laughter] And I have to say, she was a little goofy when I met her. [Laughter] She was back there teasing me and asking Arne about our basketball games and stuff. [Laughter] You can tell she's just got a wonderful spirit.