

The President's Weekly Address

April 28, 2012

On Friday, I traveled to Fort Stewart in Georgia to meet with soldiers from the 3d Infantry Division.

These men and women have fought with bravery and honor in some of the most dangerous places on the planet. Some of them didn't make it back. But those who did are now fighting a different kind of battle here at home. They're looking for new jobs, new opportunities, and new ways to serve.

For many, that means going back to school, and America has a long tradition of making sure our veterans and our men and women in uniform can afford to do that. After World War II, we helped a generation of Americans, including my grandfather, to go to school on the GI bill. Now, thanks to the 9/11 GI bill and the tuition assistance program, last year we supported more than half a million veterans and over 300,000 servicemembers who are pursuing a higher education.

And that's progress. But it's not enough to just help our veterans and servicemembers afford school. We need to make sure they have all the tools they need to make an informed decision when it comes to picking the right program.

The sad truth is, is that there are people out there who are less interested in helping our men and women in uniform get ahead and more interested in making a buck. They bombard potential students with e-mails and pressure them into making a quick decision. Some of them steer recruits towards high-interest loans and mislead them about credit transfers and job placement programs. One of the worst examples was a college recruiter who visited a marine barracks and enrolled marines with brain injuries so severe that some of them

couldn't recall what courses the recruiter had signed them up for.

That's appalling. It's disgraceful. And even though the vast majority of schools do the right thing, we need to guard against the bad actors who don't.

That's why, on Friday, I signed an Executive order making life a whole lot more secure for our servicemembers, veterans, and their families, and a whole lot tougher for anyone who tries to prey on them.

We're making sure veterans and servicemembers get a simple fact sheet called "Know Before You Owe" that lays out all the information they need about financial aid and paying for college. We're requiring schools to offer counseling to help students finish their degree even if they have to move or deploy. And we're stepping up our efforts to fight dishonest recruiters by strengthening the rules about who can come on base and make it easier to file complaints.

When our men and women in uniform succeed, our country succeeds. They have our backs; now it's our turn to have theirs. And as long as I'm President, I'm going to make sure that anyone who serves this country gets every opportunity they deserve.

Thank you, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4 p.m. on April 27 in the Grand Foyer at the White House for broadcast on April 28. In the address, the President referred to Executive Order 13607, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 28.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

April 28, 2012

The President. Thank you. Good evening, everybody. Good evening. I could not be more

thrilled to be here tonight—[laughter]—at the White House Correspondents' Dinner. This is

a great crowd. They're already laughing. It's terrific.

Chuck Todd, love you, brother. [Laughter] I'm delighted to see some of the cast members of "Glee" are here. [Laughter] And Jimmy Kimmel, it's an honor, man. [Laughter] What's so funny?

My fellow Americans, we gather during a historic anniversary. Last year at this time—in fact, on this very weekend—we finally delivered justice to one of the world's most notorious individuals.

[At this point, a photograph of Trump Organization Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Donald J. Trump was shown.]

Now, this year, we gather in the midst of a heated election season. And Axelrod tells me I should never miss a chance to reintroduce myself to the American people. So tonight this is how I'd like to begin: My name is Barack Obama. My mother was born in Kansas. My father was born in Kenya. And I was born, of course, in Hawaii. [Laughter]

[The President winked at the audience.]

In 2009, I took office in the face of some enormous challenges. Now, some have said I blame too many problems on my predecessor, but let's not forget that's a practice that was initiated by George W. Bush. [Laughter] Since then, Congress and I have certainly had our differences; yet, I've tried to be civil, to not take any cheap shots. And that's why I want to especially thank all the Members who took a break from their exhausting schedule of not passing any laws to be here tonight. [Laughter] Let's give them a big round of applause.

Despite many obstacles, much has changed during my time in office. Four years ago, I was locked in a brutal primary battle with Hillary Clinton. Four years later, she won't stop drunk-texting me from Cartagena. [Laughter]

Four years ago, I was a Washington outsider. Four years later, I'm at this dinner. Four years ago, I looked like this.

[A photograph of the President during his 2008 election campaign was shown.]

Today, I look like this. [Laughter]

[A recent photograph of the President was shown.]

And 4 years from now, I will look like this. [Laughter]

[A photograph of actor Morgan Freeman was shown.]

That's not even funny. [Laughter]

Anyway, it's great to be here this evening in the vast, magnificent Hilton ballroom, or what Mitt Romney would call a little fixer-upper. [Laughter] I mean, look at this party. We've got men in tuxes, women in gowns, fine wine, first-class entertainment. I was just relieved to learn this was not a GSA conference. [Laughter] Unbelievable. Not even the mindreader knew what they were thinking. [Laughter]

Of course, the White House Correspondents' dinner is known as the prom of Washington, DC, a term coined by political reporters who clearly never had the chance to go to an actual prom. [Laughter]

Our chaperone for the evening is Jimmy Kimmel, who is perfect for the job since most of tonight's audience is in his key demographic, people who fall asleep during "Nightline." [Laughter] Jimmy got his start years ago on "The Man Show." In Washington, that's what we call a congressional hearing on contraception. [Laughter]

And plenty of journalists are here tonight. I'd be remiss if I didn't congratulate the Huffington Post on their Pulitzer Prize. You deserve it, Arianna. There's no one else out there linking to the kinds of hard-hitting journalism that HuffPo is linking to every single day. [Laughter] Give them a round of applause. And you don't pay them. It's a great business model. [Laughter]

Even Sarah Palin is getting back into the game, guest hosting on the "Today" show, which reminds me of an old saying: What's the difference between a hockey mom and a pit

bull? A pit bull is delicious. [Laughter] A little soy sauce—[laughter].

Now, I know at this point many of you are expecting me to go after my likely opponent, Newt Gingrich. [Laughter] Newt, there's still time, man. [Laughter] But I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to attack any of the Republican candidates. Take Mitt Romney. He and I actually have a lot in common. We both think of our wives as our better halves, and polls show, to a alarmingly insulting extent, the American people agree. [Laughter] We also both have degrees from Harvard; I have one, he has two. What a snob. [Laughter]

Of course, we've also had our differences. Recently, his campaign criticized me for slow jamming the news with Jimmy Fallon. In fact, I understand Governor Romney was so incensed he asked his staff if he could get some equal time on "The Merv Griffin Show." [Laughter] Still, I guess Governor Romney is feeling pretty good about things because he took a few hours off the other day to see "The Hunger Games." Some of you have seen it. It's a movie about people who court wealthy sponsors and then brutally savage each other until only one contestant is left standing. I'm sure this was a really great change of pace for him. [Laughter] I have not seen "The Hunger Games," not enough class warfare for me. [Laughter]

Of course, I know everybody is predicting a nasty election, and thankfully, we've all agreed that families are off limits. Dogs, however, are apparently fair game. [Laughter] And while both campaigns have had some fun with this, the other day I saw a new ad from one of these outside groups that, frankly, I think crossed the line. I know Governor Romney says he has no control over what his super PACs do, but can we show the ad real quick?

[A video was shown.]

The President. That's pretty rough—[laughter]—but I can take it, because my stepfather always told me, it's a boy-eat-dog world out there. [Laughter]

Now, if I do win a second term as President, let me just say something to all the—[apause]—let me just say something to all my

conspiracy-oriented friends on the right who think I'm planning to unleash some secret agenda: You're absolutely right. [Laughter] So allow me to close with a quick preview of the secret agenda you can expect in a second Obama administration.

In my first term, I sang Al Green; in my second term, I'm going with Young Jeezy. [Laughter]

The First Lady. Yeah.

The President. Michelle said, "Yeah." [Laughter] I sing that to her sometimes. [Laughter]

In my first term, we ended the war in Iraq; in my second term, I will win the war on Christmas. [Laughter] In my first term, we repealed the policy known as "don't ask, don't tell"—[applause]—wait, though; in my second term, we will replace it with a policy known as "It's Raining Men." [Laughter] In my first term, we passed health care reform; in my second term, I guess I'll pass it again.

I do want to end tonight on a slightly more serious note. Whoever takes the oath of office next January will face some great challenges, but he will also inherit traditions that make us greater than the challenges we face. And one of those traditions is represented here tonight: a free press that isn't afraid to ask questions, to examine, and to criticize. And in service of that mission, all of you make sacrifices.

Tonight we remember journalists such as Anthony Shadid and Marie Colvin, who made the ultimate sacrifice as they sought to shine a light on some of the most important stories of our time. So whether you are a blogger or a broadcaster, whether you take on powerful interests here at home or put yourself in harm's way overseas, I have the greatest respect and admiration for what you do. I know sometimes you like to give me a hard time—and I certainly like to return the favor—[laughter]—but I never forget that our country depends on you. You help protect our freedom, our democracy, and our way of life.

And just to set the record straight, I really do enjoy attending these dinners. In fact, I had a lot more material prepared, but I have to get the Secret Service home in time for their new curfew. [Laughter]

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent, NBC News; James C. Kimmel, host, ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" program; David M. Axelrod, communications director of the President's 2012 election campaign; Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and his wife

Ann; Arianna Huffington, founder and editor in chief, the Huffington Post; former Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska; Republican Presidential candidate Newton L. Gingrich; James T. Fallon, Jr., host, NBC's "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon" program; and musicians Al Green and Jay W. "Young Jeezy" Jenkins. He also referred to journalists Anthony Shadid, who died while on assignment in Syria on February 16, and Marie Colvin, who was killed while on assignment in Homs, Syria, on February 19.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in McLean, Virginia April 29, 2012

The President. Thank you so much. It's always good to be in Virginia.

To Dorothy, most of all—[laughter]—but also to this guy here, Terry—[laughter]—I want to thank the McAuliffe family for this incredible hospitality. Jack, we could not be prouder of you. You look sharp in whites, man. [Laughter] And to the whole family, it is a—I'm sure Terry and Dorothy feel the way Michelle and I feel about Malia and Sasha and the way Bill feels about—Bill and Hillary feel about Chelsea. There's nothing we do that's more important than raising our kids. And when we see outstanding young people like this, it gives us a lot of satisfaction.

A couple of other people I want to mention. It was already noted that the next U.S. Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Tim Kaine, is here. I love Tim Kaine. One of the finest men I know and just a great friend and was a great Governor here, obviously.

You also have an outstanding Congressman in Jim Moran in the house. And I need to acknowledge—because some of you know I am a former State senator, so I never pass up the chance to introduce State senators—Barbara Favola is here, and this is her district, and we love State senators. Where's Barbara? She's over there somewhere. Good to see you, Barbara.

Well, you guys get two Presidents for one out of this event—[laughter]—which is a pretty good deal. [Laughter] And I was—as I was

listening to President Clinton speaking, I was just thinking about the remarkable record that he was able to create during his Presidency and his singular capacity to be able to explain very difficult concepts in very understandable terms to the American people. A master communicator. But more importantly than his communication skills was, Bill Clinton understood at a time when, let's face it, the Democratic Party was a little bit lost, he understood what it meant to refocus not on ideology, not on abstractions, but focus on where people live, what they're going through day to day.

And early in our party in such a way that we were thinking about what has always been the central promise of America, the idea that if you work hard, if you play by the rules, if you're responsible, then you can live out that basic American promise: the idea that you can find a job that pays a decent living and buy a home and send your kids to school and not have to worry, if you get sick, that you might go bankrupt, and retire with dignity and respect.

And everything he did, all the years that he was in office, was designed to give people the tools to help fulfill that promise. And he did so to a remarkable degree. Terry mentioned the record.

And ever since that time, because of Bill Clinton's leadership, I think that when you look at the Democratic Party and what we've stood for, it has been squarely at the center of how the American people think and what they