

And the answer to your question, sir—and the next time I'd prefer you let me finish my statements before you ask that question—is this is the right thing to do for the American people——

Mr. Munro. [Inaudible]

The President. I didn't ask for an argument. I'm answering your question.

Mr. Munro. I'd like to——

The President. It is the right thing to do——

Mr. Munro. [Inaudible]

The President. ——for the American people. And here's why——

Mr. Munro. ——high unemployment——

The President. Here's the reason: because these young people are going to make extraordinary contributions and are already making contributions to our society.

I've got a young person who is serving in our military, protecting us and our freedom. The notion that in some ways we would treat them as expendable makes no sense. If there's a

young person here who has grown up here and wants to contribute to this society, wants to maybe start a business that will create jobs for other folks who are looking for work, that's the right thing to do. Giving certainty to our farmers and our ranchers, making sure that in addition to border security, we're creating a comprehensive framework for legal immigration, these are all the right things to do.

We have always drawn strength from being a nation of immigrants, as well as a nation of laws, and that's going to continue. And my hope is that Congress recognizes that and gets behind this effort.

All right. Thank you very much.

Mr. Munro. What about American workers who are unemployed while you import foreigners?

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:09 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President George W. Bush.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month

June 15, 2012

Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. We are glad all of you could join us today. I want to thank the Members of Congress and the members of my administration who are here, including our friends who are doing outstanding work every day: John Berry, Nancy Sutley, Fred Hochberg.

Now, each June since I took office, we've gathered to pay tribute to the generations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans who devoted their lives to our most basic ideals: equality not just for some, but for all. Together, we've marked major milestones like the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, when a group of brave citizens held their ground against brutal discrimination. Together, we've honored courageous pioneers who, decades ago, came out and spoke out, who challenged unjust laws and destructive prejudices. Together, we've stood resolute, unwav-

ering in our commitment to advance this movement and to build a more perfect Union.

Now, I've said before that I would never counsel patience, that it wasn't right to tell you to be patient any more than it was right for others to tell women to be patient a century ago or African Americans to be patient a half century ago. After decades of inaction and indifference, you have every reason and right to push, loudly and forcefully, for equality. But 3 years ago, I also promised you this: I said that even if it took more time than we would like, we would see progress, we would see success, we would see real and lasting change. And together, that's what we're witnessing.

For every person who lost a loved one at the hand of hate, we ended a decade of delay and finally made the Matthew Shepard Act the law of the land. For every person with HIV who was treated like an outcast, we lifted the HIV entry ban. And because of that important

step, next month, for the first time in more than two decades, the International AIDS Conference will be held right here in the United States.

For every American diagnosed with HIV who couldn't get access to treatment, we put forward a National HIV/AIDS Strategy, because who you are should never affect whether you get life-extending care. Marjorie Hill, the head of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, is here. GMHC has saved so many lives, and this year they are celebrating their 30th anniversary. So I want to give them and all these organizations who work to prevent and treat HIV a big round of applause. Give it up for Marjorie and everybody else.

For every partner or spouse denied the chance to comfort a loved one in the hospital, to be by their side at their greatest hour of need, we said, enough. Hospitals that accept Medicare or Medicaid, and that is most of them, now have to treat LGBT patients just like any other patient. For every American denied insurance just for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, we passed health insurance reform, which will ban that kind of discrimination.

We've expanded benefits for same-sex partners of Federal employees, prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender identity for workers in the Federal Government. We've supported efforts in Congress to end the so-called Defense of Marriage Act. And as we wait for that law to be cast aside, we've stopped defending its constitutionality in the courts.

We've put forward a strategy to promote and protect the rights of LGBT communities all over the world, because, as Secretary Clinton said back in December, gay rights are human rights.

And of course, last year we finally put an end to "don't ask, don't tell" so that nobody would ever have to ever again hide who they love in order to serve the country they love. And I know we've got some military members who are here today. I'm happy to see you with your partners here. We thank you for your service. We thank your families for their service, and

we share your joy at being able to come with your spouses or partners here to the White House with your Commander in Chief.

Now, we know we've got more to do. Americans may feel more comfortable bringing their partners to the office barbecue, but we're still waiting for a fully inclusive "Employment Non-Discrimination Act." Congress needs to pass that legislation so that no American is ever fired simply for being gay or transgender.

Americans may be able to serve openly in the military, but many are still growing up alone and afraid, picked on, pushed around for being different. And that's why my administration has worked to raise awareness about bullying. And I know—I just had a chance to see Lee Hirsch, the director of "Bully," who is here. And we thank him for his work on this issue.

I want to acknowledge all the young leaders here today who are making such a big difference in their classrooms and in their communities. And Americans may be still evolving when it comes to marriage equality, but—[laughter]—but as I've indicated personally, Michelle and I have made up our minds on this issue. And we believe that same-sex couples should be treated equally.

So we still have a long way to go, but we will get there. We'll get there because of all of you. We'll get there because of all of the ordinary Americans who, every day, show extraordinary courage. We'll get there because of every man and woman and activist and ally who is moving us forward by the force of their moral arguments, but more importantly, by the force of their example.

And as long as I have the privilege of being your President, I promise you, you won't just have a friend in the White House, you will have a fellow advocate for an America where, no matter what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can dream big dreams and dream as openly as you want.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:16 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.