

journalist Nguyen Van Hai by his pen name Dieu Cay; Marilyn J. Mosby, State's attorney, Baltimore, MD; Freddie C. Gray, Jr., who died on April 19 from injuries sustained during his arrest by Baltimore, MD, police officers on April 12; Caesar Goodson, Lt. Brian

Rice, Edward Nero, William Porter, Sgt. Alicia White, and Garrett Miller, Baltimore, MD, police officers who were charged on May 1 in connection with the death of Mr. Gray; and Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch.

## The President's Weekly Address

May 2, 2015

Hi, everybody. I'm speaking with you from the DC Public Library in Anacostia, where I just met with a group of promising middle school students. We spent some time talking about their lives and how we all care about their success and how that starts with a good education.

So one thing I announced here in Anacostia is a new project by libraries and major publishers to provide more than \$250 million in free eBooks for low-income students. We also issued a challenge to mayors, libraries, and school leaders to help every student get a library card so they can expand their horizons in a place like this.

It's all part of our ConnectED initiative to connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet. Because no matter who you are, where you live, or how much money you've got, you should be able to access the world's knowledge and information just like anyone else. In a global economy, we've got to help ensure that everyone, of every age, in every ZIP Code—urban and rural—has the chance to learn the skills that lead directly to a good job.

It's also why I've put forward a plan to make 2 years of community college as free and uni-

versal for every American as high school is today. It's something I'll talk about in my commencement address next week at Lake Area Tech, in the small town of Watertown, South Dakota. It's a community college with a graduation rate that is nearly twice the national average. They're proving that a great education can be within everyone's reach.

All of us have a responsibility to not only make sure our own children have pathways to success, but that all children do. And a great education is the ticket to a better life like never before. Making sure all our kids receive one is the surest way to show them that their lives matter. And it's the smartest way to prove to them that in communities like this and in a country like ours, we believe in opportunity for all.

Thanks, everybody. And have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12 p.m. on April 30 in Room 1 of the Anacostia Neighborhood Library for broadcast on May 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 1, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 2.

## Statement Congratulating Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, of the United Kingdom on the Birth of Their Daughter

May 2, 2015

Michelle and I are delighted to congratulate the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, her Majesty the Queen and the royal family, and all the people of the United Kingdom on the birth of the Royal Princess. On be-

half of the American people, we wish the Duke and Duchess and their son George much joy and happiness on the occasion of the arrival of the newest member of their family.

NOTE: The statement referred to Queen Elizabeth II of England. This statement was re-

leased by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

## Remarks at a Roundtable Discussion on Expanding Opportunity for Young People at Lehman College in New York City *May 4, 2015*

Well, I just had an opportunity to have a conversation with some outstanding young men, many of them from here in New York, a few of them who have come as distant as California, Boston. We've got some folks from Jersey.

I want to thank Joe Echevarria, who has been heading up our My Brother's Keeper Alliance, the private-sector component of what we're doing. I'm going to have a lot more to say about that during my formal remarks. But if you have any doubt about the incredible promise and potential of America, then you need to get to know these young men, because they are examples of intelligence, hard work, empathy and compassion, street smarts. And all these young men are going to do incredible things with their lives. Many of them are already doing incredible things with their lives.

Part of what we wanted to do was to make sure we heard directly from young people who oftentimes are growing up in really tough situations: single-parent households, low-income communities, crime-infested areas. We've heard stories of some of these young men being stopped and put on the ground by police for no reason, domestic abuse inside the household, situations where the schools don't seem to be invested in their success.

And yet, despite all that, these young men are succeeding in some remarkable ways. And part of what I heard from them was that they're succeeding because somewhere along the line they've received a mentor, somebody who's just paying attention to them and giving them some sense of direction. Part of what we've heard is that they've had the opportunity in some way to participate in community service and to get involved and have been able to

show themselves that they matter and they count and that they can make amazing things happen in their own communities.

And what all of them suggested is, is that if we're going to be successful in addressing some of the challenges that young men of color face around the country, that their voices have to be part of how we design programs and how we address these issues. Because they've got a lot to say, and what they say is powerful and makes a big difference.

So I just want to say to all of them how proud I am of you, how grateful I am to you. I want to thank John Legend to participate. John has been doing a lot of work on his own time, not just around "My Brother's Keeper," but dealing with issues in the criminal justice system and incarcerations and how we can steer how we interact with communities of color and low-income communities in a different direction. So we appreciate his leadership.

I'm very excited about what we can get done, but the main reason I'm excited is because listening to all these young men, I know that the future will be in good hands as long as we're giving them the support and the love that they need.

All right? Thank you, everybody. We'll see you outside.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. in Hearth Room 330 of the Music Building. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph J. Echevarria, Jr., former chief executive officer, Deloitte LLP, in his capacity as Cochair and Interim Chief Executive Officer of the White House "My Brother's Keeper" initiative; and musician John Legend, in his capacity as honorary chairman of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance.

## Remarks Announcing the My Brother's Keeper Alliance at Lehman College in New York City

May 4, 2015

Hello, New York! Give Darinel a big round of applause for that introduction. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. We are so proud of Darinel. We want to thank him for being such a great role model for other students here in New York and around the country.

I want to give a shout-out to a friend of mine who happens to be your assemblyman, Michael Blake. Where's Michael? He is around here somewhere. There he is. Michael—you've got to stand up, Michael. *[Laughter]* We're still teaching him about politics. When the President introduces you, you've got to stand up. *[Laughter]* Get some TV time. *[Laughter]*

So Mike grew up in tough circumstances as well. He worked hard, went to a good college. He joined my campaign, worked in the White House. Now he's in public office to make sure that other young people like him have every chance in the world. So we couldn't be prouder of him. It's great to see.

So I'm getting practice for Malia and Sasha leaving home. I've got all these incredible young people who worked on the White House staff who are now doing all kinds of great things.

I want to thank all the members of Congress and elected officials who are in the house. You've got a couple of proud Lehman graduates: Eliot Engel—where's Eliot? There he is. And Jose Serrano. And we've got some more folks—we've got three other folks from the New York delegation: Gregory Meeks, the always dapper Charlie Rangel, the outstanding Yvette Clarke. And visiting from Florida, Frederica Wilson. But they all share the same passion that I do, and that is making sure every young person in this country has opportunity.

And that's why we're all here today. Because we believe in the idea that no matter who you are, no matter what you look like, no matter where you came from, no matter what your circumstances were, if you work hard, if you take

responsibility, then America is a place where you can make something of your lives.

And I want to thank Lehman for hosting us here today. And our community college system, the CUNY system, our public education institutions—they are all pathways for success. And we're very proud of what they do.

Everything that we've done since I've been President, the past 6½ years, from rescuing the economy to giving more Americans access to affordable health care to reforming our schools for all of our kids, it's been pursuit—it's been in pursuit of that one goal: creating opportunity for everybody. We can't guarantee everybody's success. But we do strive to guarantee an equal shot for everybody who's willing to work for it.

But what we've also understood for too long is that some communities have consistently had the odds stacked against them; that there's a tragic history in this country that has made it tougher for some. And folks living in those communities, and especially young people living in those communities, could use some help to change those odds.

It's true of some rural communities where there's chronic poverty. It's true of some manufacturing communities that have suffered after factories they depended on closed their doors. It's true for young people of color, especially boys and young men.

You all know the numbers. By almost every measure, the life chances of the average young man of color is worse than his peers. Those opportunity gaps begin early—often at birth—and they compound over time, becoming harder and harder to bridge, making too many young men and women feel like no matter how hard they try, they may never achieve their dreams.

And that sense of unfairness and of powerlessness, of people not hearing their voices, that's helped fuel some of the protests that we've seen in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and right here in New York. The catalysts

of those protests were the tragic deaths of young men and a feeling that law is not always applied evenly in this country. In too many places in this country, Black boys and Black men, Latino boys, Latino men, they experience being treated differently by law enforcement: in stops and in arrests and in charges and incarcerations. The statistics are clear, up and down the criminal justice system. There's no dispute.

That's why one of the many things we did to address these issues was to put together a Task Force on community policing. And this Task Force was made up of law enforcement and of community activists, including some who had led protests in Ferguson, some who had led protests here in New York, young people whose voices needed to be heard. And what was remarkable was, law enforcement and police chiefs and sheriffs and county officials working with these young people, they came up with concrete proposals that, if implemented, would rebuild trust and help law enforcement officers do their jobs even better and keep them and their communities even safer.

And what was clear from this Task Force was the recognition that the overwhelming majority of police officers are good and honest and fair and care deeply about their communities. And they put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe. And their loved ones wait and worry until they come through that door at the end of their shift.

As many of you know, New York's finest lost one of its own today, Officer Brian Moore, who was shot in the line of duty on Saturday night, passed away earlier today. He came from a family of police officers. And the family of fellow officers he joined in the NYPD and across the country deserve our gratitude and our prayers not just today, but every day. They've got a tough job.

Which is why, in addressing the issues in Baltimore or Ferguson or New York, the point I made was that if we're just looking at policing, we're looking at it too narrowly. If we ask the police to simply contain and control problems that we ourselves have been unwilling to invest and solve, that's not fair to the communities, and it's not fair to the police. What we

gathered here to talk about today is something that goes deeper than policing. It speaks to who we are as a nation and what we're willing to do to make sure that equality of opportunity is not an empty word.

Across the country and in parts of New York, in parts of New Jersey, in parts of my hometown in Chicago, there are communities that don't have enough jobs, don't have enough investment, don't have enough opportunity. You've got communities with 30- or 40- or 50-percent unemployment. They've been struggling long before the economic crisis in 2007, 2008. Communities without enough role models. Communities where too many men who could otherwise be leaders, who could provide guidance for young people, who could be good fathers and good neighbors and good fellow citizens are languishing in prison over minor, nonviolent drug offenses.

Now, there's no shortage of people telling you who and what is to blame for the plight of these communities. But I'm not interested in blame. I'm interested in responsibility, and I'm interested in results.

And that's why we've partnered with cities to get more kids access to quality early childhood education, no matter who they are or where they're born. It's why we've partnered with cities to create Promise Zones, to give a booster shot to opportunity. That's why we've invested in ideas from support for new moms to summer jobs for young people, to helping more young people afford a college education.

And that's why, over a year ago, we launched something we call "My Brother's Keeper," an initiative to address those persistent opportunity gaps and ensure that all of our young people, but particularly young men of color, have a chance to go as far as their dreams will take them. It's an idea that we pursued in the wake of Trayvon Martin's death because we wanted it—the message sent from the White House in a sustained way that his life mattered, that the lives of the young men who are here today matter, that we care about your future, not just sometimes, but all the time.

In every community in America, there are young people with incredible drive and talent,

and they just don't have the same kinds of chances that somebody like me had. They're just as talented as me, just as smart. They don't get a chance. And because everyone has a part to play in this process, we brought everybody together. We brought business leaders and faith leaders, mayors, philanthropists, educators, entrepreneurs, athletes, musicians, actors, all united around the simple idea of giving all our young people the tools they need to achieve their full potential.

And we were determined not to just do a feel-good exercise, to write a report that nobody would read, to do some announcement, and then once the TV cameras had gone away and there weren't protests or riots, then somehow we went back to business as usual. We wanted something sustained. And for more than a year, we've been working with experts to identify some of the key milestones that matter most in every young person's life, from whether they enter school ready to learn to whether they graduate ready for a career. Are they getting suspended in school? Can we intervene there? Are they in danger of falling into the criminal justice system? Can we catch them before they do? Key indicators that we know will make a difference. If a child is reading by the third grade at grade level, we know they've got a chance of doing better. If they aren't involved with the criminal justice system and aren't suspended while they're in school, we know they've got a chance of doing better. So there are certain things that we knew would make a difference.

And we've looked at which programs and policies actually work in intervening at those key periods. Early childhood education works. Job apprenticeship programs work. Certain mentoring programs work. And we've identified which strategies make a difference in the lives of young people, like mentoring or violence prevention and intervention.

And because we knew this couldn't be the work of just the Federal Government, we challenged every community in the country—big cities, small towns, rural counties, tribal nations—to publicly commit to implementing strategies to help all young people succeed.

And as a result, we've already got more than 200 communities across the country who are focused on this issue. They're on board, and they're doing great work. They're sharing best practices. They're sharing ideas.

All of this has happened just in the last year. And the response we've gotten in such a short amount of time, the enthusiasm and the passion we've seen from folks all around the country, proves how much people care about this. Sometimes, politics may be cynical, the debate in Washington may be cynical, but when you get on the ground and you talk to folks, folks care about this. They know that how well we do as a nation depends on whether our young people are succeeding. That's our future workforce.

They know that if you've got African American or Latino men here in New York who instead of going to jail are going to college, those are going to be taxpayers. They're going to help build our communities. They will make our communities safer. They aren't part of the problem, they're potentially part of the solution, if we treat them as such.

So we've made enormous progress over the last year. But today, after months of great work on the part of a whole lot of people, we're taking another step forward, with people from the private sector coming together in a big way. We're here for the launch of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, which is a new nonprofit organization of private sector organizations and companies that have committed themselves to continue the work of opening doors for young people—all our young people—long after I've left office. It's a big deal.

I want to thank the former CEO of Deloitte, Joe Echevarria, who's been involved for a long time. He has taken the lead on this alliance. Joe, stand up. You've done an incredible job. Just like the "My Brother's Keeper" overall effort that we launched last year, Joe and My Brother's Keepers Alliance—they're all about getting results. They've set clear goals to hold themselves accountable for getting those results: Doubling the percentage of boys and young men of color who read at grade level by the third grade, increasing their high school

graduation rates by 20 percent, getting 50 more—50,000 more of those young men into postsecondary education or training.

They've already announced \$80 million in commitments to make this happen, and that is just the beginning. And they've got a great team of young people who helped to work on this, a lot of them from Deloitte. We appreciate them so much. We're very proud of the great work that they did.

But here's what the business leaders who are here today—and Joe certainly subscribes to this—will tell you, they're not doing this out of charity. The organizations that are represented here, ranging—as varied as from Sprint to BET—they're not doing it just to assuage society's guilt. They're doing this because they know that making sure all of our young people have the opportunity to succeed is an economic imperative.

These young men, all our youth, are part of our workforce. If we don't make sure that our young people are safe and healthy and educated and prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, our businesses won't have the workers they need to compete in the 21st-century global economy. Our society will lose in terms of productivity and potential. America won't be operating at full capacity. And that hurts all of us.

So they know that there's an economic rationale for making this investment. But frankly, this is also about more than just economics, it's about values. It's about who we are as a people.

Joe grew up about a mile from here, in the Bronx. And as he and I were sitting there, listening to some incredible young men in a roundtable discussion, many of them from this community, their stories were our stories. So, for Joe and I, this is personal, because in these young men we see ourselves.

The stakes are clear. And these stakes are high: At the end of the day, what kind of society do we want to have? What kind of country do we want to be? It's not enough to celebrate the ideals that we're built on: liberty for all and justice for all and equality for all. Those can't just be words on paper. The work of every generation is to make those ideals mean something

concrete in the lives of our children—all of our children.

And we won't get there as long as kids in Baltimore or Ferguson or New York or Appalachia or the Mississippi Delta or the Pine Ridge Reservation believe that their lives are somehow worth less. We won't get there when we have impoverished communities that have been stripped away of opportunity and where, in the richest nation on Earth, children are born into abject poverty.

We won't be living up to our ideals when their parents are struggling with substance abuse or are in prison or unemployed, and when fathers are absent and schools are substandard and jobs are scarce and drugs are plentiful. We won't get there when there are communities where a young man is less likely to end up in college than jail or dead and feels like his country expects nothing else of him.

America's future depends on us caring about this. If we don't, then we will just keep on going through the same cycles of periodic conflict. We ask police to go into communities where there's no hope. Eventually, something happens because of the tensions between societies and these communities, and the police are just on the front lines of that.

And people tweet outrage. And the TV cameras come. And they focus more on somebody setting fire to something or turning over a car than the peaceful protests and the thoughtful discussions that are taking place. And then, some will argue, well, all these social programs don't make a difference. And we cast blame. And politicians talk about poverty and inequality and then gut policies that help alleviate poverty or reverse inequality. And then, we wait for the next outbreak or problem to flare up. And we go through the same pattern all over again, so that, in effect, we do nothing.

There are consequences to inaction. There are consequences to indifference. And they reverberate far beyond the walls of the projects or the borders of the barrio or the roads of the reservation. They sap us of our strength as a nation. It means we're not as good as we could be. And over time, it wears us out. Over time, it weakens our Nation as a whole.

The good news is, it doesn't have to be this way. We can have the courage to change. We can make a difference. We can remember that these kids are our kids. "For these are all our children," James Baldwin once wrote. "We will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become."

And that's what "My Brother's Keeper" is about, that's what this alliance is about. And we are in this for the long haul. We're going to keep doing our work at the White House on these issues. Sometimes, it won't be a lot of fanfare. I notice we don't always get a lot of reporting on this issue when there's not a crisis in some neighborhood. But we're just going to keep on plugging away. And this will remain a mission for me and for Michelle not just for the rest of my Presidency, but for the rest of my life.

And the reason is simple. Like I said before—I know it's true for Joe; it's true for John Legend, who was part of our roundtable; it's true for Alonzo Mourning who is here, part of our board—we see ourselves in these young men.

I grew up without a dad. I grew up lost sometimes and adrift, not having a sense of a clear path. And the only difference between me and a lot of other young men in this neighborhood and all across the country is that I grew up in an environment that was a little more forgiving. And at some critical points, I had some people who cared enough about me to give me a second chance or a third chance or to give me a little guidance when I needed it or to open up a door that might otherwise been closed. I was lucky.

Alex Santos is lucky too. Where's Alex? Alex is here. Stand up, Alex. So Alex was born in Puerto Rico, grew up in Brooklyn and the Bronx, in some tough neighborhoods. When he was 11, he saw his mom's best friend, a man he respected and looked up to, shot and killed. His older brothers dropped out of school, got caught up in drugs and violence. So Alex didn't see a whole lot of options for himself, couldn't envision a path to a better future. He then dropped out of school.

But then, his mom went back to school and got her GED. She set an example. That inspired Alex to go back and get his GED. Actually, it's more like she stayed on him until he went back. *[Laughter]* And I know, because just like I was lucky, I also had a mom who used to get on my case about my studies. So I could relate. But this is what Alex says about his mom: "She made me realize that no matter what, there's a second chance in life."

So today, Alex is getting his GED. He's developed a passion for sports. His dream is to one day work with kids as a coach and set an example for them. He says he never thought he could go to college; now he believes he can. All Alex wants to be is a good role model for his younger brothers Carlos and John, who are bright and hard-working and doing well in school. And he says, "They matter so much to my life, and I matter to theirs."

So, Alex and his brothers and all the young people here, all the young ones who are out there struggling, the simple point to make is: You matter. You matter to us.

It was interesting during the roundtable, we asked these young men—incredible gifted young men, like Darinel—asked them, what advice would you give us? And they talked about mentor programs, and they talked about counseling programs and guidance programs in schools. But one young man, Malachi, he just talked about, we should talk about love. Because Malachi and I shared the fact that our dad wasn't around and that sometimes we wondered why he wasn't around and what had happened.

But really that's what this comes down to is, do we love these kids? See, if we feel like because they don't look like us or they don't talk like us or they don't live in the same neighborhood as us that they're different, that they can't learn or they don't deserve better, or it's okay if their schools are rundown, or it's okay if the police are given a mission just to contain them rather than to encourage them, then it's not surprising that we're going to lose a lot of them.

But that's not the kind of country I want to live in. That's not what America is about. So

my message to Alex and Malachi and Darinel and to all the young men out there and young boys who aren't in this room, haven't yet gotten that helping hand, haven't yet gotten that guidance—I want you to know, you matter. You matter to us. You matter to each other. There's nothing, not a single thing, that's more important to the future of America than whether or not you and young people all across this country can achieve their dreams.

And we are one people, and we need each other. And we should love every single one of our kids. And then we should show that love, not just give lip-service to it, not just talk about it in church and then ignore it, not just have a seminar about it and not deliver.

It's hard. We've got an accumulation of not just decades, but, in some cases, centuries of trauma that we're having to overcome. But if Alex is able to overcome what he's been through, then we as a society should be able to overcome what we've been through. If Alex can put the past behind him and look towards the future, we should be able to do the same.

I'm going to keep on fighting and everybody here is going to keep on fighting to make sure that all of our kids have the opportunity to make of their lives what they will. Today is just the beginning. We're going to keep at this for you, the young people of America, for your generation and for all the generations to come.

So, thank you. God bless you. God bless all of you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:56 p.m. in the Faculty Dining Room of the Music Building. In his remarks, he referred to Darinel Montero, student, Bronx International High School in New York City; Joseph J. Echevarria, Jr., Cochair and Interim Chief Executive Officer, White House "My Brother's Keeper" initiative; musician John Legend, in his capacity as honorary chairman, and Alonzo Mourning, former center, National Basketball Association's Miami Heat, in his capacity as a board member, of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance; New York City resident Alex Santos; and Malachi Hernandez, student, Boston Latin Academy in Boston, MA.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in New York City May 4, 2015

*The President.* Thank you, everybody. Thank you. No need to do that, no, no, no. Well, it is wonderful to see so many old friends and a few new ones here today. I just want to, first of all, thank Leslie and Loida and the entire family for their incredible hospitality. Please give them a big round of applause. They have been wonderful supporters from the very start. And they couldn't be more gracious. And thank you for opening up this amazing home. And I suspect that your neighbors aren't thrilled. [Laughter]

*Actor Leslie Lewis.* Some of them are here.

*The President.* A few of them are here. [Laughter] So, neighbors, thank you. We're tying up the elevators and messing up the streets, I know. [Laughter]

I'm going to be very brief at the front because I just want to spend most of my time in dialogue. A lot of you have been to these be-

fore, and you know I like taking questions. Let me make a couple of points.

Obviously, we've made some enormous strides over the last 6½ years in repairing the economy. We've seen 5 years straight of job growth. Stock market is booming. Almost every economic indicator you can think of, we are doing better than when I came into office. Energy production, health care, graduation rates, college attendance rates, reductions in carbon emissions—you name it—we've been making some incredible strides.

But I think that what we're all aware of—and certainly what's been brought to, once again, America's attention over the last several months—is that there are still folks left behind from recovery. There are communities that are still locked out of opportunity. And part of our task over the next 2 years, next 5 years, 10, 20 years is making sure that the basic ideal upon



which this country was founded is realized; that there's not a child in America who, if they're willing to work hard, can't make it.

And whether we see the news in Ferguson or New York or Baltimore, what we know is, that's still not the case. So part of what brought me here to New York today was to announce one more piece of this overall initiative we're calling "My Brother's Keepers," designed to focus on those communities and those young people, and particular, young men, who are locked out of opportunity. And the private sector and corporate community came together, initially have raised \$80 million, and are going to keep on going, for us to provide mentorship programs and apprenticeship programs and to work with cities and communities all across the country that are focused on this issue.

But it does speak to the larger set of challenges that we still have. We are growing faster than most other advanced economies. Our unemployment rate has come down faster than almost anybody else's. We've got all the best cards in terms of cheap energy sources, innovation, the best university systems in the world, the most dynamic economy in the world. But if we are going to be successful over the long haul, if we're going to win what will be a very competitive 21st century, we've got to have everybody on the field. We can't leave entire sectors of our economy or entire communities behind.

And that means the work that remains to be done around early childhood education, making college more affordable, encouraging greater investment in research and development and science and technology, making sure that we're rebuilding the infrastructure of this country—those are all big pieces of business that have not yet happened.

Now, I intend to get as much done in the next 22 months as possible. As you've noticed, I've been pretty busy—[laughter]—and I will continue to be. And I'm hopeful that we may find some opportunities for collaboration with the Republican Congress, for example, on trade, hopefully, on infrastructure. There may be some things where there's some convergence. But if we're going to deliver on the promise that's there for all of us, then we're still going to need to realign our budgets to our values, and we're going to have to fight for priorities like immigration reform.

And those battles are going to depend, in large part, on the continuing effort in the political arena. And we've got to have strong candidates. But more importantly, we've got to have an engaged citizenry. And that's why, despite the fact, as Michelle helpfully reminds me, I don't have another race to run—[laughter]—and she's pretty happy about that—that's why I'm here this evening. And I know that's why you're here. Because this is not a project that stops after a certain term in office, and it's not a project that stops after an election. This is something that we have to sustain over the long term.

And the values and ideals that I believe in are ones that I've never expected to realize just in one term or in one Presidency. In fact, I said that in Grant Park the day I was elected.

And so I just want to say thank you to all of you because we're going to need you for the long haul. America needs you. And the Democratic Party is grateful for you.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:14 p.m. at the residence of Loida Nicolas Lewis. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks on the Nomination of General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., To Be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Paul J. Selva To Be Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

May 5, 2015

Good morning. As Americans, we are blessed with the strongest military the world has ever known. Yes, our system of equipment and technology, our logistical capacity is unmatched. But what makes us the best, the reason no other nation can do what we do, is our people: patriotic men and women across our country who step forward, raise their hand, and take an oath to defend our Nation. It's our men and women in uniform—and their leaders—who make our Armed Forces the very best.

Among our military leaders, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to me and my national security team, including Vice President Biden, my National Security Adviser, Susan Rice, and our Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter.

In recent years, I have been deeply grateful for the service of our Chairman, General Marty Dempsey, and our Vice Chairman, Admiral Sandy Winnefeld. Marty and Sandy will complete their terms later this year. I'll have a chance to say nice things about them later. I can tell you that they have been outstanding, and I could not have asked for a better team. But today I'm proud to announce my nominees to be the next Chairman, General Joe Dunford, and the next Vice Chairman, General Paul Selva.

Again, I want to thank General Dempsey and Admiral Winnefeld for being here today. Marty and Sandy, we are extraordinarily grateful for all that you've done. And we'll have an opportunity to pay tribute to you in the months ahead. I've relied on you both—your advice, your counsel, your judgment—as we've navigated the urgent challenges of recent years: from ending our combat mission in Afghanistan to leading the international coalition to destroy ISIL; conducting humanitarian operations from typhoon relief in the Philippines to fighting Ebola in West Africa; and strengthening our security alliances from Europe to Asia.

At every step, you have been critical to our processes, and I have valued not only your counsel, but your friendships.

At the same time, Marty and Sandy have helped to guide our forces through difficult fiscal times, especially sequestration. They've stayed focused on readiness and training and modernization. Today, there are also more opportunities for women in our Armed Forces. We're tackling the outrage of sexual assault, which has no place in our ranks. We've made progress in large part because leaders like Marty and Sandy have made sure we're recruiting and training and equipping and retaining the best fighting force on the planet. I look forward to honoring Marty and Sandy and thanking them more fully for their extraordinary contributions to their Nation—to our Nation.

There are other things we're going to miss. We're going to miss Marty's incomparable singing voice. *[Laughter]* He will not be singing today. *[Laughter]* But I'm going to put my request in early for a final number at your farewell. But on behalf of myself, our entire national security team, and our Armed Forces, thank you. And to Deanie and to Mary, we are grateful for your families' service.

My choice for the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Joe Dunford, is one of the most admired officers in our military. A native of Boston, Joe is the very definition of "Boston Strong." The son of a retired Boston police officer and Marine veteran of Korea, Joe followed in his father's footsteps and has distinguished himself through nearly 40 years of military service. He's commanded Marines in field, from the platoon level to a Marine Expeditionary Force. During the invasion of Iraq, he led Marines in the charge to Baghdad.

Given his combat experience, I was proud to nominate Joe as the commander of American and Coalition Forces in Afghanistan. I've had a chance to work with him. I have been

extraordinarily impressed by Joe, from the Situation Room, where he helped to shape our enduring commitment to Afghanistan, to my visit last year to Bagram, where I saw his leadership firsthand.

I know Joe. I trust him. He's already proven his ability to give me his unvarnished military advice based on his experience on the ground. Under his steady hand, we've achieved key milestones, including the transition to Afghan responsibility for security, historic Afghan elections, and the drawdown of U.S. forces, setting the stage for our combat mission there.

So Joe is a proven leader of our joint force, including our troops in Afghanistan, who he served Christmas dinner to. He's one of our military's most highly regarded strategic thinkers. He's known and respected by our allies, by Members of Congress—on both sides of the aisle—and by colleagues across our Government. He's also tireless. His staff has been known to carry around a voice recorder to keep up with his commands and new ideas.

He just began his service as Commandant of his beloved Marine Corps. So, Joe, I appreciate your willingness to take on this new assignment. I think the only downside in my book is, as a White Sox fan, there is yet another Red Sox fan who I'm going to have to be dealing with. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank you and your wife Ellyn for your continued service.

In General Paul Selva, we have a Vice Chairman with 35 years of military service, as both a pilot and a commander. As leader of Air Mobility Command, he earned a reputation as a force for change and innovation. I understand that when it was time to deliver the final C-17 to the Air Force, Paul went to the cockpit and helped fly it himself. As head of Transportation Command, he's been committed to the partnerships that are a core principle of our national security strategy, whether it's supplying our joint force around the world, in operations large and small, to supporting and keeping safe our diplomats and Embassy personnel overseas.

Paul also served as Secretary of State Clinton's military adviser for the first years of my Presidency, so he grasps the strategic environment in which our forces operate. He understands that our military, as powerful as it is, is one tool that must be used in concert with all the elements of our national power.

I should note that, as a graduate of the Air Force Academy, Paul is especially grateful to the Academy because it's there that he met his wife Ricki, who also served in the Air Force. And, Paul and Ricki, thank you both for taking on this next chapter of your service together.

Joe, Paul, we continue to call on our Armed Forces to meet a range of challenges. We have to keep training Afghan forces and remain relentless against Al Qaida. We have to push back against ISIL and strengthen forces in Syria [Iraq],<sup>o</sup> and build moderate opposition in Syria. We have to stand united with our allies in Europe and keep rebalancing our posture as a Pacific power. We have to keep investing in new capabilities to meet growing threats, including cyber attacks.

So, as Commander in Chief, I'll be looking to you for your honest military advice as we meet these challenges. As we do, we're also going to keep working with Congress on a more responsible approach to defense spending, including reforms in the Department so we can preserve the readiness of our All-Volunteer Force, keep faith with our troops and our military families, and care for our wounded warriors. This is work we have to do together, as a nation.

Again, to Joe, to Paul, to your families, on behalf of the American people, thank you for your continued service to our Nation. I urge our friends in the Senate—and I know I won't have a problem with Jack Reed, who's sitting right here—to confirm these remarkable leaders without delay so we can stay focused on the work that unites us all as Americans: keeping our military strong, our Nation secure, our citizens safe.

Thank you very much.

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<sup>o</sup> White House correction.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deanie Dempsey, wife of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, USA; Mary Winnefeld, wife of Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff Adm. James A. “Sandy” Winnefeld, Jr., USN; Joseph F. Dunford, Sr., father of Chairman-designate Dunford; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

## Remarks at a Cinco de Mayo Celebration May 5, 2015

*The President.* Buenas tardes. Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca—[applause]—su casa tambien. And Happy Cinco de Mayo. I know there are tacos and churros and margaritas. [Laughter]

*Audience member.* And tequila!

*The President.* Tequila. [Laughter] So I'm going to be brief. I'll let you get back to the tequila. She sounded very excited about that. [Laughter]

Let me, first of all, ask everybody to give a big round of applause to our musical guests, the Esperanza Azteca Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles and Puebla, Mexico. [Applause] Yay! So one of the biggest Cinco de Mayo fiestas in the world happens every year in L.A., and some of these students left their hometowns to be here today. So we are very, very proud of them. I also want to welcome our guests from Mexico—Under Secretary Sergio Alcocer. Give him a big round of applause. Ambassador Alejandro Estivill is here. Give him a big round of applause.

We know the origins of Cinco de Mayo. On this day, more than 150 years ago, thousands of soldiers from one of the world's most powerful armies marched towards the city of Puebla. And the farmers and the peasants who lived there were as hopelessly outmatched as their uniforms were mismatched. But they held their ground. They sent the invading army running in the other direction. It's one of the great David-vs.-Goliath stories in history.

And the United States, of course, has made Cinco de Mayo a celebration of our own. After World War II, when States and cities across the country sought to recognize Mexico and Mexican Americans for their contributions to the war effort, recognition of Cinco de Mayo in the United States took off. And today, we cele-

brate it with parades and barbecues and dances and street fairs and parties just like we're having today, with tequila. [Laughter]

So this holiday is an opportunity to remember how deeply Mexican American culture is woven into the fabric of this country. People of Mexican heritage and their children and their children's children have influenced our commerce and our culture and our language and our literature, our faith and our food. Like so many immigrant groups in this country, Mexican Americans have kept us young and dynamic and energetic as a people.

So we reaffirm our commitment to those traditions, and part of the way we reaffirm it is to reaffirm our commitment to comprehensive immigration reform, because that's who we are as a country. The story of America is a dynamic story. So we're not just going to stop now suddenly and forget everything that helped to build this country. And part of what built it was the incredible power of our immigrant communities. Our prosperity, our security demands comprehensive immigration reform.

That's the reason I took the actions I did last fall—within my legal authority—to make our immigration system fairer and smarter and more just. That's why Congress still needs to step up and ultimately pass comprehensive immigration reform.

*Audience members.* Yes!

*The President.* I know that it's so challenging when you know the right thing to do, and there are folks blocking your way and obstacles in your path. But I just want to remind everybody that progress is not always a straight line. Sometimes, you have to take this turn and that turn and go over this mountain and that valley. But the good news is, the American people are

with us, because they understand that the story of America is a story of progress. And it's often written by people who come here with a vision for what's possible and are willing to take risks and aspire to something bigger than what they've already known.

As one of my predecessors, Franklin Roosevelt, once said, "Remember, always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists." Immigrants and revolutionists. Now, that's not the story of looking backwards, that's the story of looking forward. That's what we're doing to-

day. And that's why I'm so glad that all of you are joining us.

So with that, *viva los Estados Unidos. Viva Mexico. Feliz Cinco de Mayo.* And go easy on the tequila. [Laughter] *Muchas gracias*, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Under Secretary for North America Sergio Manuel Alcocer Martinez de Castro of Mexico; and Supreme Court Justice Alejandro Estivill-Castro of Mexico, in his former capacity as Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S.

## Statement on the Death of Former Speaker of the House of Representatives James C. Wright, Jr.

May 6, 2015

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former Congressman and Speaker of the House Jim Wright. Jim represented the people of his beloved Texas for over three decades. He was a committed public leader and a proud World War II veteran who dedicated much of his life to serving his country. As

a Representative from Texas and Speaker of the House, Jim was passionate about investing in infrastructure, and he worked tirelessly to promote peace in Central America. Today our thoughts and prayers are with Jim's family and friends and the people he represented in Congress for so many years.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Actions of the Government of Syria

May 6, 2015

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions of the Government of Syria declared in Executive Order (E.O.) 13338 of May 11, 2004—as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps tak-

en in E.O. 13399 of April 25, 2006, E.O. 13460 of February 13, 2008, E.O. 13572 of April 29, 2011, E.O. 13573 of May 18, 2011, E.O. 13582 of August 17, 2011, E.O. 13606 of April 22, 2012, and E.O. 13608 of May 1, 2012—is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2015.

The regime's brutal war on the Syrian people, who have been calling for freedom and a representative government, not only endangers the Syrian people themselves, but could yield greater instability throughout the region. The Syrian regime's actions and policies, including pursuing chemical and biological weapons, supporting terrorist organizations, and obstructing the Lebanese government's ability to function effectively, are fostering the rise of extremism and sectarianism and

continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions to address this national emergency.

In addition, the United States condemns the Asad regime's use of brutal violence and human rights abuses and calls on the Asad regime to stop its violent war and allow a political transition in Syria that will forge a credible path to a future of greater freedom, democracy, opportunity, and justice.

The United States will consider changes in the composition, policies, and actions of the Government of Syria in determining whether to continue or terminate this national emergency in the future.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Air Force Academy Falcons May 7, 2015

Hello, everybody. Welcome to the White House. Please have a seat. And congratulations to this year's winners of the Commander in Chief's Trophy, the Air Force Fighting Falcons. [Applause] Hey!

So this is the Falcons' third trip to the White House in the last 5 years. All told, it is a record 19 times that they have earned this unreasonably large trophy. [Laughter] But if anybody can figure out how to get this thing to where it needs to go, it is the Air Force. [Laughter]

I want to start by recognizing the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Mark Welsh, as well as the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy, Lieutenant General Michelle Johnson. [Applause] Yay! And of course, we've got Coach Troy Calhoun, a graduate of the Air Force Academy himself.

Now, last year at this time, most folks did not think that Coach Calhoun and the Falcons would be here today. They had just come off a less-than-ideal season. [Laughter]

But this year, they came back determined to set a new tone. The Falcons won four of their first five games. In a big win over Navy, quarterback Kale Pearson threw three touchdown passes, and wide receiver Jalen Robinette threw another on a trick play. Three games lat-

er, they went to West Point with this trophy on the line. And there, the Falcons defense held Army to just six points to complete the sweep against the academies and take this trophy back to Colorado Springs.

And that was just one of a number of highlights this season. They posted big wins over Boise State and Nevada, Colorado State. When the dust settled, they finished with a 10-and-3 record, a bowl victory, an eight-win improvement from the previous season, which tied for the best turnaround in all of college football. That was quite a season right there.

So this was a total team effort, led by Kale, the team MVP, and guys like offensive lineman Michael Husar and linebacker Jordan Pierce, kicker Will Conant. And we can't forget manager Chris Woychak. [Laughter] Where's Chris? Where is he? There he is. [Laughter] Who became a cult hero with his all-out sprints to get that water bottle—[laughter]—into the huddle. Coach, this guy has speed. [Laughter] Fans started calling him Blue Bolt. We should find some sort of position, slot the guy at wide-out or something—[laughter]—because he can move.

So this was quite a season for the Falcons. But my favorite thing about Air Force—and all

the academies who come through here—is not just that they win, it’s how they win. Last year, they had the highest graduation rate in the conference. Coach recruits guys with at least a 3.5 high school GPA. As cadets, they give back to their community, and obviously, ultimately, they give back to their country.

Alongside preseason training, players complete summer service, leadership training. They volunteered for more than 500 hours at local community organizations. They’ve taken action to combat and prevent sexual assaults on their campus by joining with a campus organization called Cadet Athletes Against Sexual Violence, and they recorded a video similar to our “It’s On Us” campaign. As defensive back Christian Spears said, he would, and I quote, “lay my life on the line for any guy up here. To say that and mean that, it’s a real blessing.”

And we know that for these players, it’s not just words. This week, we honor the tradition of service and sacrifice that has always defined those who wear our country’s uniform as we mark the 70th anniversary of V–E Day. Seventy years ago tomorrow, the world celebrated a generation of young Americans who thundered across a continent to liberate a people, young Americans who were willing to lay down their lives for people they’d never met and ideals that we can’t live without. From the sands of Africa to the beachheads of Italy and Normandy to the skies over the Pacific islands, young Americans like these guys changed the course of human history and shaped the future of the entire world.

So we honor all our World War II veterans for their courage and their example. We see their character alive and well in a new generation of Americans who have stepped up to serve: the cadets behind me, the midshipmen from the Naval Academy who we’ve got here today and who teamed up to win this year’s Cyber Defense Exercise, the soldiers and marines and coastguardsmen with whom these men will serve once they graduate, every man and every woman who stands post across the country and around the world with pride and with honor and talent and skill.

You are the ones who make the United States Armed Forces the finest fighting force in the history of the world. And as President, I have no greater honor or greater responsibility than serving as your Commander in Chief.

In the months and in the years ahead, these cadets will go on to become officers in our military. They will lead their peers, and that will call on each of you to live up to the example of those who came before you. And wherever you are stationed, I want you to know that this country stands behind you and will strive to serve you as well as you will be serving us. But in the meantime, congratulations on a great football season. [*Laughter*]

Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your service years to come. Give it up once again to the Fighting Falcons of the Air Force Academy. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Portland, Oregon May 7, 2015

*The President.* Hello, Portland! Oh, I am excited to be in Portland! Hello, hello, hello! Hello!

*Audience member.* I love you!

*The President.* I love you back!

Well, everybody, have a seat, have a seat. Make yourselves comfortable. Now, first of all, I appreciate I appreciate whoever arranged for the really excellent weather. Somebody told

me it never rains in Oregon. [*Laughter*] But it is spectacular. As we were flying in, you had Mount Hood and the greenery. And I don’t want to go, now that I’m here. But it turns out, I’ve got this job, it’s really demanding. [*Laughter*] So—but I will have to come back.

It is wonderful to see all of you. Thank you so much for the extraordinary hospitality.

There are a couple of people that I want to start off by acknowledging. First of all, you've got as wonderful a congressional delegation coming out of here as anybody. And I want to start off by thanking a—your senior Member of Congress here, who has just been a great friend—one of my earliest supporters, supported me when people could not pronounce my name. [Laughter] And I'm so grateful to him for everything that he's done. He does a great job for you; Earl Blumenauer is here. Give—where's Earl? There he is back there.

And outstanding Member of Congress now who's really just doing great work every single day, representing your values and what you care about, Suzanne Bonamici. Give her a big round of applause. Where's Suzanne? Right here.

Kurt Schrader is traveling overseas, but give him a big round of applause anyway. We love him. And the chair of the Oregon Democratic Party, Frank Dixon, is here. Along with some outstanding college Democrats who are here in the house, the next generation!

Now, I just have fond memories of this place because—I told a number of people before I came out onstage that maybe my favorite event of the entire 2008 campaign was the rally we had here in the park along the waterfront. A lot of you were there. It was a perfect day. It was the only rally I had in which you had kayakers and—see this guy here was, “Yes, I was out there on a kayak.” [Laughter] But it was spectacular. And I've had a soft spot for Oregon and Portland ever since.

When you think about the distance we've traveled since that time, it's pretty remarkable. Yes, I am more gray than I was at the time. [Laughter] So that is one, significant change, although, as I pointed out, Michelle has not changed at all. [Laughter] She has this special mirror in our house; she won't let me look at it. [Laughter] So there's some sort of pact that she's made. [Laughter]

So I'm a little older; I've got a few dings and dents here and there. But when we came to that rally, as beautiful as it was, as extraordinary of a day as it was, those were scary times. We were entering into what proved to be the

worst financial crisis in our lifetimes. And we were losing 800,000 jobs a month. The prospects not only of Wall Street collapsing, but more importantly, Main Street collapsing, were very, very real.

And 6½ years later, because of the incredible resilience and strength and tenacity of the American people, and because so many of you worked so hard to give me the opportunity to put in place some smart policies, we are able to reverse those trends.

We've now seen 5 straight years of job growth, the longest private sector job growth in our history. The unemployment rate has gone from 10 percent to 5.5 percent. An auto industry that had flatlined is now going on all cylinders. And we are not only making some of the best cars in the world, but we're selling them all around the world.

At the time when we had that rally, a lot of folks were concerned that Washington wasn't taking seriously the imperatives of our environment and the need to grapple with climate change. And since that time, we have doubled our production of clean energy. We have increased solar energy by tenfold, wind energy by threefold, doubled fuel efficiency standards for our cars. And as a consequence, we've been able to significantly reduce the trend lines in terms of the carbon pollution that is heating the planet.

At the time that we had that extraordinary rally, there were millions of people around the country who didn't have health care at all and people who, if they lost their job, because of a preexisting condition, would not be able to get health care. And today, because of the work that you did, there are 16 million people who have health insurance that didn't have it. And everywhere in the country, if somebody has a preexisting condition, insurance companies cannot turn them away.

At the time that we fought for this, it was predicted that this would break the bank and drive our deficits up. And yet, low and behold, health care costs have actually increased at the lowest rate in 50 years. And by the way, the deficits have come down by two-thirds since I came into office.



The Recovery Act that helped us avoid a Great Depression was the biggest investment in infrastructure, the biggest investment in education, the biggest investment in green technology, the biggest investment in NIH. And as a consequence, people were put back to work, jobs were saved, and the economy started coming back.

And as we look to the future, we've initiated the kinds of reforms that are going to be critical to our future. We've revamped our student loan program so that we expanded Pell grants, allowing millions of young people who couldn't afford to go to college before to go to college. And we are now working to make sure that young people, when they are going to college, have the information they need to keep their debt levels lower and have repayment systems that allow them to make repayments in an affordable way and allow them to choose professions like teaching because they're not going to be burdened so much with debt.

At the—in terms of our younger kids, reading scores are up, high school graduation highest on record, college attendance highest on record.

And so here's the bottom line: That was a nice day in the park, but it was also a moment in which we were fighting for America's future. And America is better off because of the work that you did. America is stronger than it was; it is safer than it was. Because of what you did, there are people around this country that have jobs that didn't have it before and have health care that didn't have it before and are attending college who didn't have a chance before.

You've made a difference. And I always said back then that change doesn't come from the top, change comes from the bottom up. And the people here in Oregon, the people here in Portland are as good representatives as anybody of the power of ordinary people coming together and making a decision that they can change their country. You have brought about extraordinary change.

Now, here's the thing. We've got a lot more work to do. For all the progress that we've made, despite the fact that we ended "don't ask, don't tell" and despite the fact that we

have gone after the practices of paying women differently for doing the same job and the changes that we're beginning to make in terms of our criminal justice system—despite all the reforms that we are initiating, we all know we've still got a lot of work to do. Because the fact of the matter is, is that although the economy has recovered, there are still a lot of folks out there that are hurting. Wages and incomes still aren't going up as fast as corporate profits. They're still not going up as fast as the stock market has gone up. The middle class still feels squeezed, and the ladders to get into the middle class have become scarcer for a lot of people who are willing to work hard, but can't seem to get ahead.

And so our challenge now is not just to have recovered from crisis, but now it's to seize the future and make sure we've got the kind of America that we believe in, an America in which anybody, no matter where they come from, no matter what they look like, no matter what their last name is, no matter what faith they practice, no matter who they love, that this is an America in which if you are willing to work hard and take responsibility, you can make it here in America. That's what we're fighting for. [Applause] That's what we're fighting for.

So what does that mean? Concretely, what are the steps that we still have to take? Well, we've still got to put more folks back to work. And we've got to make sure that folks who are working are getting paid a decent wage and have decent benefits. And that's why we're fighting so hard to make sure that we increase the minimum wage all across this country.

That's the reason why we think it's really important to have paid sick leave for people. There are 43 million people in this country who don't have it, and that's not right.

That's the reason why we're going to keep on making sure that there's equal pay for equal work all across America.

That's why, working with Earl and Suzanne and others, we need to start rebuilding our infrastructure all across this country, putting people back to work right now, rebuilding our roads and our bridges, but also our broadband

lines and creating a smart grid that can save energy and help us to curb climate change. We've still got more work to do to put people back to work.

And one of the things that we need to do to put people back to work is make sure we are accessing the markets of the future. So part of what I'm going to be doing tomorrow at Nike is talking about how important it is—95 percent of the world's markets are outside our borders. We've got the best workers in the world, the best universities in the world, the most innovative companies in the world, the best scientists and research in the world. So we are not afraid of competition. We are concerned if the playing field is not level. And that's why we've got to have the kinds of enforceable, tough, fair trade deals that are going to make sure that American workers and American businesses aren't locked out of these markets.

That's part of a middle class economic agenda, and it is a priority for us. We've got to make sure it happens.

We've got to make sure that we are training our young people for the jobs of the future. And that's why I've proposed to make sure that the first 2 years of community college in this country are free, just like public high school, so every young person can at least get that kind of start for the jobs of the future.

And for folks who still want to go on for 4 years, it's not bad having 2 years free. That will cut our debt—student debt that is such a burden on so many young people all across this country. So that's got to be a priority.

And we've got to make sure that early childhood education is our priority, because we know that young people, when they get a chance early on in life, it is the best investment we can make. Every dollar we invest in early childhood education means higher graduation rates, lower teen pregnancy rates. It means that kids are going to do better. They are going to be successful citizens. They'll pay taxes. We will get that money back. They're not going to be going straight from school to jail, they're going to be going into college, and they're going to be going into jobs. And that's the kind of America that we want. That's what we believe in.

We still got to make sure we get comprehensive immigration reform passed in this country. I couldn't be prouder of the work that we've done through executive actions to make sure that our young DREAMers—young people who were brought here as children and are Americans just like our kids, except they don't have the right documents—the notion that we would be keeping them in the shadows made no sense.

But we've got to solve that larger problem, and only Congress can do that. And you've got some great Members of Congress who understand that. Now, we've got to get all Members of Congress to understand that, and we've got to get that thing passed. It's the right thing to do. It's good for our economy, and it upholds our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

We're going to have to keep—we're going to have to tackle climate change. We've got some folks in the Senate right now who think because we get a snowy day, they bring in snowballs into the Chambers and think that's science. [*Laughter*] I'm not a scientist, but I know a lot of scientists. I can understand science. And what the science says is that our planet is warming in such a way that it is going to increase drought and it is going to increase wildfires and it is going to displace millions of people around this planet and increase the severity of floods and hurricanes and it will cost lives and it will cost our way of life and it could affect the incredible natural bounty that Oregon represents. And that's not the kind of America I want to pass on to our kids and our grandkids.

That's why we're taking actions through the EPA to make sure that we cut carbon pollution that's produced from power plants. It's the right thing to do.

And we're going to keep on investing in clean energy, because that is not only critical to our environmental future, but it's critical to our economic future. There are jobs to be had for those countries that are first to figure out how to harness the power of the sun and the wind and store it properly and distribute it properly. And I want that to be America. I want those jobs to be right here in the United

States. I want those jobs to be here in Oregon. That's what we're fighting for.

So we've got a lot of stuff to do. And I hope you're not tired. [Laughter] Because I'm not. People sometimes ask me—they ask me, you've got so much stuff on your plate. I mean, we just talked about domestic issues. Obviously, internationally, we have ended two wars, but we still have to bring about peace and help deal with situations from Ukraine to Iraq, to making sure that in places like Latin America and Asia, they continue to see America as a beacon of leadership.

So people say, Mr. President, no wonder you look so old. [Laughter] And they ask you, how do you just keep at it every day? And I tell them, at least once a day, I meet people who, because of the work that we did, have seen their lives transformed.

Before I came out here, there was a young man who told me that before the ACA was passed, he was paying \$3,000 a month for the drugs that he needed to take every day to stay alive. And today, because of the Affordable Care Act, not only can he afford those drugs, but he knows that if he had to change jobs he'll be able to get access to what he needs. That will keep you from getting tired, hearing something like that.

Mother's Day is coming up. Yesterday I called some moms. I get these 10 letters every single day; out of 40,000 that we receive, 10 get to me. And so for Mother's Day, we decided we were just going to call, as a surprise, three moms who had written me letters. One of them was a waitress, two young kids. They had written me on President's Day, because mom was trying to teach the two boys about doing good deeds, and part of their good deed was encouraging the President of the United States. [Laughter]

And she wrote and took the time, along with her sons, to say, thank you for the good work you're doing. Now, here's somebody who's working on her feet every single day, undoubtedly underpaid, then having to come home and look after a couple kids, took the time to say thank you to me. I can't afford to be tired, because I want to make sure that she's getting the

kind of wages and benefits that she deserves. And if she gets sick, I want to make sure that she can stay home. And if her kids get sick, I want to make sure that she can look after them and not lose a day's pay. That's why I'm not tired. We've got work to do.

The young man in college who comes to me and says, you know, I—as a gay teen, I was bullied and thought about suicide, and seeing all the changes that have taken place and the recognition and the acceptance and the love that we've seen sweep across this country has made such a big difference in my life. That's why I don't get tired, because I want that young man to feel loved.

Those wounded warriors who I see at Walter Reed, some of them lost a leg, some of them lost two. And then, 6 months or 8 months or a year later, they come into the White House, walking on their new legs, and looking me in the eye, standing up straight and shaking my hand. And I think about the sacrifices that they've made and realize that we've got to serve them just as well as they have served us. That's why I don't get tired.

So—but here's the thing, Democrats. I can't do it alone. And I've run my last election. Michelle is very happy about that. [Laughter] But that doesn't mean I stop fighting.

I think it was Brandeis who said, the most important office in a democracy is not the President, not a Senator or Governor or mayor, it's the office of citizen. And what was represented at that park back in 2008 here in Portland, that was people holding office. That was people holding the office of citizen and saying that we are joining together to make sure that America is living up to the ideals that we care about so deeply.

Pretty soon, I'm going to be a citizen myself, not just a President. I'll be alongside you. And we're going to have to make sure that we keep people like Earl and Suzanne, make sure that we've got a Democratic President and a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate. We've got to make sure that we are fighting for the things that we believe in so that when we look back 10 years from now or 20 years from now or 30 years from now,

or when our children and grandchildren look back, they can say that we were part of that incredible race that has been run and we took the baton and we carried it forward to make this a more just, more prosperous, more secure, more tolerant, more generous, more loving nation.

That's what we're fighting for. I'm going to need you, Democrats. Not just today, not just next week or next year, but as long as you hold that incredible office of citizen.

## The President's Weekly Address *May 8, 2015*

Hello, everybody. Today marks a historic anniversary: 70 years since the Allied victory in Europe during World War II. On V-E Day after the Nazi surrender, people swarmed the streets of London and Paris and Moscow, and the cloud of fear that had hung for so many years finally lifted. Here at home, from small towns to Times Square, crowds gathered in celebration, singing and dancing with joy. It would still be 3 more months of deadly fighting in the Pacific. But for a few hours, the world rejoiced in the hope of peace.

General Eisenhower announced the news with little fanfare. "The mission of this Allied Force," he said, "was fulfilled." But his simple message belied the extraordinary nature of the Allied victory and the staggering human loss. For over 5 years, brutal fighting laid waste to an entire continent. Mothers, fathers, children were murdered in concentration camps. By the time the guns fell silent in Europe, some 40 million people on the continent had lost their lives.

Today we pay tribute to all who served. They were patriots, like my grandfather who served in Patton's army: soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guard, merchant marines, and the women of the WACs and the WAVES and every branch. They risked their lives and gave their lives so that we, and people the world over, could live free. They were women

Thank you very much, everybody. I love you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:56 p.m. at the Sentinel hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Coon Rapids, MN, resident Stephanie Tarr and her children Kai and Kenny Jones; Tucson, AZ, resident Dawn Miller; and Ormond Beach, FL, resident Patricia Church. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

who stepped up in unprecedented numbers, manning the home front and, like my grandmother, building bombers on assembly lines.

This was the generation that literally saved the world: that ended the war and laid a foundation for peace. This was the generation that traded in their uniforms for a college education so they could marry their sweethearts, buy homes, raise children, and build the strongest middle class the world has ever known. This was the generation that includes heroes like the Tuskegee Airmen, the Navajo Code Talkers, and the Japanese Americans of the forty—hundred forty-second [442d]<sup>o</sup> Regiment, and who continued the fight for freedom here at home, expanding equality and opportunity and justice for minorities and women.

We will be forever grateful for what these remarkable men and women did, for the selfless grace they showed in one of our darkest hours. But as we mark this 70th anniversary, let's not simply commemorate history, let's re-dedicate ourselves to the freedoms for which they fought.

Let's make sure that we keep striving to fulfill our founding ideals: that we're a country where no matter who we are or where we're from or what we look like or who we love, if we work hard and take responsibility, every American will have the opportunity to make of our lives what we will.

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<sup>o</sup> White House correction.

Let's stand united with our allies, in Europe and beyond, on behalf of our common values—freedom, security, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law around the world—and against bigotry and hatred in all their forms so that we give meaning to that pledge: “Never forget. Never again.”

Most of all, let's salute once more that generation of Americans whose courage and sacrifice are the reason we're here today, in peace and freedom. Their spirit lives on in our brave men and women in uniform and their families who continue to defend the very freedoms our parents and grandparents fought for. As Amer-

icans grateful for their service, let's truly honor them, on this day and every day, with the gratitude they have earned and the respect that they deserve.

May God bless them, and may he continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:45 p.m. on May 7 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on May 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 8.

## Remarks at Nike World Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon May 8, 2015

*The President.* Hello, Oregon! Well, who arranged this day? Every time I come to Oregon this is what it looks like. [*Laughter*]

*Audience member.* Come more often!

*The President.* Yes! Then, I'll—it never rains in Oregon, does it?

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* Never.

*Audience member.* Don't come to California. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* All right. Well, listen, it is wonderful to see all of you. First of all, please give Mark another round of applause for his hospitality. And thanks to everyone at Nike for hosting us today, here in “Federer Platz.” [*Laughter*] You know, the White House is cool. [*Laughter*] We've got a basketball court. Actually, it's a tennis court that we repainted some lines—[*laughter*]—when I came into office. So it's a combination basketball-tennis court. There is a putting green that President Eisenhower put in. Can you imagine, by the way, if I had put in a putting green? [*Laughter*] Things have changed. [*Laughter*]

But you've got all that and the 18th tee box from Pebble Beach. Come on. I'm sure some of my staff is running around right now in the Michael Jordan and Mia Hamm buildings. [*Laughter*] They want to be lab rats for your new gear. [*Laughter*]

But it is wonderful to be here. Please give it up for two people who fight every single day for Oregon workers, your Representatives in Congress—they do a great job—Earl Blumenauer and Suzanne Bonamici. They are both here. Give them a big round of applause. Yay! And there are two people who couldn't make it here today, but they're doing a great job, and you should give them a round of applause as well, and that's Senator Ron Wyden and Representative Kurt Schrader.

So it is great to be at the world headquarters of such an iconic company, a company that helps athletes succeed from the individual to the world stage. And as you've heard, I've come to Oregon to talk a little bit about trade—which initially may have had some people thinking, what, is Mariota going someplace that we didn't know about? Or—[*laughter*]. He's going to be great. He's an outstanding young man. He's going to be terrific—and from Hawaii, by the way. [*Laughter*] Right on. Local boy. [*Laughter*]

But this is important, and I want to tell you why I think trade deals and our willingness to go out there and compete on the global stage is so important.

Before I came out here, I had a chance to meet with some small-business owners from across Oregon, whose workers make everything from bikes to tea to stationery to wine.

And they know how important this is to them. Sometimes, when we talk about trade, we think of Nike, or we think of Boeing, or we think of GE. We think about these big multinational companies. But those small-business leaders came here today because they understood that these markets outside the United States will help them grow and will help them hire more folks, just as all the suppliers to Nike or Boeing or GE or any of these other companies understand this is going to be critical to their growth and their ability to create new jobs. In fact, that's why Ron Wyden is not here, because he's in Washington, DC, as we speak quarterbacking this effort on behalf of Oregon's small-business owners and workers.

Now, small businesses are the backbone of our economy. Eventually, like Nike, they grow sometimes into really, really big companies. They employ millions of people. Ninety-eight percent of exporters are small businesses. They're the ones who made—make “Made in Oregon” and “Made in the U.S.A.” mean something. And they represent something essential about this country, the notion that if you've got a good idea and you're willing to work at it, you can turn that idea into a business, you can grow that business; eventually, who knows what might happen. You can give other people a chance to earn a living even as you do well. That's America's promise. And it's up to us to keep that promise alive.

Now, that promise was threatened for almost everybody just about 7 years ago, when the economy nearly collapsed and millions of Americans lost their jobs and their homes and their life savings. But thanks to the hard work of the American people and entrepreneurs like the ones who are here today—and some pretty good policies from my administration—[laughter]—we're in a different place today. [Applause] We're in a different place today.

This morning we learned that our economy created 223,000 new jobs last month. The unemployment rate ticked down again to 5.4 percent, which is the lowest it's been in almost 7 years. That's 3 million new jobs over the past 12 months, nearly the fastest pace in over a decade. And all told, over the past 62 months in a

row, America's businesses have created 12.3 million new jobs.

I should add, by the way, 62 months ago is when I signed the Affordable Care Act. So, obviously, it hasn't done too bad in terms of employment in this country. I just thought I'd mention that. Since there were a lot of predictions of doom and gloom, I would just suggest, those who were making those predictions go back and check the statistics. [Laughter] Just saying. [Laughter]

So small businesses deserve a lot of credit for that. In fact, over the past several years, small businesses have created nearly two out of every three new American jobs. And the question is, how do we build on that success? We've got to be relentless in our efforts to support small businesses who are creating jobs and helping to grow the economy.

And that's been the purpose behind many of the policies I've fought for as President. I've cut taxes for small businesses more than a dozen times. I've pushed for investments in infrastructure and faster Internet. It's why we've made health care more accessible, affordable, portable, to give people the freedom to change jobs or launch that startup without worrying about losing their health insurance.

And passing trade agreements is part of that agenda if those trade agreements are the right kinds of trade agreements; if they make sure that they're growing our businesses and helping American workers by selling goods made in America across the rest of the world. And I've been talking a lot about this lately, because I view smart trade agreements as a vital piece of middle class economics. Not a contradiction to middle class economics, it's a part and parcel of it.

I believe that our country does best when everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, everybody plays by the same set of rules. And that means making sure everybody has got a good education. It means making sure that women are getting paid the same as men for doing the same work. It means making sure that folks have to have sick leave and family leave and that they can balance work and family in a fair way. It means, working to

increase the minimum wage all across this country, because folks who have some of the toughest jobs oftentimes get the lowest pay.

That's all part of middle economics—middle class economics, but you know what, so is trade. We strive to make sure our own economy lives up to high standards, but in a lot of parts of the world, the rules are unfair. The playing field is uneven. That puts American businesses and American workers at a disadvantage. So the question is, what should we do about it?

Some folks think we should just withdraw and not even try to engage in trade with these countries. I disagree. We have to make sure America writes the rules of the global economy. And we should do it today, while our economy is in the position of global strength. Because if we don't write the rules for trade around the world, guess what? China will. And they'll write those rules in a way that gives Chinese workers and Chinese businesses the upper hand and locks American-made goods out.

That's the choice we face. We're not going to be able to isolate ourselves from world markets. We've got to be in there and compete. And the question is, are we going to make sure that the rules are fair so that our businesses and our workers are on a level playing field? Because when they are, we win every time. When the rules are fair, we win every time.

So this is why I'm such a strong supporter of new trade agreements. They're going to help our workers compete and our businesses compete. This is not a left issue or a right issue or a business or a labor issue. It is about fairness and equity and access. And like other issues that we've waged slow, steady fights on over the last 7 years, this is also a question of the past versus the future.

So the Trans-Pacific Partnership that we're working on—it's the biggest trade deal that we're working on right now—has to do with the Asia-Pacific region. And it reflects our values in ways that, frankly, some previous trade agreements did not. It's the highest standard, most progressive trade deal in history. It's got strong, enforceable provisions for workers, preventing things like child labor. It's got

strong, enforceable provisions on the environment, helping us to do things that haven't been done before: to prevent wildlife trafficking or deforestation or dealing with our oceans. And these are enforceable in the agreement.

And Nike operates in the Pacific region, so they understand the competitive pressures they're under. Nike has factories all around the world. And let's face it—Mark I think doesn't mind me saying it—that some of these countries, they don't have the standards for wages and labor conditions that we have here.

So when you look at a country like Vietnam, under this agreement, Vietnam would actually, for the first time, have to raise its labor standards. It would have to set a minimum wage. It would have to pass safe workplace laws to protect its workers. It would even have to protect workers' freedom to form unions for the very first time. That would make a difference. That helps to level the playing field. And it would be good for the workers in Vietnam, even as it helps make sure that they're not undercutting competition here in the United States.

So that's progress. It doesn't mean that suddenly, working conditions in Vietnam will be like they are here at Nike—[laughter]—or here in Portland right away. But it moves us in the right direction. And if Vietnam or any of the other countries in this trade agreement don't meet these requirements, they'll face meaningful consequences. If you're a country that wants in to this agreement, you have to meet higher standards. If you don't, you're out. If you break the rules, there are actual repercussions. And that's good for American businesses and American workers, because we already meet higher standards than most of the rest of the world, and that helps level the playing field.

And this deal would strengthen our hand overseas by giving us the tools to open other markets to our goods and services and make sure they play by the fair rules we help write. The truth is, we have one of the most open markets in the world. Folks are already selling stuff here. We've got to be able to sell there. That requires us to enter into trade agreements to open up their markets.

I hear Oregon wine is actually pretty good. [Laughter] Somebody told me that the pinot noir in Oregon is top notch, right? I've got some winemakers right here. Well, I want to make sure Japanese wine consumers have the opportunity to partake—[laughter]—in an excellent Oregon wine. We've got some Oregon beef producers and ranchers around here. I—beef is really expensive in Japan. Let's make sure they try some Oregon steaks. It's good stuff.

And that's one of the best things that can happen for our businesses and our workers: opening up markets that have previously been closed, particularly markets where they're already selling stuff here. There's a lack of reciprocity. It's not a fair deal right now. We want to make it fairer.

Now, I want to acknowledge—because this looks like a very well read and informed crowd—[laughter]—that there have been a bunch of critics about trade deals generally and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. And what's interesting is, typically, they're my friends, coming from my party, and they're my fellow travelers on minimum wage and on job training and on clean energy. And on every progressive issue, they're right there with me. And then, on this one, they're, like, whooping on me. [Laughter]

But I tell you what: I've run my last election, and the only reason I do something is because I think it's good for American workers and the American people and the American economy. I don't have any other rationale for doing what I do than that I think it's the best thing for the American people. And on this issue, on trade, I actually think some of my dearest friends are wrong. They're just wrong. And here's why.

First of all, they say that this trade agreement will cost American jobs. And they're really basing this on some past experience, looking at what happened in the nineties, over the last 20 years, as there was a lot of outsourcing going on. And you know what, past trade agreements, it's true, didn't always reflect our values or didn't always do enough to protect American workers. But that's why we're designing a different kind of trade deal

And the truth is that companies that only care about low wages, they've already moved. They don't need new trade deals to move. They've already outsourced. They've already located in search of low wages.

What this trade agreement would do is open the doors to the higher skill, higher wage jobs of the future, jobs that we excel at. It would make sure our manufacturers who are operating at the higher end of the value chain are able to access these growing markets. And the fact is, over the past few years, our manufacturers have been steadily creating jobs for the first time since the 1990s, under my administration. After more than a decade away from the top spot, business leaders around the world have declared the United States is the world's number-one place to invest for a third year in a row. [Applause] Third year in a row.

So the point is, outsourcing is already giving way to insourcing. Companies are starting to move back here to do more advanced manufacturing, and this is a trend we expect to continue. This trade deal would help that.

Just this morning, as Mark may have mentioned, Nike announced that, with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, it will make new investments in advanced manufacturing, not overseas, but right here in the United States. And far more Nike products would be made in the U.S.A. And that means thousands of new jobs in manufacturing and engineering and design at Nike facilities across the country and potentially tens of thousands of new jobs along Nike's supply chain here at home. That's what trade can do.

Look, I've spent 6½ years trying to rescue this economy, 6½ years of trying to revitalize American manufacturing, including rescuing an American auto industry that was on its back and is now fully recovered. So I would not risk any of that if I thought the trade deals were going to undermine it. The reason I'm for this is because I think it will enhance it and advance it. So that's point number one.

Point number two: When you ask folks specifically, "What do you oppose about this trade deal?" they just say "NAFTA." [Laughter] NAFTA was passed 20 years ago. That was a



different agreement. And in fact, this agreement fixes some of what was wrong with NAFTA by making labor and environmental provisions actually enforceable. I was just getting out of law school when NAFTA got passed. [Laughter]

Number three, you've got some critics saying that any deal would be rushed through; it's a secret deal, people don't know what's in it. This is not true. [Laughter] Any agreement that we finalize with the other 11 countries will have to be posted online for at least 60 days before I even sign it. Then, it would go to Congress, and you know they're not going to do anything fast. [Laughter] So there will be months of review. Every "t" crossed, every "i" dotted. Everybody is going to be able to see exactly what's in it.

There's nothing fast-track about this. This is a very deliberate track—[laughter]—which will be fully subject to scrutiny. And I'm confident when people read the agreement for themselves, they'll see that this is the most progressive trade deal in history.

Number four, critics warn that parts of this deal would undermine American regulation: food safety, worker safety, even financial regulations. This is—they're making this stuff up. This is just not true. No trade agreement is going to force us to change our laws. This agreement would make sure our companies aren't discriminated against in other countries.

We already treat companies from other countries fairly here. But our companies don't always get treated fairly there. So sometimes, they need to have some way to settle disputes where it's not subject to the whims of some government bureaucrat in that country. That's important. We want our businesses to succeed in selling over there because that's how our workers will get more jobs here in the United States.

And then, finally, some critics talk about currency manipulation. Now, this has been a problem in the past. Some countries, they try to lower their currency so that it makes their goods cheaper, makes our more expensive. There was a time when China was pretty egregious about this. When I came into office, I

started pounding on them. Every time I'd meet with them, I'd be talking about currency. And we pushed back hard, and China moved. In real terms, their currency has appreciated about 30 percent since I came into office. And we're going to keep on going after it. But that's not an argument against this trade agreement. If we give up the chance to help our businesses sell their stuff in the world's fastest growing markets, that doesn't do anything to stop currency manipulation.

So the fact is, some folks are just opposed to trade deals out of principle, a reflexive principle. And what I tell them is, you know what, if you're opposed to these smart, progressive trade deals, then that means you must be satisfied with the status quo. And the status quo hasn't been working for our workers. It hasn't been working for our businesses. And there are people here who will tell you why.

I'm going to just give you a couple of examples of small businesses who I had a chance to meet with today. Egg Press, it's a Portland-based greeting card company, really nice. They sell their cards in Australia, which is a member of this Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. Their CEO, Tess Darrow—where's Tess? Raise your hand. I saw her. There she is. So Tess says that if they could more easily reach customers in Japan as well, they'd sell half the volume that they do here in America. That's a lot.

Right now the logistics of exporting to Japan are too complicated. Products end up being held up for months at the border. This agreement would help solve some of those problems so Tess can sell more greeting cards in Japan, presumably in Japanese. [Laughter] Right? Is there going to be—there will be a translation process, I assume. Yes, absolutely. I'm teasing. [Laughter] Okay.

So the trade deal would help eliminate barriers and simplify customs and hold countries accountable for getting products delivered swiftly. The more Tess sells, the more she can grow, the more she can hire here in Oregon, here in the United States.

Oregon Fruit Products—makes canned fruits, berries, other products—depends on ex-

ports for 20 percent of its annual sales. Right now it exports to four members of this partnership that we're putting together: Japan, Australia, Singapore, and Canada. Unfortunately, selling in these countries right now can mean dealing with unfair rules designed to prevent our products from being offered in their markets. Under this agreement, that would change. Exporting becomes simpler, more consistent. That means more people around the world eating Oregon berries all year long. Berry tasty.

Sokol Blosser Winery—[*applause*]*—oh, we've got a lot of drinkers here. [Laughter]* This is a winery, family run in Dayton, Oregon. One of its top export markets is Japan. Right now there are high tariffs on American wine in that country. Under this trade partnership, those tariffs would be eliminated, and wineries across America could see their sales grow overseas. The brother-and-sister team that runs this vineyard—*wave, guys—they say, "If we can make it easier to do business with countries that are already our trading partners, countries that are allies, that's a good thing."*

*They're right. This deal would be a good thing. So let's "just do it." [Laughter]* It took a while for you to catch that, didn't you? [*Laughter*] I thought that was pretty obvious. [*Laughter*]

So listen, I know a lot of folks who are skeptical about trade. Past trade deals didn't always live up to the hype. Labor and environmental protections weren't always strong enough. I saw for years, in Chicago and towns across Illinois, manufacturing collapsing, jobs drying up. Outsourcing is real. Folks didn't just make that up. Some of our manufacturing base shifted over the last 25 years, and it wasn't good for manufacturing, and it wasn't good for those communities, and it wasn't good for workers. That's the truth. It had benefits. Other jobs were created; we got cheaper goods. But there was real displacement and real pain. And so for many Americans, this is not an abstraction, this is real.

But we've got to learn the right lessons from that. The lesson is not that we pull up the drawbridge and build a moat around ourselves. The lesson is, is that we've got to make sure

that the trade deals that we do shape are ones that allow us to compete fairly.

So when I took office, I decided we could rethink the way we do trade in a way that actually works for working Americans. I didn't think this was the right thing to do just for companies. If I didn't think this was the right thing to do for working families, I would not be fighting for it. If any agreement undercuts working families, I won't sign it. I ran for office to expand opportunity for everybody, the all-American idea that no matter who you are or where you come from or how you started out or who you love, in America, you can make it if you try.

So yes, we should be mindful of the past, but we can't ignore the realities of the new economy. We can't stand on the beaches and stop the global economy at our shores. We've got to harness it on our terms. This century is built for us. It's about innovation. It's about dynamism and flexibility and entrepreneurship and information and knowledge and science and research. That's us. So we can't be afraid of it; we've got to seize it. We've got to give every single American who wakes up, sends their kids to school, rolls up their sleeves, punches in every day the chance to do what they do best: dream up, innovate, build, sell the best products and ideas in the world to every corner of the world.

Because, Nike, we do not just have the best athletes in the world. We also have the best workers in the world. We also have the best businesses in the world. And when the playing field is level, nobody beats the United States of America. Nobody beats the United States of America.

Just do it, everybody. Thank you. God bless you. Thank you, Oregon. Thank you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:44 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mark G. Parker, chief executive officer, Nike, Inc.; Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; Mia Hamm, former forward, U.S. women's soccer team; Marcus Mariota, former quarterback, University of Oregon football team; and Alex and Allison Sokol Blosser, copresidents, Sokol Blosser Winery.

## Commencement Address at Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, South Dakota

May 8, 2015

Thank you so much. Thank you. Congratulations. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, hello, Watertown! It's good to be in South Dakota. I want to thank Governor Daugaard and the First Lady. Apparently, Michelle and her, they're on the same wave length when it comes to keeping us straight. *[Laughter]* To Senator Thune, Senator Rounds, Congresswoman Noem, Mayor Thorson, Superintendent Dr. Lesli Jutting—all of you for your extraordinary hospitality.

I am thrilled to be here. I have now been to all 50 States as President, and I was saving the best for last. To the other 49, I hope you take no offense. *[Laughter]* I will say that your tourism secretary sent me a very impressive letter listing all the South Dakota sites that I still need to see. *[Laughter]* And they looked great, but I decided that the first one I needed to see was Lake Area Tech.

So, President Cartney, thank you and the people of Watertown for welcoming me. To the students, the faculty, the staff, I'm honored to be with you here today. And most of all, congratulations to the class of 2015!

I know some folks were a little surprised by me coming here. But there is no place I'd rather be on this Friday afternoon than celebrating with all of you. Although, I was told I should head home before any of my staff end up at the "gravel pit" tonight. *[Laughter]* That's what I was told.

I want to begin with a public service announcement. As long as you keep your school ID, you can still get your Sunday night student discount at B-Dubs. *[Laughter]* I had my staff check on that. And I think it may go down in history as one of my more popular executive actions. *[Laughter]*

So after a whole lot of work, you have a whole lot to celebrate this weekend. This is a proud moment, and not just for you wearing the funny hats, but for your friends and your family and your mentors, your instructors who

helped you to reach this day. So let's give the family members and all the people who helped get you here, let's give them a big round of applause.

And I actually spend a lot of time with a community college professor whose name is Dr. Jill Biden. She happens to be Joe Biden's wife. She teaches English full time at a community college in Virginia. So I know how great your instructors can be. And I want to thank one of them in particular. So Dolores Stemwedel was scheduled to speak today. Where is she? I saw her earlier. There she is. She graciously agreed to wait until next year so that I could cut in. *[Laughter]* And I had a chance to meet her. She was completely charming. And I have to say, you guys missed out. She's really good.

Of course, Dolores was not the only one who was surprised to learn that I had asked to speak at your commencement. When President Cartney told his staff the news, apparently no one believed him. *[Laughter]* And Shane Ortmeier, your bookstore manager, said he blacked out for a minute. *[Laughter]* Alexis Stinton, an instructor in your Ag program, said her first thought was: "That's the funniest joke in the world. We're just a tiny little school in this little tiny town." *[Laughter]*

And look, she's right. This is a small school in a small town, in a State that is wonderful, but not a huge population. There are schools out there with more students than this one. There are schools with more resources and more history and more name recognition. And frankly, there are schools with stadiums that could fit all of this county nearly four times over. *[Laughter]*

So the question is, why am I here? Well, you started to hear the answer earlier from the previous speakers. Why would I come to a 2-year college in the fifth-biggest city in South Dakota? Well, the reason is because I believe that in a fast-paced, hyperconnected, constantly changing world, there are few institutions that

are more important to America's economic future than community colleges. And there are few community colleges that are as important as Lake Area Tech. This school is leading the way.

Compared with other community colleges, the graduation rate at Lake Area is more than three times the national average. Three times. Within 6 months, 98 percent of those graduates—you—are either employed or continuing your education. The average Lake Area graduate who enters the workforce earns nearly 50-percent more than other new hires in this region. And as has already been noted, since 2011, there's been an award for excellence called the "Aspen Prize." It's basically the Oscars for great community colleges. Only two community colleges in the country made the top 10 every year the prize has been awarded, and one of them is Lake Area Tech.

So this is not an accident. It's the result of a relentless focus on teaching real-world skills that lead directly to a job. In your time here, you've done hands-on work with companies across the upper Midwest. Employers even help design the curriculum. You work direct with the tools and the technology that you'll encounter in the workforce, from car engines to welding equipment to your new MakerSpace, with 3-D printers that were actually built by Lake Area students. And your instructors haven't just taught you new skills, they've helped place you in new careers.

You might think all this attention on job training comes at the expense of great teaching, but if anything, the opposite is true. This is the kind of place where students are on a first-name basis with their instructors. If you call at 10 p.m., they'll answer your call, although I hope you don't do that, because folks need their sleep. If you don't make it to morning classes, they'll check up on you and make sure you're okay. I heard one student who skipped school to go hunting found that out the hard way that somebody was going to check up on you. [Laughter] One of today's graduates, Colin Blume—where's Colin? Raise your hand. Stand up, Colin, just so you—hey, that's Colin. Colin is a big guy, by the way. So Colin—I'm

going to quote Colin on this. He said, "You're family, and they'll do anything to help you along the way."

And that sense of mission has been part of Lake Area since this school was founded 50 years ago. And today, it matters even more, that sense that we're a family and that we'll do anything to help each other along the way.

Class of 2015, you're about to graduate into an economy that is fundamentally different than the one that faced the first class of Lake Area graduates over a half-century ago. You've seen a lot of the perils of this economy firsthand: how good jobs and entire industries can vanish or be shipped overseas; how a crisis, because of some of irresponsible folks on Wall Street, can punish families on Main Street with one of the most vicious recessions in our country's history.

So it would be easy to just throw up your hands and say: "What hope does a place like Watertown have in a global economy? What place does somebody like me have in today's job market?" But instead of looking backwards, you looked forward. You saw doors of opportunity waiting to be opened. And you decided that community college would be your key to unlocking those doors.

Some of you came to Lake Area because you knew exactly what you wanted to do with your lives and you saw that education could earn your way to get started as quickly as possible. And Colin, the young man who said this school was like a family, turned a high school welding project into a business when he was 16 years old. At 18, he was awarded a patent for creating a new type of grain-handling cage. And today, at the ripe old age of 20—[laughter]—he's graduating with a degree in Ag production, a new contract to manufacture continuous fencing in the shop on his family farm, and who knows how many jobs he's going to end up creating. That's the kind of future-oriented focus that we're seeing in today's graduates. And the instructors here helped him make it happen. So we're really proud of you.

But Colin is not the only. From the time she was an infant, Maysa Hackens has been blind in her right eye, and she has only 75-percent

vision in her left. Where—is she here? Maysa? Come on, stand up. There you go. There you go. So Maysa is not as tall as Colin. [Laughter] But in high school, she discovered a passion that most people might not expect somebody with her vision issues to be able to pursue photography. And she was really good at it. And she found that Lake Area would give her the chance to complete both a business degree and a photography degree in just 2 years. So now she's going back home, to New Underwood, to run her own business. It's called "How 'Eye' See It Photography." And she's got a website, and she's got a business plan. That's the kind of initiative that built this country. And a little free advertising from the President doesn't help—it doesn't hurt. [Laughter] Hopefully, folks were paying attention.

So community colleges like this one can be a great place for young people to launch a career. But they're also a great place for people who have already been in the workforce for a while and decide they need to change their careers and reach for something better.

So Leanna Waldner—where's Leanna? Come on, don't be shy. She's here somewhere. There she is. Wow. Leanna, you stood up and sat down before I could even see you. [Laughter] Where are you? Come on, stand up. There you are. There you go. So Leanna grew right—grew up right here in Watertown. She dropped out of high school. By age 20, she was working as a waitress, supporting two beautiful baby girls, Lizzie and Farrah, on her own. And that touches me, because I was raised by a single mom with the help of my grandparents.

So after years of low-paying jobs, Leanna decided she needed to go back to school. And it wasn't easy. Some nights, Lizzie would be doing her homework at one end of the kitchen table, and Mom would be doing her homework at the other end. And Leanna says, "I didn't think I'd ever be in that position to walk across that stage and get a diploma." But here she is, about to walk across this stage and earn her financial services degree. And I know there are two little girls here today that are really, really proud of their mom. Setting a great example.

And then, some of you came to Lake Area Tech because you'd already begun a great career, in the bravest way possible. And you figured with a few new skills, you could take the next step. Tech Sergeant Joe Wiskur joined the Navy right before 9/11. Where's Joe? In 2005, he enlisted in the South Dakota Air National Guard. He helped organize air operations over four deployments overseas, earned two commendation medals for his service. But Joe's mentors told him that if he wanted to keep climbing the chain of command, he needed more than a high school degree. So he came to Lake Area to study aviation maintenance technology. Joe's next deployment is shortly after graduation. But this time, he's hoping to be training the airmen who used to do his old job.

And Sergeant Wiskur is one of 35 servicemembers and veterans graduating from Lake Area Tech today. And as your Commander in Chief, I could not be prouder of you. And I ask everyone to stand and recognize these men and women for their service. Thank you.

So stories like Joe's and Leanna's and Maysa's and Colin's, they are our proof that community colleges like this one are vital paths to the middle class for millions of Americans. In just 2 years, schools like this can change lives, change careers, grow our economy. They can change our country.

All of us are better off when our businesses have access to the best trained workers in the world. All of us are better off when entrepreneurs like Colin and Maysa can boost their hometown economies and make it more attractive for young people to stay. All of us are better off when a parent like Leanna can make ends meet and provide for her kids. All of us are better off when a patriot like Joe can keep serving his country.

So that's why I came here today, to this little tiny school in this little tiny town. I didn't come here to inspire you. I came here because you, the graduates, inspire me. That's why I came here. You have lived through some of the toughest economic times in your country's history, and you still chose to come here—come here and invest in yourself, because you still believe that America is a place where you can

make it if you try. That's what hope is, the belief that even if today is hard, with a little hard work, there's something better around the bend.

And it is that promise that has always set this country apart. It's the idea that through hard work and through sacrifice, each of us can pursue our individual dreams, but we still come together as one American family to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams as well; that we take responsibility for looking after our own kids, but we're also thinking about somebody else's kids; that if we got a good break and did well, you know what, we're going to turn around and make sure that somebody else gets a break too. It's the idea, as Colin said, that we're a family and we'll do anything to help each other along. And we know that if we're helping somebody else, at some point we may need help too.

Now, I doubt all this was on your mind when you celebrated "Thirsty Thursday" last night. [Laughter] But as President, it's my job to think about this stuff. And I think the time you spent here was not only an investment in yourself, but a true act of faith in your country as well.

And that's why I think the country should return the favor. We should have faith in people like you. We should invest in people like you. Our budgets should reflect that we care about you.

That means giving everybody in America the same chance you have here, the chance to earn new skills that lead directly to a good job. And this is an idea that has united philanthropists and companies and educators around a common mission. And at a moment when our politics sometimes can seem really divided, this is an idea that actually has some bipartisan support. From the Republican Governor of Tennessee to the Democratic mayor of Chicago, leaders across our country are laying out plans to put a college education within reach for everybody.

And I'm proud of what we've done to expand Pell grants and the fact that so many young people here are recipients of Pell grants. Because when I came into office, not as many

folks were getting them. And I'm proud of what we've done to try to keep interest rates low on student loans. But we can do more than what we're doing.

That's why this year, in my State of the Union Address, inspired by a letter I received from a hard-working mom like Leanna, I put forward a proposal of my own. I want to lower the cost of community college in America to zero. I want to make it as easy to go to community college as it is to graduate from high school, if you're willing to work hard.

Now, I know some of you graduates are wishing we could go back in time and make the last 2 years free. [Laughter] I get it. I do too. But if folks in Congress decide to make this a priority, we could do the next best thing and make community college free for an entire generation of young Americans, as long as they're willing to work: keep their grades up, be responsible, graduate on time. And we could pay for it by closing just one loophole for millionaires and billionaires. Just one. Just one tax loophole enjoyed almost entirely by very few at the top, we could offer a quality education to millions of middle class Americans. It's in everybody's interest.

We live in a 21st-century economy that rewards knowledge and innovation like never before. So as a country, we can't afford to let any striving American be priced out of the education they need to get ahead. For everybody willing to work for it, we need to make 2 years of community college as free and universal as high school is today. It's the right thing to do. [Applause] It's the right thing to do.

And you know, if that seems pie in the sky, just remember, 4 years of free high school was once hard to imagine, until we as a country decided to give every child that chance. Helping veterans go to college on the GI bill was hard to imagine, until we decided our returning heroes deserved nothing less. Pell grants for lower income students were hard to imagine, until we decided that by investing in their future, we were investing in our own.

That's part of what makes America exceptional. We are family, and we'll do anything to

help each other along the way. That's what Colin said.

That brings me back to Alexis Stinton, your instructor who wondered why I would ask to come to this tiny little school, this little tiny town. Where's Alexis, by the way? There she is, over there. You see, back in 2007, Alexis owned a small dog-grooming business. And her husband Nathaniel worked construction. And one day, misfortune hit, and Nathaniel got injured, and he had to leave his job. And then the recession hit, and her small business struggled. "It was so overwhelming and such a low point for us," Alexis said, "I knew I was at a point where life needed to change." And this is the place where it did.

First, Nathaniel enrolled here. He earned a degree from the lab technician program. Today, he works in quality control at the Baby Bel Cheese factory over in Brookings. The next semester, Alexis enrolled here. And she was such a good student that even before she finished her Ag degree, she was asked to help teach classes. And "Lake Area Tech has turned both of our lives around," Alexis says. And today, her life work is to help other students make the same journey. "It's gratifying," she says, "when someone finds their path."

Graduates, I hope that's something you keep in mind as you walk across the stage today, that gratification that comes from helping someone find their path; for making yourself useful not just to yourself, but to others. For you haven't just earned new opportunities with this degree; you've also earned responsibilities along with it.

And, Colin and Maysa, as you open your small business, don't forget to be those entrepreneurs who give back to the communities that gave you so much. Leanna, as you build a better future for your kids, teach them that every child deserves the chance they had, even if they aren't lucky enough to have a mom like you. Joe and all the other graduates here today: Never settle. Keep climbing that ladder of success as you're doing it. Reach back to help others strive to be the best they can be.

That's who we are as Americans. We are rugged individuals. We haven't lost that pio-

neering spirit that brought many of our grandparents and great-grandparents to these plains. We ask for nothing more than the chance to blaze our own trail. And yet each of us is only here because somebody, somewhere, helped us find our path.

Which brings me to one last story. It's a story about a boy who was born more than a hundred years ago in Wallace, South Dakota, about 25 miles from here. His family didn't have much. But they were able to give him an education because he was part of that first generation of Americans to grow up in a country that believed high school should be available for everybody. And after high school, that boy went on to graduate college, and then he became a teacher, and then he became a mayor, and then he became a Senator. At the time Lake Area was founded, Hubert Humphrey was Vice President of the United States. But he never once forgot what made his American story possible. "The road to freedom," he said, "here and everywhere on Earth, begins in the classroom." The road to freedom begins in the classroom.

So, class of 2015, you have earned the chance to walk the road to freedom and to make of your lives what you will, to write that next great chapter in our American story. And your path will not always be easy, and your way forward will not always be clear. But you have worked hard for this moment. And if you hold fast to that faith in yourself and in your country and in our God, then the greatest moments of your journey are the ones that still lie ahead.

It's your world. Thank you, graduates. God bless you. Congratulations to the class of 2015. And good job, Lake Area Tech! We're proud of you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the Watertown Civic Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Daugaard, wife of Gov. Dennis Daugaard of South Dakota; Lesli Jutting, superintendent of schools, Watertown School District; Secretary of Tourism James D. Hagen of South Dakota; Shane Ortmeier, director of support operations, Lake Area Technical Institute; Gov. William E. Haslam of Tennessee; and Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago, IL.

## Statement on the 70th Anniversary of V–E Day May 8, 2015

Seventy years ago today, the Allied Forces declared victory in Europe over tyranny during World War II. After more than 5 years of brutal fighting that took the lives of some 40 million people across the continent—including 6 million Jews and millions of others murdered by the Nazi regime—the forces of freedom triumphed over oppression in Europe. The war was not yet won; it would be 3 more months of fighting in the Pacific. But V–E Day represented, at long last, a hope for peace.

Today we salute the more than 16 million Americans who left everything they knew—their families, their homes—to serve in World

War II and then came home to help build the America we know today. We honor the memory of the more than 400,000 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we might live free. We rededicate ourselves—on this day and every day—to the freedoms for which they fought and to the American Dream for which they died. We stand with our allies, in Europe and around the world, in defending the liberty and human rights of all people. And we honor our brave men and women in uniform and their families who continue to defend the freedom that was won 70 years ago today.

## Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in the United Kingdom May 8, 2015

I congratulate Prime Minister Cameron on his impressive electoral victory. The special and essential relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom is rooted in deep and abiding shared interests and values. I have enjoyed working closely with

Prime Minister Cameron on a range of shared interests these last several years, and I look forward to continuing to strengthen the bonds between our countries as we work together on behalf of global peace, security, and prosperity.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Central African Republic May 8, 2015

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13667 of May 12, 2014, with respect to the Central Afri-

can Republic is to continue in effect beyond May 12, 2015.

The situation in and in relation to the Central African Republic, which has been marked by a breakdown of law and order, intersectorian tension, widespread violence and atrocities, and the pervasive, often forced recruitment and use of child soldiers, threatens the peace, security, or stability of the Central African Republic and neighboring states, and continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order



13667 with respect to the Central African Republic.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

## Remarks on Global Entrepreneurship May 11, 2015

*The President.* Thank you so much. Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House.

We have more than 20 countries represented here today. So to those of you visiting for the first time, welcome to the United States. We have a lot of brainpower here. We've got innovators and investors, business leaders, entrepreneurs. We've even got a few Sharks. [Laughter] Mark and Daymond and Barbara, they were having a chance to talk to some of these young entrepreneurs, and they—the young entrepreneurs, I think, decided they were pretty nice sharks, as sharks go. [Laughter]

I want to welcome Senator Coons, who's here and a great champion of our engagement with Africa. And I want to thank Secretary Penny Pritzker, as well as our Small Business Administrator, Maria Contreras-Sweet, and all the leaders from across the administration for their work to empower entrepreneurs like you.

We're here today because we believe in the power of entrepreneurship: the basic notion that if you've got an idea and if you really work hard and you're able to pick yourself up if you stumble a couple of times, you can eventually turn that idea into a reality. And this matters to us because encouraging the spirit of entrepreneurship can help us to tackle some of the greatest challenges that we face around the world.

At a time when we're still working to sustain the global economic recovery and put people back to work, helping folks to start new business can spur broad-based growth, here at home and around the world. At a time when the world is more interconnected than ever, we've got unprecedented opportunities to help more people access capital and resources and networks that they need to succeed. At a time

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

that we're facing challenges that no country can meet by itself—lifting people out of poverty, combating climate change, preventing the spread of disease—helping social entrepreneurs mobilize and organize brings more people together to find solutions.

And entrepreneurship breaks down barriers between cultures and between faiths at a time when we need more than ever the capacity to understand and work across borders.

And no one understands this better than our young people, like those of you who are here today. I do have to say, as a quick aside, I feel kind of old hanging out with you. [Laughter] I used to think of entrepreneurs as kind of old, grizzled people, and now I'm the old grizzled person—[laughter]—and the entrepreneurs are all young, and so I have an extraordinarily good-looking group of entrepreneurs.

But more than half the world's population is under the age of 30. In some countries, it's an overwhelming majority. And yet there are also countries where youth unemployment can exceed 35 percent. And when so many young people don't see a future for themselves, if they don't see a path to success, it holds the entire nation back. It's a recipe for instability and conflict and violence.

And around the world, we've seen how violent extremists are exploiting and tapping into these frustrations of young people who feel that they've got no opportunity to improve their lives. And what they offer are dead ends. And yet if these young people don't feel that there is a positive path for themselves, then they're vulnerable.

Poverty alone does not cause terrorism or sectarian violence, but investments in youth entrepreneurship and education are some of our best antidotes that we have to that kind of

disorder. So all of this matters to us: to our shared prosperity and to our shared security.

And that's why, from the very beginning of my administration, I've elevated our support for entrepreneurship to make it easier for young people—and people generally—to start a new business or a new social venture. I hosted the first Global Entrepreneurship Summit back in 2010, and over the past 5 years, we've helped to train and empower thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs. We've helped small businesses expand into new markets, mobilized new investments, connected emerging innovators with mentors and networks and expanded access to capital.

As part of our Young African Leaders Initiative, we're offering training and grants and online resources and courses and leadership centers to help young entrepreneurs build businesses that can drive growth in Africa. As part of our initiative in Southeast Asia, we've connected young people across the ASEAN countries, and this is a region that will only grow in importance for the global economy.

Last month, I was in Jamaica—not only to visit Bob Marley's house, which was very cool. [Laughter] The—Mark, I'm telling you, if you can go, it's—[laughter]—it's cool. But also to launch our initiative for young entrepreneurs in the Caribbean and Latin America. And everywhere you go, I've—you meet these incredibly inspiring young people. Young Palestinians I met in Ramallah, working to improve the lives of people across the West Bank through business and creating opportunity. A young man in rural Malawi, his town currently in darkness, but he's building generators to deliver electricity. Young Malaysians, harnessing technology and connecting their communities to the global economy. And just like you, they're daring to dream and dedicating themselves to building something lasting for themselves, but also for their countries.

So all told, we've set a goal of generating \$1 billion in new investment for emerging entrepreneurs worldwide by 2017. And half of that money is going to support young entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs. And we're calling it the Spark Global Entrepreneurship

Initiative—brings together some of the most successful entrepreneurship programs across our Government and makes sure that they're working with the private sector in ways that allow for long-term, sustained success.

So today we're taking some next steps. First, we're going to step up our efforts to support young entrepreneurs and women, which is just smart business. We want to spur entrepreneurship in places where it can do the most good and have the greatest impact. And we're going to work even harder to reach entrepreneurs who face the highest hurdles when it comes to accessing the essential tools of entrepreneurship: finance, support networks, mentors.

Second, I'm proud to announce that more of America's business leaders and innovators are joining us in this effort. We call them our ambassadors for global entrepreneurship. They do not have to be confirmed by the Senate—[laughter]—which is worth—[laughter]—cheering. Our first class of ambassadors has been doing extraordinary work. Steve Case, who, from the day I came into office, has been working with me on promoting entrepreneurship here in the United States and now overseas, he just ended his Rise of the Rest bus tour, investing in young entrepreneurs in 14 cities across the United States.

Today we're welcoming nine new ambassadors from companies working on shared challenges: how to build a business in underserved communities, how to improve the affordability and accessibility of medical care, how to inspire young girls to pursue science and engineering. And each of our ambassadors has committed to a signature project focused on the communities we're looking to help.

I'm just going to give you two examples, although each one of these entrepreneurs have amazing stories and are doing some extraordinary partnering with us. So Brian Chesky of Airbnb—where's Brian? There he is. In addition to stealing a few of my employees—[laughter]—is going to help the Cuban people navigate new business opportunities as their economy opens up to greater Internet connectivity and modern payment systems, which provides enormous opportunities for individu-

als inside of Cuba at a time when things are transitioning and changing.

Julie Hanna. Where is Julie? There she is. Julie will use her expertise leading Kiva to increase access to capital around the world. Her project commits to delivering a hundred million dollars in crowdfunded loans to 200,000 women and young entrepreneurs across 86 different countries.

So I want to thank all our global entrepreneurship ambassadors for stepping forward and being part of this important work. Why—can you guys all stand up? And our global ambassadors, I want to just give them a big round of applause because they're doing really important work.

And finally, I'm challenging our partners across the private sector around the world to join this effort. We've already got the backing of some of the world's leading entrepreneurial foundations and organizations. They've joined together to form the Spark Global Entrepreneurship Coalition, which will coordinate this work and help us mobilize even more funding to support entrepreneurs.

But today I'm also urging governments and companies and organizations and individuals to make their own commitments. Whether it's through training and mentorship programs or helping entrepreneurs access capital and connect to markets or improving educational opportunities and exchanges, everybody has a part to play. Everybody can do something.

And this summer, I'll travel to Kenya. While I'm there, I'll participate in the—

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* All right, yo! [Laughter] *Habari!* The—and so we're going to participate in the sixth Global Entrepreneurship Summit. And I'll have the opportunity to meet some of the brilliant young entrepreneurs from across Africa and around the world. If enough folks respond to the challenge that I'm issuing today, I believe that at the summit in Nairobi we'll be able to announce new investments and commitments that will pay off for years to come.

We want to empower people in ways that empower societies and ultimately empower the world. Women like Jimena Florez of Co-

lombia—where's Jimena? There she is. So I just had a chance to meet with her. She started her own company making healthy foods—which Michelle would be very pleased with—[laughter]—and she started her company entirely with fellow women entrepreneurs, which Michelle would also be happy with. And through our support for women entrepreneurs, we've helped Jimena connect to mentors and training so that she can access new trade opportunities and grow her business. And through her work, she's also helping Colombian farmers adopt organic farming and benefit from access to new markets as well. So we want to thank you, Jimena, for helping to lift up your community. We're very, very proud of you.

We want to empower pioneers like Ziad Sankari. Where's Ziad? There he is, right next to her. When he was 17, he lost his father to a heart attack. And Ziad first came to the United States to study on a Fulbright. Then, through one of our science and technology competitions, he earned seed funding to develop his innovation, which is a heart-monitoring technology that clips to your waistband. So today, he's improving the way we respond to cardiac incidents, which will have enormous ramifications not just in places like Lebanon, but potentially, all around the world. So thank you, Ziad, for helping to save lives.

And we want to empower leaders of social change like Lina Khalifeh of Jordan. Where's Lina? There she is. After seeing one of her close friends abused, Lina said, that's enough. And so she had a background in martial arts. [Laughter] And so she opened SheFighter, a self-defense studio for women. So far, she has helped about 10,000 women learn how to protect themselves. And now she's competing for funding to expand her mission across the Middle East. So thank you, Lina. We want to be your partner to help women live—in helping women to live with dignity and safety.

So Jimena, Ziad, Lina—to all the young entrepreneurs out here—you are the face of change. You have the power to drive creative solutions to our pressing challenges. You know how to bring people together to work toward a common goal. And I believe in all of you. And

as I travel around the country—I was telling some of the entrepreneurs earlier—when you go to some of the toughest places in the world, where violence and deprivation are, sadly, daily facts of life, what people are most eager to hear about is opportunities to start a business. What they're most interested in hearing about is the power of entrepreneurship to allow them to shape their own destinies, not just to be subject to the whims of aid agencies or geopolitics, but to be part of something that allows them to pursue their dreams and, by doing so, empowers all of us.

I believe that entrepreneurs like you can make the world a better place, one idea at a time. And you're going to be how change happens: one person, one step, one business, one city, one country at a time.

There are brilliant young people and hard-working women and innovative thinkers from communities all around the world—people just like you—ready to make a difference. But they haven't been given the chance yet. And we can change that. And together, we can help make sure that anyone who's got the creativity and drive to work hard, no matter where they're

from, what they look like, what their background is, they get a fair shot at pursuing their dreams. And we'll all be better for it.

That's what this is about. And that's why America is going to keep supporting entrepreneurs like you. And as long as I'm President, this is going to be a critical part of our engagement and our diplomacy with countries and peoples around the world, and I suspect I'll still be working on it well after I'm President as well.

So thank you very much, everybody. Proud of you. Keep it up. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:29 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Cuban, Daymond G. John, and Barbara A. Corcoran, castmembers, ABC's "Shark Tank" program; Stephen M. Case, chief executive officer, Revolution; Brian J. Chesky, chief executive officer, Airbnb, Inc.; Julie Hanna, executive chair of the board of directors, Kiva; Jimena Florez, founder, Crispy Fruits; and Ziad Sankari, founder, CardioDiagnostics.

## Remarks During a Panel Discussion at the Catholic-Evangelical Leadership Summit on Overcoming Poverty at Georgetown University

May 12, 2015

*Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne, Jr. It's a real honor to be here today with my two presidents: President Obama and President DeGioia. [Laughter] And my friend David Brooks hurled the most vicious insult at me ever once when he said that I was the only person he ever met whose eyes lit up at the words "panel discussion." [Laughter] And I have to confess that my eyes did light up when I was asked to do this particular panel discussion, and not just for the obvious reason to my left—and again, it's a real honor to be with you, Mr. President—or Arthur or Bob.

Poverty is a subject we talk about mainly when tragic events, such as those we witnessed recently in Baltimore, grab our attention. Then, we push it aside, we bury it, we say it's

not politically shrewd to talk about it. So I salute Georgetown, my friend John Carr, and Galen Carey, and all the other extraordinary people who are gathered here for the poverty summit from all religious traditions all over the country.

Our friend Jim Wallis once said that if you cut everything Jesus said about the poor out of the Gospel, you have a book full of holes. And these are evangelicals, Catholics, and others who understand what the Scripture said.

Just two quick organizing points on our discussion. The first is that when it's time to go, please keep your seat so the President can be escorted out. The other is that Bob and Arthur and I all agreed that we should direct somewhat more attention to President Obama than

to the other members of the panel. [Laughter] I just say that—I say that in advance so that you know this was our call and not some exercise in executive power. [Laughter] This was our decision to do this.

And in any event, we hope this will be a back-and-forth kind of discussion. Bob and Arthur, feel free to interrupt the President if it—if you feel like it. [Laughter]

My first question, Mr. President, is the obvious one. A friend of mine said yesterday, when do Presidents do panels? And what came to mind is the late Admiral Stockdale: “Who am I? Why am I here?” [Laughter] And I’d like to ask you why you decided—this is a very unusual venue for a President to put himself in—and I’d like to ask you, where do you hope this discussion will lead beyond today?

And I was struck with something you said in your speech last week. You said, “Politicians talk about poverty and inequality and then gut policies that help alleviate poverty and reverse inequality.” Why are you doing this, and how do you want us to come out of here?

*The President.* Well, first of all, I want to thank President DeGioia, the Georgetown community, all the groups—nonprofits, faith-based groups, and others—who are hosting this today. And I want to thank this terrific panel.

I think that we are at a moment—in part because of what’s happened in Baltimore and Ferguson and other places, but in part because a growing awareness of inequality in our society—where it may be possible not only to refocus attention on the issue of poverty, but also maybe to bridge some of the gaps that have existed and the ideological divides that have prevented us from making progress.

And there are a lot of folks here who I have worked with; they disagree with me on some issues, but they have great sincerity when it comes to wanting to deal with helping the least of these. And so this is a wonderful occasion for us to join together.

Part of the reason I thought this venue would be useful and I wanted to have a dialogue with Bob and Arthur is that we have been stuck, I think, for a long time in a debate

that creates a couple of straw men. Right? The stereotype is that you’ve got folks on the left who just want to pour more money into social programs and don’t care anything about culture or parenting or family structures. And that’s one stereotype. And then, you’ve got cold-hearted, free market, capitalist types who are reading Ayn Rand and—[laughter]—think everybody is moochers, and that’s—and I think the truth is more complicated.

I think that there are those on the conservative spectrum who deeply care about the least of these, deeply care about the poor, exhibit that through their churches, through community groups, through philanthropic efforts, but are suspicious of what government can do. And then, there are those on the left who, I think, are in the trenches every day and see how important parenting is and how important family structures are and the connective tissue that holds communities together and recognize that that contributes to poverty when those structures fray, but also believe that government and resources can make a difference in creating an environment in which young people can succeed despite great odds. And it seems to me that if coming out of this conversation we can have a both-and conversation rather than either-or conversation, then we’ll be making some progress.

And the last point, I guess, I want to make is I also want to emphasize, we can do something about these issues. I think it is a mistake for us to suggest that somehow every effort we make has failed and we are powerless to address poverty. That’s just not true. First of all, just in absolute terms, the poverty rate, when you take into account tax-and-transfer programs, has been reduced about 40 percent since 1967.

Now, that does not lessen our concern about communities where poverty remains chronic. It does suggest, though, that we have been able to lessen poverty when we decide we want to do something about it. In every low-income community around the country, there are programs that work to provide ladders of opportunity to young people; we just haven’t figured out how to scale them up.

And so one of the things I'm always concerned about is cynicism. I, my Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough, we take walks around the South Lawn, usually when the weather is good, and a lot of it is policy talk; sometimes, it's just talk about values. And one of our favorite sayings is, our job is to guard against cynicism, particularly in this town. And I think it's important when it comes to dealing with issues of poverty for us to guard against cynicism and not buy the idea that the poor will always be with us and there's nothing we can do. Because there's a lot we can do. The question is, do we have the political will, the communal will to do something about it?

Mr. Dionne. Thank you, Mr. President. I feel, as a journalist, maybe I'm the one representative of cynicism up here—[laughter]—so I'll try to do my job. I want to go through the panel and come back to you, Mr. President. I want to invite Bob, and I'm going to encourage us to reach for solutions. But before we get there, I think it's important to say that your book, Bob, your book "Our Kids" is above all a moral call on the country to think about all the kids in the country who have been left out as our kids in some deep way. And you make the point that the better off and the poor are now so far apart that the fortunate don't even see the lives of the unlucky and the left behind. You wrote, "Before I began this research, I was like that."

And following on what the President said, you insist that the decline in social mobility, the blocking of the American Dream for so many, is a purple problem. And I may have some questions later on that, but I really would like you to lay out the red and blue components. And also, how do we break through a politics in which food stamp recipients are still somehow cast as privileged or the poor are demonized. But I'd like you to lay out sort of the moral call of your book.

Harvard University Malkin Professor of Public Policy Robert D. Putnam. Thanks. Thanks, E.J., and thanks to the President and to Arthur for joining me in this conversation.

I think in this domain, there's good news and bad news, and it's important to begin with

the bad news because we have to understand where we are. The President is absolutely right that the War on Poverty did make a real difference, but it made a difference more for poverty among people of my age than it did for poverty among kids.

And with respect to kids, I completely agree with the President that we know about some things that would work and things that would make a real difference in the lives of poor kids, but what the book that you've deferred to, "Our Kids," what it presents is a lot of evidence of growing gaps between rich kids and poor kids; that over the last 30 or 40 years, things have gotten better and better for kids coming from well-off homes and worse and worse for kids coming from less well-off homes.

And I don't mean Bill Gates and some homeless person. I mean people coming from college-educated homes, their kids are doing better and better, and people coming from high school-educated homes, their kids aren't. And it's not just that there's this class gap, but a class gap on our watch. I don't mean just the President's watch, but I mean on my generation's watch, that gap has grown.

And you can see it in measures of family stability. You can see it in measures of the investments that parents are able to make in their kids, the investments of money and the investments of time. You can see it in the quality of schools kids go to. You can see it in the character of the social and community support that kids—rich kids and poor kids—are getting from their communities. Church attendance is a good example of that, actually. Churches are an important source of social support for kids outside their own family, but church attendance is down much more rapidly among kids coming from impoverished backgrounds than among kids coming from wealthy backgrounds.

And so I think what all of that evidence suggests is that we do face, I think, actually a serious crisis in which, increasingly, the most important decision that anybody makes is choosing their parents. [Laughter] And if you—if, like my grandchildren are really smart, they were—the best decision they ever made was to choose college-educated parents and great

grandparents. [Laughter] But out there, someplace else, there is another bunch of kids who are just as talented and just as—in principle—just as hard-working, but who happened to choose parents who weren't very well educated and/or weren't high-income, and those kids' fate is being determined by things that they had no control over. And that's fundamentally unfair.

It also is, by the way, bad for our economy, because when we have this large number of kids growing up in poverty, it's not like that's going to make things better for my grandchildren. It's going to make things worse for my grandchildren. So this is, in principle, a solution that we—a problem that we ought to find solutions to.

And historically, this is a kind of problem that Americans have faced before and have solved, and this is the basis for my optimism. There have been previous periods in American history when we've had a great gap between rich and poor, when we have ignored the least of these, in which we've—I'm thinking of the Gilded Age at the end of the 19th century, and both of you have written about that period—in which there was a great gap between rich and poor and kids were—we were ignoring lots of kids, especially lots of immigrant kids. And America seemed to be going to hell in a hand basket. And there was a dominant philosophy, social Darwinism, which said that it's better for everybody if everybody is selfish and the devil take the hindmost.

But that—not unlike some of the ideology of Ayn Rand that you referred to—but that period was quickly—not quickly, but was overcome by a reawakening of the conscience of America across party lines, with the important contribution of religious leaders and religious people, to the fact that these are all our kids.

And now is not the time to rehearse all of the lessons of that earlier period, but I think it does actually give me grounds for hope. This is a kind of problem that we could solve as long as we all recognize that it's in everybody's interest to raise up these poor kids and not to leave them in the dust.

*Mr. Dionne.* Thank you very much. By the way, let the record show the President was not looking at Arthur when he referred to cold-hearted capitalists. [Laughter] But it is nice to have somebody here from the AEI.

*American Enterprise Institute President Arthur C. Brooks.* Well, E.J., I mean, when the President said that, I was just thinking—what was going through my head was, please don't look at me, please don't look at me. [Laughter] But you notice, when Bob said this—about the social Darwinism—he pointed at me. [Laughter]

*Mr. Putnam.* No.

*Mr. Brooks.* So I'm more outnumbered than my Thanksgiving table in Seattle, I'll tell you. [Laughter]

*Mr. Dionne.* You just have to look into your heart, Arthur. [Laughter] And in fact, that's kind of what I want to ask you to do here. I mean, your views on these subjects have actually changed, and I think it's one of the reasons you wanted to join us today.

Back in 2010, you talked about makers and takers in society and a culture of redistribution. But in February 2014, you wrote a very important article in *Commentary*, "Be Open-Hearted"—"Open-Handed Toward Your Brothers." And you have said we have to declare peace on the safety net, which I think is a really important thing to say.

And so—and as the President suggested, the safety net we have has actually cut poverty substantially. So twin questions: Could you talk about how and why your own views have changed, if I fairly characterize that? And in the spirit we're celebrating here of transideological nonpartisanship—now, there's a mouthful for you—[laughter].

*Mr. Brooks.* Yes. Wow.

*Mr. Dionne.* In that spirit, where can Republicans cooperate with Democrats, conservatives with liberals, on safety net issues like making the earned-income tax credit permanent or expanding the child tax credit? I mean, where can we find not just verbal common ground, but actual common ground to get things done for the least among us?

*Mr. Brooks.* Well thank you, E.J. And thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here

and with all of you. This is such an important exercise in bringing Catholics and evangelicals together, but having a public discussion.

One of the main things that I do as president of AEI is to talk publicly about issues and start a conversation with my colleagues in a way that I hope can stimulate the conversation and spread it around the country.

When—at the American Enterprise Institute, where we have a longstanding history of work on the nature of American capitalism, when we're focusing very deeply on poverty, it sends a signal to a lot of people that are deeply involved in the free enterprise movement. My colleague, Robert Doar, is here. He came to AEI because poverty is the most important thing to him. And indeed, the reason I came into the free enterprise movement many years ago is because poverty is the thing I care about the most.

And, in point of fact, 2 billion people around the world have been lifted up out of poverty because of ideas revolving around free enterprise and free trade and the globalization of ideas of sharing through property rights and rule of law and all the things that the President is talking about in policy debates right now.

That's why I'm in this particular movement. But we've gotten into a partisan moment where we substitute a moral consensus about how we serve the least of these, our brothers and sisters, where we pretend that that moral consensus is impossible, and we blow up policy differences until they become a holy war. That's got to stop because it's completely unnecessary. Now, you brought—[*applause*]—and we can stop that, absolutely, with a couple of key principles.

So how are we on the center right talking about poverty in the most effective way? Number one is with a conceptual matter. We have a grave tendency on both the left and the right to talk about poor people as “the other.” Remember in Matthew 25, these are our brothers and sisters. Jim Olson and I have this roadshow; we go to campuses and everybody wants to set up something, right-left debates, and it never works out, because it turns out, we both have a commitment to the teachings of the Savior

when it comes to treating the least of these, our brothers and sisters.

When you talk about people as your brothers and sisters you don't talk about them as liabilities to manage. They're not liabilities to manage. They're assets to develop because every one of us made in God's image is an asset to develop. That's a completely different approach to poverty alleviation. That's a human capital approach to poverty alleviation. That's what we can do to stimulate that conversation on the political right, just as it can be on the political left.

One concept that rides along with that is to point out—and this is what I do to many of my friends on Capitol Hill—I remind them that just because people are on public assistance doesn't mean they want to be on public assistance. And that's the difference between people who factually are making a living and who are accepting public assistance. That's a—it's an important matter to remember about the motivations of people and humanizing them. And then the question is, how can we come together? How can we come together?

I have, indeed, written that it's time to declare peace on the safety net. And I say that as a political conservative. Why? Because Ronald Reagan said that; because Friedrich Hayek said that. This is not a radical position. In fact, the social safety net is one of the greatest achievements of free enterprise: that we could have the wealth and largesse as a society, that we take—that we can help take care of people who are poor that we've never even met. It's ahistoric; it's never happened before. We should be proud of that.

But then, when I talk to conservative policymakers and say how should you distinguish yourself from the traditional positions in a marketplace of ideas from progressives, you should also talk about the fact that the safety net should be limited to people who are truly indigent, as opposed to being spread around in a way that metastasizes into middle class entitlements and imperils our economy.

And the third part is that help should always come with the dignifying power of work to the extent that we can. Then, we can have, with



these three ideas—declaring peace on the safety net, safety net only for the indigent, and always with work—then we can have an interesting moral consensus and policy competition of ideas and maybe make some progress.

*Mr. Dionne.* Thank you. In fact, I'm hoping people will challenge each other about what that actually means in terms of policy. And I want to invite the President to do that.

I'm tempted, Mr. President, to ask you to sort of go in a couple of directions at once. One is, I am, again, hoping that you can enlist Arthur as your lobbyist on this. One kind of question I want to ask is, if John Boehner and Mitch McConnell were watching this and suddenly had a conversion—and there are a lot of religious people in the audience, so miracles—

*The President.* I assure you they're not watching this. [Laughter] But it's a hypothetical, so we can—[laughter].

*Mr. Dionne.* Well, it's a religious audience. They believe in miracles. [Laughter] So if they said, "We are so persuaded that it's time we do something about the poor, Mr. President, tell us a few things that we'll actually pass, we'll do this." When you think about—we can talk kind of abstractly about the family on this side, and what government can do. What do you think would actually make a difference? So that's one kind of question I'm tempted to ask.

And maybe you could put that into the context of Bob's mention of the Gilded Age. Because, as you know, I was much taken by that Osawatomie speech—I even learned how to pronounce Osawatomie, thanks to you—back in 20—help me. [Laughter]

*The President.* It's a couple years ago.

*Mr. Dionne.* Anyway. A couple years ago, 2011. And it really did put this conversation in context. Where we do seem in certain ways to be having the problems we had back then. So what would you tell Congress, "Please help me on this"? And how do we sort of move out of this Gilded Age—feeling kind of period?

*The President.* Well, let me tease out a couple things that both Bob and Arthur said. And maybe some of these will be challenging to a couple of them, and they may want to respond.

But let me talk about big picture, and then we can talk about specifics.

First of all, I think we can all stipulate that the best antipoverty program is a job, which confers not just income, but structure and dignity and a sense of connection to community. Which means we have to spend time thinking about the macroeconomy, the broader economy as a whole.

Now, what has happened is, is that since, let's say, 1973, over the last 40 years, the share of income going to the bottom 90 percent has shrunk from about 65 percent down to about 53 percent. It's a big shift. It's a big transfer. And so we can't have a conversation about poverty without talking about what's happened to the middle class and the ladders of opportunity into the middle class.

And when I read Bob's book, the first thing that strikes you is, when he's growing up in Ohio, he's in a community where the banker is living in reasonable proximity to the janitor at the school. The janitor's daughter may be going out with the banker's son. There are a set of common institutions—they may attend the same church, they may be member of the same Rotary Club, they may be active at the same parks—and all the things that stitch them together. And that is all contributing to social mobility and to a sense of possibility and opportunity for all kids in that community.

*Mr. Putnam.* Exactly.

*The President.* All right? Now, part of what's happened is that—and this is where Arthur and I would probably have some disagreements. We don't dispute that the free market is the greatest producer of wealth in history; it has lifted billions of people out of poverty. We believe in property rights, rule of law, so forth. But there has always been trends in the market in which concentrations of wealth can lead to some being left behind. And what's happened in our economy is that those who are doing better and better—more skilled, more educated, luckier, having greater advantages—are withdrawing from sort of the commons. Kids start going to private schools. Kids start working out at private clubs instead of the public parks. An antigovernment ideology then

disinvests from those common goods and those things that draw us together. And that, in part, contributes to the fact that there's less opportunity for our kids, all of our kids.

Now, that's not inevitable. A free market is perfectly compatible with also us making investment in good public schools, public universities, investments in public parks, investments in a whole bunch—public infrastructure that grows our economy and spreads it around. But that's, in part, what's been under attack for the last 30 years. And so in some ways, rather than soften the edges of the market, we've turbocharged it. And we have not been willing, I think, to make some of those common investments so that everybody can play a part in getting opportunity.

Now, one other thing I've got to say about this is that even back in Bob's day, that was also happening. It's just, it was happening to Black people.

*Mr. Putnam.* Right. That's right.

*The President.* And so in some ways, part of what's changed is that those biases or those restrictions on who had access to resources that allowed them to climb out of poverty—who had access to the firefighter's job, who had access to the assembly line job, the blue-collar job that paid well enough to be in the middle class and then got you to the suburbs, and then the next generation was suddenly office workers—all those things were foreclosed to a big chunk of the minority population in this country for decades.

And that accumulated and built up. And over time, people with less and less resources, more and more strains—because it's hard being poor. People don't like being poor. And it's time-consuming, it's stressful. It's hard. And so over time, families frayed. Men who could not get jobs left. Mothers who are single are not able to read as much to their kids. So all that was happening 40 years ago to African Americans. And now what we're seeing is that those same trends have accelerated, and they're spreading to the broader community.

But the pattern that, Bob, you're recording in some of your stories is no different when—than what William Julius Wilson was talking

about when he talked about the truly disadvantaged. So I say all this—and I know that was not an answer to your question. [*Laughter*] I will be willing to answer it, but I think it is important for us at the outset to acknowledge, if in fact we are going to find common ground, then we also have to acknowledge that there are certain investments we are willing to make as a society, as a whole: in public schools and public universities; in, today, I believe early childhood education; in making sure that economic opportunity is available in communities that are isolated; and that somebody can get a job; and that there's actually a train that takes folks to where the jobs are; that broadband lines are in rural communities and not just in cities. And those things are not going to happen through market forces alone.

And if that's the case, then our government and our budgets have to reflect our willingness to make those investments. If we don't make those investments, then we could agree on the earned-income tax credit, which I know Arthur believes in. We could agree on home visitation for low-income parents. All those things will make a difference, but the broader trends in our society will make it harder and harder for us to deal with both inequality and poverty.

And so I think it's important for us to recognize there is a genuine debate here, and that is, what portion of our collective wealth and budget are we willing to invest in those things that allow a poor kid, whether in a rural town or in Appalachia or in the inner city, to access what they need both in terms of mentors and social networks, as well as decent books and computers and so forth, in order for them to succeed along the terms that Arthur discussed?

And right now they don't have those things, and those things have been stripped away. You look at State budgets, you look at city budgets, and you look at Federal budgets, and we don't make those same common investments that we used to. And it's had an impact. And we shouldn't pretend that somehow we have been making those same investments. We haven't been. And there's been a very specific ideological push not to make those investments. That's where the argument comes in.

*Mr. Dionne.* And if I could follow up, which gets to the underlying problem where we talk, piously sometimes, about let's tear down these ideological red-blue barriers, yet when push comes to shove, these things get rejected. How do you change the politics of that? I mean that—as you said, Mitch McConnell and John Boehner were unlikely to be watching us; that actually has a kind of political significance. Not to this event, but in general.

*The President.* I was suggesting, they're busy right now. They've got votes and—[laughter].

*Mr. Dionne.* No, but I think you were saying something else. How do you tear down those barriers? Because you laid out a fairly robust agenda there. And then, I want to—forgive me, Arthur and Bob—but I'm curious, how do you get from here to there?

*The President.* Well, part of what happened in our politics and part of what shifted from when Bob was young and he was seeing a genuine community—there were still class divisions in your small town.

*Mr. Putnam.* True. True.

*The President.* There were probably certain clubs or certain activities that were still restricted to the banker's son as opposed to the janitor's son. But it was more integrated. Part of what's happened is, is that elites in a very mobile, globalized world are able to live together, away from folks who are not as wealthy, and so they're—they feel less of a commitment to making those investments.

In that sense—and what used to be racial segregation now mirrors itself in class segregation and this great sorting that's taking place. Now, that creates its own politics. Right? I mean, there's some communities where I'm not—I don't know—not only do I not know poor people, I don't even know people who have trouble paying the bills at the end of the month. I just don't know those people. And so there's a less sense of investment in those children. So that's part of what's happened.

But part of it has also been—there's always been a strain in American politics where you've got the middle class, and the question has been, who are you mad at, if you're struggling; if you're working, but you don't seem to be get-

ting ahead. And over the last 40 years, sadly, I think there's been an effort to either make folks mad at folks at the top or to make mad—be mad at folks at the bottom. And I think the effort to suggest that the poor are sponges, leaches, are—don't want to work, are lazy, are undeserving, got traction.

And look, it's still being propagated. I mean, I have to say that if you watch Fox News on a regular basis, it is a constant menu—they will find, like, folks who make me mad. I don't know where they find them, right? [Laughter] They're all, like, "I don't want to work, I just want a free Obama phone"—[laughter]—or whatever. And that becomes an entire narrative, right? That gets worked up. And very rarely do you hear an interview of a waitress—which is much more typical—who's raising a couple of kids and is doing everything right, but still can't pay the bills.

And so if we're going to change how John Boehner and Mitch McConnell think, we're going to have to change how our body politic thinks, which means we're going to have to change how the media reports on these issues and how people's impressions of what it's like to struggle in this economy looks like and how budgets connect to that. And that's a—it's a hard process because that requires a much broader conversation than typically we have on the nightly news.

*Mr. Dionne.* I am tempted to welcome Arthur to defend his network. But instead, I want to sort of maybe invite him to an altar call here. [Laughter] I want to invite you to a kind of altar call, which is, the President talked about some basic public investments that are actually pretty old-fashioned public investments, along the lines of somebody like President Eisenhower supported a lot of those kinds of investments—

*The President.* The first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, thought things like land-grant colleges and infrastructure, investments in basic research in science were important.

I suspect, Arthur, you'd agree in theory about those investments. And then, the question would be—

Mr. Brooks. How much?

The President. —how much?

Mr. Brooks. How much? Sure. Look, no good economist, no self-respecting person who understands anything about economics denies that there are public goods. There just are public goods. We need public goods. Markets fail sometimes; there's a role for the state. There are no radical libertarians up here, there—libertarians who believe that the state should not exist, for example. Even the libertarians don't think that. So we shouldn't caricature the views of others because, in point of fact, that's—that impugns the motives.

I think that what we're talking about is, one, when are there public goods? When can the government provide them? And when are the benefits higher than the costs of the government providing these things? Because, in point of fact, when we don't make cost-benefit calculations at least at the macro level about public goods, the poor pay. This is a fact.

If you look at what's happening in the periphery countries of Europe today, this is a— as George W. Bush used to say, this is a true fact. [Laughter] They—it's more emphasis. There's nothing wrong. [Laughter] The—if you don't pay attention to the macro economy and the fiscal stability, you will become insolvent. And if you become insolvent, you will have austerity. And if you have austerity, the poor always pay. Jim Wallis taught me this. The poor always pay when there's austerity. The rich never pay. The rich never are left with the bill. It's the poor who are left with the bill.

So if you join me in believing the safety net is a fundamental, moral right, and it's a privilege of our society to provide, you must avoid austerity and you must avoid insolvency. And the only way that you can do that is with smart policies.

And I'm a hundred-percent sure that the President agrees with me about smart macro-economic public policies, so I'm not caricaturing these views either. Although, can you believe he said "Obama phone"? [Laughter] And he's against the Obama phone. So let's stipulate to that. [Laughter] Just only because they took away his phone. [Laughter]

Now, since we believe that there should be public goods, then we're really talking about the system that provides them and provides them efficiently. The President talked about the changing structure of the income distribution, and it's unambiguously true. What I would urge us to regret is this notion that it's not a shift, but a transfer. Okay, now, it's not a transfer.

Since the 1970s, it's not that the rich have gotten richer because the poor have gotten poorer. The poor are not having their money taken away and given to the rich. The rich have gotten richer faster than the poor have moved up. And we might be concerned with that because that also reflects on opportunity. And as an opportunity society, as an equal opportunity society, we should all be really concerned with that.

But to the extent that we can get away from this notion that the rich are stealing from the poor, then we can look at this in, I think, in a way that's constructive. Why? Because the rich are our neighbors and the poor are our neighbors, and everybody else should be our neighbors, and they're all our kids. And I think getting away from that rhetoric is really important.

And then, the last point, is actually—as we come to consensus is remembering that capitalism or socialism or social democracy or any system is just a system. Look, it's just a system. It's not—it's just a machine. It's like your car. You can do great good with it, you can do great evil with it. It can't go uninhibited. So far, it can't drive on its own. It will soon enough. The economy never will be able to.

Capitalism is nothing more than a system, and it must be predicated on right morals. It must be. Adam Smith taught me that. Adam Smith, the father of modern economics; he wrote "The Wealth of Nations" in 1776. Seventeen years before, he wrote "The Theory of Moral Sentiments," which was a more important book because it talked about what it meant as a society to earn the right to have free enterprise, to have free economics. And it was true then, and it's still true today.

So this is why this conference is so important. And this conversation with the President

of the United States is so important, from my point of view—I say with appropriate humility—is because we’re talking about right morality toward our brothers and sisters, and built on that, that’s when we can have an open discussion to get our capitalism right. And then, the distribution of resources is only a tertiary question.

*Mr. Dionne.* I still want to know how much infrastructure you’re actually willing to vote for, but I’ll take it. [Laughter]

*Mr. Brooks.* Forty-one billion dollars.

*Mr. Dionne.* All right, it’s a start. We can negotiate.

I want to—this is in a way for both the President and Bob, because in this conversation about poverty, there’s a kind of consensus on this stage that, yes, you need to care about family structure, it really matters, but if you don’t worry about the economy, you’re not sort of thinking about why the battering ram is against the family.

And yet this family conversation can make a lot of people feel uneasy because it sounds like either you’re not taking politics seriously or you’re not taking the real economic pressure seriously. And I just want to share two things with the President and Bob and have you respond.

One, as you can imagine, I asked a lot of smart people what they would ask about if they were in my position. And one very smart economist said, look, what we know is, when we have really tight labor markets, unemployment down below—down to 4 or even lower, Kennedy-Johnson years, World War II, at the end of the Clinton years—all kinds of good things start happening to poor people. So maybe, this person said, even though, he says, yes, family structure matters, let’s stop with the moral lectures and just run a really tight economic policy, and we could have some really good things happen to us.

And then, the other thing I wanted to share—and I’m being pointed here, Mr. President, because you know, and you’ve—I’ve heard you talk about this, but not that often publicly, which is—you know, I’ve heard you in those sessions you do with opinion reporters.

Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote something back in 2013 about your talk about what needs to happen inside the African American community—and I know you remember this: “Taking full measure of the Obama Presidency thus far, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this White House has one way of addressing the social ills that afflict Black people and particularly Black youth and another way of addressing everyone else. I would have a hard time imagining the President telling the women of Barnard that”—quotes—“there’s no longer room for any excuses”—as though they were in the business of making them.”

I’d love you to address sort of the particular question about, maybe it is primarily about economics because we can’t do much about the other things through government policy; and also answer Ta-Nehisi’s critique, because I know you hear that a lot.

*The President.* Why don’t we let Bob—

*Mr. Dionne.* Let Bob—

*Mr. Putnam.* Well, I’m going to try to respond to that, and of course, I want to hear what the President has to say about that. But I wanted to just comment briefly on that earlier conversation, about—first of all, about public goods.

I agree very much with the President’s framing of this issue, that is, that we disinvested in collective assets, collective goods that would benefit everybody, but are more important for poor people because they can’t do it on their own. I want to just give one example of that that’s very vivid, and this is a case where we’ve clearly shot ourselves in the foot.

For most of the 20th century, all Americans of all walks of life thought that part of an—getting a good education was getting soft skills: not just reading, writing, arithmetic, but cooperation and teamwork and so on. And part of that was that everybody in the country got free access to extracurricular activities—

*The President.* Sports, music.

*Mr. Putnam.* Band and football and music and so on. But beginning about 20 years ago, the view developed—which is really, really deeply evil—that that’s just a frill.

And so we disinvested, and we said if you want to have—if you want to take part in football here or you want to take part in music, you've got to pay for it. And of course, what that means is that poor people can't pay for it. It's a big deal—\$1,600 on average for two kids in a family. Well, \$1,600 to play football or play in the band or French club or whatever, it's not a big deal if your income is \$200,000; but if you income is \$16,000, who in their right mind is going to be paying 10 percent of their family income?

So it seems to me that that's a case where the allocation that the benefits of learning teamwork and hard skills and so—I mean, hard, you know, grit—were only on the individual. But that wasn't true. The whole country was benefiting from the fact that we had a very broad based set of skills that people had. So I'm trying to emphasize this—how deep runs this antipathy in some quarters for the notion that these are all our kids and, therefore, we've got to invest in all of them.

But I also want to then come back, if I can, to, I think, the thing we maybe haven't spent enough time here, and that is, this is a purple problem. There are those of us who on the left can see most clearly the economic sources of this problem and want to do something about it. But then, there are people on the conservative side, especially religious people, who can—who use a different lens, and they can see most clearly the effects of family disruption among poor families of all races on the prospects of kids.

And in the stories of the kids that we gathered across America—I want to return a little bit not just to the abstract discussion of poverty, but to real kids. Mary Sue in Port Clinton—doesn't have anything the—like the same opportunities as my granddaughter. But part of that is because Mary Sue's parents behaved in very irresponsible ways. We interviewed a kid from—a young woman from Duluth who is now on drugs. How did she get on drugs? Because her dad was addicted to meth and wanted to get high, but didn't want to get high alone, so her dad taught—Molly is her name—how to smoke, how to do meth. I don't even

know how you do meth myself. I'll have to check with him. [Laughter]

And it's systematically—the fact is we all know this, that it's—I'm not making an attack on single moms, who are often doing terrific jobs in the face of lots of obstacles, but I am saying it's harder to do that. And therefore, we need to think, all of us, including those of us—and I know the President agrees with me about this—even those of us on the more progressive side have to think, how did we get into a state in which two-thirds of American kids coming from what we used to call the working class have only a single parent, and what can we do to fix that?

I'm not sure this is government's role. But I do think that if we're concerned about poverty, we also, all of us, have to think about this purple side of the problem—I mean, this family side of the problem. And we shouldn't—those of us—I'm now speaking to my side of the choir—we shouldn't just assume that anybody who talks about family stability is somehow saying that the economics don't matter. Of course, the economics matter. It's both-and, it's not either-or.

*Mr. Dionne.* Mr. President?

*The President.* Well, a couple of things I would say. First of all, just going back to something Arthur said earlier about how we characterize the wealthy, and did they take this extra wealth from the poor, the middle class: These are broad economic trends turbocharged by technology and globalization, a winner-take-all economy that allows those with even slightly better skills to massively expand their reach and their markets, and they make more money, and it gets more concentrated, and that then reinforces itself. But there are values and decisions that have aided and abetted that process.

So, for example, in the era that Bob was talking about, if you had a company in that town, that company had a whole bunch of social restraints on it because the CEO felt it was a member of that community and the sense of obligation about paying a certain wage or contributing to the local high school or what have you was real. And today, the average Fortune 500 company—some are great corporate

citizens, some are great employers—but they don't have to be, and that's certainly not how they're judged.

And that may account for the fact that where a previous CEO of a company might have made 50 times the average wage of the worker, they might now make a thousand times or 2,000 times. And that's now accepted practice inside the corporate boardroom. Now, that's not because they're bad people. It's just that they have been freed from a certain set of social constraints.

And those values have changed. And sometimes, tax policy has encouraged that, and government policy has encouraged that. And there's a whole literature that justifies that as, well, that's what you'd need to get the best CEO and they're bringing the most value, and then you do tip into a little bit of Ayn Rand. [*Laughter*]

Which, Arthur, I think you'd be the first to acknowledge, because I'm in dinners with some of your buddies, and I have conversations with them. [*Laughter*] And if they're not on a panel, they'll say, you know what, we created all this stuff, and we made it, and we're creating value, and we should be able to make decisions about where it goes.

So there's less commitment to those public goods, even though a good economist who's read Adam Smith's "Moral Sentiments" would acknowledge that actually, we're underinvesting, or at least, we have to have a certain investment. So that's point number one.

Point number two, on this whole family-character-values-structure issue: It's true that if I'm in—if I'm giving a commencement at Morehouse that I will have a conversation with young Black men about taking responsibility as fathers that I probably will not have with the women of Barnard. And I make no apologies for that. And the reason is, is because I am a Black man who grew up without a father, and I know the cost that I paid for that. And I also know that I had the capacity to break that cycle, and as a consequence, I think my daughters are better off.

And that is not something that—for me to have that conversation does not negate my conversation about the need for early child-

hood education or the need for job training or the need for greater investment in infrastructure or jobs in low-income communities.

So look, I'll talk till you're blue in the face about hard-nosed, economic, macroeconomic policies, but in the meantime, I've got a bunch of kids right now who are graduating, and I want to give them some sense that they can have an impact on their immediate circumstances and the joys of fatherhood.

And we did something with "My Brother's Keepers," which emphasizes apprenticeships and emphasizes corporate responsibility, and we're gathering resources to give very concrete hooks for kids to be able to advance. And I'm going very hard at issues of criminal justice reform and breaking this school-to-prison pipeline that exists for so many young African American men. But when I'm sitting there talking to these kids, and I've got a boy who says, "You know what, how did you get over being mad at your dad, because I've got a father who beat my mom and now has left and has left the State, and I've never seen him because he's trying to avoid \$83,000 in child support payments, and I want to love my dad, but I don't know how to do that," I'm not going to have a conversation with him about macroeconomics. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to have a conversation with him about how I tried to understand what it is that my father had gone through and how issues that were very specific to him created his difficulties in his relationships and his children so that I might be able to forgive him and that I might then be able to come to terms with that.

And I don't apologize for that conversation. I think—and so this is what I mean when—or this is where I agreed very much with Bob that this is not an either-or conversation, it is a both-and. The reason we get trapped in the either-or conversation is because all too often, not Arthur, but those who have argued against a safety net or argued against government programs, have used the rationale that character matters, family matters, values matter as a rationale for the disinvestment in public goods that took place over the course of 20 to 30 years.

If in fact the most important thing is character and parents, then it's okay if we don't have band and music at school. That's the argument that you will hear. It's okay—look, there are immigrant kids who are learning in schools that are much worse, and we're spending huge amounts in the district, and we still get poor outcomes, and so obviously, money is not the issue. And so what you hear is a logic that is used as an excuse to underinvest in those public goods.

And that's why I think a lot of people are resistant to it and are skeptical of that conversation. And I guess what I'm saying is that, guarding against cynicism, what we should say is, we are going to argue hard for those public investments. We're going to argue hard for early childhood education because, by the way, if a young kid—3, 4 years old—is hearing a lot of words, the science tells us that they're going to be more likely to succeed at school. And if they've got trained and decently paid teachers in that preschool, then they're actually going to get—by the time they're in third grade, they'll be reading at grade level.

And those all very concrete policies. But it requires some money. We're going to argue hard for that stuff. And lo and behold, if we do those things, the values and the character that those kids are learning in a loving environment, where they can succeed in school and they're being praised and they can read at grade level and they're less likely to drop out, and it turns out that when they're succeeding at school and they've got resources, they're less likely to get pregnant as teens and less likely to engage in drugs and less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system—that is a reinforcement of the values and characters that we want.

And that's where we, as a society, have the capacity to make a real difference. But it will cost us some money. It will cost us some money. It's not free.

You look at a State like California that used to have, by far, the best public higher education system in the world, and there is a direct correlation between Proposition 13 and the slow disinvestment in the public university sys-

tem, so that it became very, very expensive. And kids got priced out of the market, or they started taking on a whole bunch of debt. Now, that was a public policy choice, based on folks not wanting to pay property taxes. And that's true in cities and counties and States all across the country. And that's really a big part of our political argument.

So I am all for values; I am all for character. But I also know that that character and that values—the values that our kids have that allow them to succeed, and delayed gratification and discipline and hard work—that all those things in part are shaped by what they see, what they see really early on. And they're—and some of those kids right now, because of no fault of those kids and because of history and some tough going, generationally, some of those kids, they're not going to get help at home. They're not going to get enough help at home. And the question then becomes, are we committed to helping them instead?

*Mr. Putnam.* That's right.

*Mr. Dionne.* Mr. President, I want to follow up on that and then invite Arthur and Bob to reply. Arthur, you clearly got a plenary indulgence in this session on all kinds of positions. [*Laughter*]

The—a lot of us, I think, feel that we made bargains with our friends on the conservative side that—I agree with the idea that you've got to care about what happens in the family if you're going to care about social justice, and you've got to care about social justice if you care about the family. Yet, when people like you start talking like this, there doesn't seem to be much giveback on, “Okay, we agree on these values; where's the investment in these kids?”

Similarly, when welfare reform was passed back in the nineties, there were a lot of people who said, okay, we're not going to hear about welfare cheats anymore because all these people are going to have to work. And yet we get the same thing back again. It's as if the work requirement was never put in the welfare bill. How do we change this conversation so that it becomes an actual bargain where the other half of the agenda that you talked about gets recognized and that we do something about it?



*The President.* I'm going to—I'll ask Arthur for some advice on this. [*Laughter*] Because, look, the devil is in the details. I think if you talk to any of my Republican friends, they will say, number one, they care about the poor. And I believe them. Number two, they'll say that there are some public goods that have to be made, and I'll believe them. But when it comes to actually establishing budgets, making choices, prioritizing, that's when it starts breaking down.

And I actually think that there will come a time when political pressure leads to a shift, because more and more families—not just inner-city African American families or Hispanic families in the barrios, but more and more middle class or working class folks are feeling pinched and squeezed—that there will be a greater demand for some core public goods and we'll have to find a way to pay for them. But ultimately, there are going to have to be some choices made.

When I, for example, make an argument about closing the carried interest loophole that exists whereby hedge fund managers are paying 15 percent on the fees and income that they collect, I've been called Hitler for doing this, or at least, this is like Hitler going into Poland. That's an actual quote from a hedge fund manager when I made that recommendation. The top 25 hedge fund managers made more than all the kindergarten teachers in the country.

So I'm not—when I say that, I'm not saying that because I dislike hedge fund managers or I think they're evil. I'm saying that you're paying a lower rate than a lot of folks who are making \$300,000 a year. You've—you pretty much have more than you'll ever be able to use and your family will ever be able to use. There's a fairness issue involved here. And by the way, if we were able to close that loophole, I can now invest in early childhood education that will make a difference. That's where the rubber hits the road.

Right? That's, Arthur, where the question of compassion and "I'm my brother's keeper" comes into play. And if we can't ask from society's lottery winners to just make that modest

investment, then, really, this conversation is for show.

If we can't ask that much, right? So—[*applause*]. And that's where—and by the way, I'm not asking to go back to 70-percent marginal rates, which existed back in the golden days that Bob is talking about when he was a kid. I'm just saying maybe we can go up to, like, tax them like ordinary incomes, which means that they might have to pay a true rate of around 23, 25 percent, which, by historical standards, postwar era, would still be really low.

So that's the kind of issue where, if we can't bridge that gap, then I suspect we're not going to make as much progress as we need to, although we can find some areas of agreement like the earned-income credit, which I give Arthur a lot of credit for extolling because it encourages work and it could help actually strengthen families.

*Mr. Dionne.* So, Arthur, raise capital gains taxes for us here.

*Mr. Brooks.* Yes, sure. Sure. Fine. These are show issues. Corporate jets are show issues. Carried interest is a show issue. The real issue? Middle class entitlements, 70 percent of the Federal budget. That's where the real money is. And the truth of the matter is, until we can take that on—if we want to make progress, if the left and right want to make progress politically as they put together budgets, they're going to have to make progress on that.

Now, if we want to create—if we want to increase taxes on carried interest, I mean, that's fine for me, not that I can speak for everybody, certainly not everybody on the Republican side.

And by the way, Mitch McConnell and John Boehner are watching, at least indirectly, and they're paying attention to this—hundred-percent sure—because they care a lot about this. And they care a lot about both culture and economics, and they care a lot about poverty. And again, we have to be really careful not to impugn their motives, and impugning motives on the other side is the number-one barrier against making progress. Ad hominem is something we should declare war on and defeat

because then we can take on issues on their face, I think. It's really important morally for us to be able to do that.

Who, by the way was—were you having dinner with who was discussing Ayn Rand, and why wasn't I invited? [Laughter]

So if we want to make progress, I think let's decide that we have a preference—I mean, let's have a rumble over how much money we're spending on public goods for poor people, for sure. And Republicans should say, I want to spend money on programs for the poor, but I think these ones are counterproductive and I think these ones are ineffective, and Democrats should say, no they're not, we've never done them right and they've always been underfunded. I want to have that competition of ideas. That's really productive.

But we can't even get to that when politicians on the left and the right are conspiring to not touch middle class entitlements, because we're looking at it in terms of the right saying all the money is gone on this, and the left saying all we need is a lot more money on top of these things, when most people who are looking at it realize that this is an unsustainable path. It's an unsustainable path for lots of things, not just programs for the poor. We can't adequately fund our military.

I think you and I have—would have a tremendous amount of agreement about the misguided notion of the sequester and for lots of reasons, because we can't spend money on purpose. And that's what we need to do. And when we're on an automatic path to spend tons of money in entitlements that are leading us to fiscal unsustainability, we can't get to these progressive conversations where conservatives and liberals really disagree and can work together, potentially, to help poor people and defend our Nation.

Mr. Dionne. I just want to say if the carried interest is a show issue, why can't we just get it out of the way and move forward? [Laughter] But that's, well—

The President. It is real money. It's real money.

Mr. Dionne. Yes. Let me—here is what I'd like to do. I think we have about 3 minutes left,

so I'd like Bob to speak, and then I have one last question for the President.

Mr. Putnam. Well, I—probably, all of us would agree about this: We need to a little bit rise out of the Washington bubble and the debates about these things. Of course, they're important. I understand why they're important. But actually, we're speaking here to an audience of people of faith. We're speaking largely, more largely, to America. And I think we ought not to disempower ordinary Americans. If they care about these problems, Americans can change the politics that would, over the next 5 to 10 years, make a huge difference.

And I'm not talking about changing Republican-Democrat, I'm talking about making poverty and the opportunity to escape from poverty a higher issue on both parties' agendas. I have some hope that that will happen. I understand—this may not be true, Mr. President—I understand that there is going to be an election next year. [Laughter]

The President. That's a true fact. [Laughter]

Mr. Putnam. That's a true fact. [Laughter] And I think American voters should insist that the highest domestic priority issue is this issue of the opportunity gap, the fact that we're talking about. This is not a third-order issue, it's a really important issue. And ask candidates, what are you going to do about it? And then, just use your own common sense. Is that the right way to go forward?

I think that we need, as a country, not just from the top down and from Washington, but from across the grassroots, to focus—and in congregations and parishes all across this country—focus on what we can do to reduce this opportunity gap in America.

Mr. Dionne. Mr. President, I wanted you to reflect on this religious question. I mean, your—one of your first salaries was actually paid for by a group of Catholic churches, something—Cardinal McCarrick knows that, but not a lot of Catholic bishops noticed that—[laughter]—that you were organizing for a group of South Side churches. You know what faith-based groups can do. And I'd like you to talk about sort of three things at the same time, which is the role of the religious community

simply in calling attention to this problem, the issues of how government can cooperate with these groups, and sort of the prophetic role of these ideas for you, where your own reflections on your own faith have led you on these questions.

*The President.* Well, first of all, it's true, my first job was funded through the Campaign for Human Development, which was the social justice arm of the Catholic Church. And I think that faith-based groups across the country and around the world understand the centrality and the importance of this issue in a intimate way, in part because these faith-based organizations are interacting with folks who are struggling and know how good these people are and know their stories, and it's not just theological, but it's very concrete. They're embedded in communities, and they're making a difference in all kinds of ways.

So I think that what our administration has done is really a continuation of work that had been done previously by the Bush administration, the Clinton administration. We've got a—our office of faith-based organizations that are working on an ongoing basis around a whole host of these issues. “My Brother's Keeper” is reaching out to churches and synagogues and mosques and other faith-based groups consistently to try to figure out, how do we reach young boys and young men in a serious way?

But the one thing I guess I want to say, E.J., is that when I think about my own Christian faith and my obligations, it is important for me to do what I can myself, individually mentoring young people or making charitable donations or in some ways impacting whatever circles of influence I have. But I also think it's important to have a voice in the larger debate. And I think it would be powerful for our faith-based organizations to speak out on this in a more forceful fashion.

This may sound self-interested, because there have been—these are areas where I agree with the evangelical community and faith-based groups, and then, there are issues where we have had disagreements around reproductive issues or same-sex marriage or what have you. And so maybe it appears advanta-

geous for me to want to focus on these issues of poverty and not as much on these other issues.

But I want to insist, first of all, I don't have—I will not be part of the election next year—[laughter]—so this is more just a broader reflection of somebody who has worked with churches and worked in communities.

There is great caring and great concern, but when it comes to what are you really going to the mat for, like, what's the defining issue, when you're talking in your congregations, what's the thing that is really going to capture the essence of who we are as Christians or as Catholics or what have you, that this is oftentimes viewed as a “nice to have” relative to an issue like abortion. That's not across the board, but there sometimes has been that view, and certainly, that's how it's perceived in our political circles.

And I think that there's more power to be had there, a more transformative voice that's available around these issues that can move and touch people. Because the one thing I know is that—here's an area where, again, Arthur and I agree—I think fundamentally people want to do the right thing. I think people don't set out wanting to be selfish. I think people would like to see a society in which everybody has opportunity. I think that's true up and down the line, across the board. And—but they feel as if it's not possible.

And there's noise out there, and there's arguments, and there's contention. And so people withdraw, and they restrict themselves to, what can I do in my church, or what can I do in my community? And that's important. But our faith-based groups I think have the capacity to frame this, and nobody has shown that better than Pope Francis, who I think has been transformative just through the sincerity and insistence that he's had that this is vital to who we are. This is vital to following what Jesus Christ, our Savior, talked about.

And that emphasis, I think, is why he's had such incredible appeal, including to young people, all around the world. And I hope that that is a message that everybody receives when he comes to visit here. I can't wait to host him because I think it will help to spark an even

broader conversation of the sort that we're having today.

*Mr. Dionne.* All events are better with a reference to Pope Francis. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

I really want to thank Arthur and Bob. And thank you, Bob, for writing this book that's moved us all. And thank you, Mr. President, for being here. And John for—and Galen and so many others for creating this.

If I may close by simultaneously quoting Amos and Dr. King, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Bless you all."

Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in Gaston Hall. In his remarks, he referred to John J. DeGioia, president, Georgetown University; William Julius Wilson, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geysler University Professor, Harvard

University; Stephen A. Schwarzman, chairman and chief executive officer, Blackstone Group; and former President George W. Bush. Mr. Dionne referred to David Brooks, columnist, New York Times; John Carr, director, Georgetown University's Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life; Galen Carey, vice president and chief operations officer, National Association of Evangelicals; Jim Wallis, author and editor-in-chief, Sojourners magazine; Ta-Nehisi Coates, national correspondent, the Atlantic magazine; and Theodor E. McCarrick, archbishop emeritus of Washington, DC, and counselor, Center for Strategic and International Studies. Mr. Putnam referred to William H. Gates III, founder, technology adviser, and board member, Microsoft Corp. Mr. Brooks referred to Robert Doar, Morgridge Fellow in Poverty Studies, American Enterprise Institute; and James Olson, senior lecturer, Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Service.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and an Exchange With Reporters May 13, 2015

*The President.* Well, it's wonderful to welcome back the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Nayif, as well as Deputy Crown Prince Salman. We are very pleased to have them both here today, as well as the delegation from Saudi Arabia.

As all of you are aware, the United States and Saudi Arabia have an extraordinary friendship and relationship that dates back to Franklin Roosevelt and King Faisal, and we are continuing to build that relationship during a very challenging time.

This gives us an opportunity to discuss some of the bilateral issues, including the crisis in Yemen and how we can build on the cease-fire that's been established to restore a process for an inclusive, legitimate Government inside of Yemen. And it will also give us a chance to discuss some of the broader issues that will be the topic of the GCC-U.S. summit tomorrow.

I can say that, on a personal level, my work and the U.S. Government's work with these two individuals, and Crown Prince bin Nayif, on counterterrorism issues has been absolutely critical not only to maintaining stability in the region, but also protecting the American people. And I want to thank them for their extraordinary support and hard work and coordination on our counterterrorism efforts. And they came in as a critical component of our coalition in the fight against ISIL, and I'm sure that we'll have opportunities to discuss as well the progress that's been made in the fight against ISIL in Iraq, as well as the continuing crisis in Syria and the importance of us addressing not only the humanitarian crisis, but the need to bring about a more inclusive and legitimate Government there.

So, Your Royal Highness, thank you so much for your presence here today and for your longstanding friendship. Thank you.

May 12 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

*Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif.* I want to thank the President for your kind invitation extended to me and to His Royal Highness, the Deputy Crown Prince. I wish to convey to you the greetings and appreciation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abd, who attaches—along with everybody in the Kingdom—great importance to the strategic and historic relationship between our two countries.

This historic relationship we seek to strengthen and broaden and deepen with time. Mr. President, you spoke about the situation in the region, and we look forward to, God willing, to working with you to overcome the challenges and to bring about calm and stability in the region.

Once again, Mr. President, I want to thank you for this meeting.

*President Obama.* Thank you, everybody.

*Iran*

*Q.* Mr. President, what do you plan to tell the GCC leaders about Iran and the nuclear deal?

*President Obama.* We'll have a whole press conference, Julie. You'll get all kinds of questions.

*Q.* I'm holding you to that.

*President Obama.* Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. He also referred to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif referred to King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayif spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by Minister of Foreign Affairs Adil al-Ahmad al-Jubayr of Saudi Arabia.

## Statement on the Crash of Amtrak Train 188 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania May 13, 2015

Along with Americans across our country, Michelle and I were shocked and deeply saddened to hear of the derailment aboard Amtrak Train 188. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of those we lost last night and to the many passengers who today begin their long road to recovery. Along the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak is a way of life for many. From Washington, DC, and Philadelphia, to New York City and Boston, this is a

tragedy that touches us all. As we work to determine exactly what happened, I commend the fire, police, and medical personnel working tirelessly and professionally to save lives. Philadelphia is known as the city of brotherly love—a city of neighborhoods and neighbors—and that spirit of loving-kindness was reaffirmed last night, as hundreds of first responders and passengers lent a hand to their fellow human beings in need.

## Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Yemen May 13, 2015

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes

in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 of

May 16, 2012, with respect to Yemen is to continue in effect beyond May 16, 2015.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Yemen and others continue to threaten Yemen's peace, security, and stability, including by obstructing the implementation of the agreement of November 23, 2011, between the Government of Yemen and those in opposition to it, which provided for a peaceful transition of power that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people for change, and by obstructing the

political process in Yemen. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 with respect to Yemen.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,  
May 13, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## The President's News Conference at Camp David, Maryland May 14, 2015

*Crash of Amtrak Train 188 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

*The President.* Good evening. Before I get to what we discussed here today with our Gulf partners, I want to again express my deepest condolences to the families of those who died in Tuesday's terrible train derailment outside of Philadelphia. I want to express my gratitude for the first responders who raced to save lives and for the many passengers who, despite their own injuries, made heroic efforts to get fellow passengers to safety.

For a lot of people on that train, it was a routine journey: a commute, a business trip. For the Amtrak employees who were badly hurt, it was their office, place of doing business. And that somehow makes it all the more tragic.

Until we know for certain what caused this tragedy, I just want reiterate what I have already said: that we are a growing country, with a growing economy. We need to invest in the infrastructure that keeps us that way and not just when something bad happens, like a bridge collapse or a train derailment, but all the time. That's what great nations do.

So I offer my prayers for those who grieve, a speedy recovery for the many who were injured as they work to recover. And we will cooperate, obviously, at every level of government to make sure that we get answers in terms of precisely what happened.

*Gulf Cooperation Council-U.S. Meetings*

Now, to the work that brought us to Camp David: For the past 70 years, the United States has maintained a core national security interest in the security and the stability of the Middle East generally, and the Gulf region specifically. This is a fundamental tenet of American foreign policy, upheld by generations of American servicemembers and reaffirmed by every U.S. President, including me.

Since I took office, we've intensified our security cooperation with our Gulf Cooperation Council partners: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain. At a time of extraordinary challenges across the Middle East, including conflicts that have caused untold human suffering, the United States and our GCC partners cooperate extensively, countering terrorist groups like Al Qaida and now ISIL, opposing the Assad regime's war against the Syrian people, supporting the legitimate Government of Yemen, and opposing Iran's destabilizing actions across the Middle East.

I invited our GCC partners here today to deepen our cooperation and to work together to resolve conflicts across the region. I want to thank each of the leaders and delegations who attended.

And we approached our discussions in a spirit of mutual respect. We agree that the security relationship between the United States

and our GCC partners will remain a cornerstone of regional stability and our relationship is a two-way street. We all have responsibilities. And here at Camp David, we decided to expand our partnership in several important and concrete ways.

First, I am reaffirming our ironclad commitment to the security of our Gulf partners. As we've declared in our joint statement, the United States is prepared to work jointly with GCC member states to deter—deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the U.N. Charter. In the event of such aggression or the threat of such aggression, the United States stands ready to work with our GCC partners to urgently determine what actions may be appropriate, using the means at our collective disposal, including the potential use of military force, for the defense of our GCC partners. And let me underscore, the United States keeps our commitments.

Second, and to back up our words with deeds, we will increase our already extensive security cooperation. We'll expand our military exercises and assistance to meet the full range of threats, in particular, terrorism. This means more training and cooperation between our special operations forces, sharing more information and stronger border security to prevent the flow of foreign fighters, and increased enforcement to prevent terrorist financing. We'll step up our efforts to counter violent extremism, including online. And more broadly, we'll expand our cooperation on maritime security and work to harden our partners' critical infrastructure.

Third, we'll help our Gulf partners improve their own capacity to defend themselves. The United States will streamline and expedite the transfer of critical defense capabilities to our GCC partners. We will work together to develop an integrated GCC defense capability against ballistic missiles, including an early warning system. And we will work toward the development of rapid response capabilities to undertake missions such as counterterrorism and peacekeeping.

Fourth, we pledged to work together to try to resolve armed conflicts in the region, and we have articulated core principles to guide our efforts: respect for state sovereignty, recognition that these conflicts can only be resolved politically, and acknowledgment of the importance of inclusive governance and the need to respect minorities and protect human rights.

Therefore, with respect to Syria, we committed to continuing to strengthen the moderate opposition, to oppose all violent extremist groups, and to intensify our efforts to achieve a negotiated political transition towards an inclusive Government—without Bashar Asad—that serves all Syrians.

We will continue to support the Iraqi Government in its efforts against ISIL and in reforms to ensure that the rights and opportunities of all Iraqis are fully respected. We welcomed the humanitarian truce in Yemen so urgently needed aid can reach civilians, and we call on all parties in Yemen to return to political talks facilitated by the United Nations. We will step up our collective efforts to help form a national unity government in Libya and counter the growing terrorist presence there. And we reiterate the urgent need for a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians.

Fifth, we spent considerable time discussing Iran. I updated our Gulf partners on the negotiations towards a comprehensive deal to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And I'm pleased that here at Camp David we agree that a comprehensive, verifiable solution that fully addresses the regional and international concerns about Iran's nuclear program is in the international—is in the security interests of the international community, including our GCC partners.

Of course, whether we reach a nuclear deal or not with Iran, we're still going to face a range of threats across the region, including its destabilizing activities, as well as the threat from terrorist groups. So we're going to work together to address these threats. And much of the enhanced security cooperation that I've outlined will allow us to do precisely that.

But I want to be very clear. The purpose of security cooperation is not to perpetuate any

long-term confrontation with Iran or even to marginalize Iran. None of our nations have an interest in an open-ended conflict with Iran. We welcome an Iran that plays a responsible role in the region, one that takes concrete, practical steps to build trust and resolve its differences with its neighbors by peaceful means and abides by international rules and norms.

As I've said before, ending the tensions in the region and resolving its devastating conflicts will require a broader dialogue, one that includes Iran and its GCC neighbors. And so a key purpose of bolstering the capacity of our GCC partners is to ensure that our partners can deal with Iran politically, diplomatically, from a position of confidence and strength.

And finally, while this summit was focused on security cooperation, events in the Middle East since the beginning of the Arab Spring are a reminder that true and lasting security includes governance that serves all citizens and respects universal human rights. So in the Middle East, as we do around the world, the United States will continue to speak out on behalf of inclusive governance, representation—representative institutions, strong civil societies and human rights, and we will work to expand the educational and economic opportunities that allow people—especially young people—to fulfill their potential.

So again, I want to thank all of our GCC partners for making this summit a success. I believe that the Camp David commitments I've described today can mark the beginning of a new era of cooperation between our countries, a closer, stronger partnership that advances our mutual security for decades to come.

So with that, I'm going to take some questions. And I will start with Julie Pace [Associated Press] because I promised her in the Oval Office that I'd call on her.

*Q.* You did. Thank you very much.

*The President.* Yes.

## Iran

*Q.* You mentioned in your statement the broad support from the GCC for stopping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* Did you get any specific commitments from the Gulf leaders for the framework that you reached a few months ago, and at least a commitment to not publicly oppose a deal if you're able to reach that?

And on the Gulf's main concern, Iran's destabilizing activity in the region, how can you really assure them that Iran would not continue that activity if they had an influx of money from sanctions relief when they're already accused of doing so now with a weaker economy?

*The President.* We didn't have a document that we presented to them to sign on the bottom line, will you approve of this nuclear framework deal, because the deal is not completed. And in the same way that I wouldn't ask the United States Senate to—or the American people—to sign off on something before they've actually seen the details of it, and given that I'm not going to sign off on any deal until I've seen the details of it, I wouldn't expect them to either.

What I did hear from our GCC partners was their agreement that if we can get a comprehensive, verifiable deal that cuts off the pathways to a nuclear weapon, that that would be in their interests and the interests of the region, as well as the world community.

And so the question is then going to be, is Iran prepared to do what's required for the international community to feel confidence that, in fact, it's not developing a nuclear weapon, and have we set up the kinds of inspection regimes that allow such confidence to be maintained, not just next year or 5 years from now, but out into the future?

So what we did was, we had Secretary Kerry, Secretary Ernie Moniz—who obviously was involved in the negotiations as well—to walk through why it was that we were confident that if the framework agreement we've arrived at were to be solidified, that, in fact, we could verify that they did not have a nuclear weapon. And that was important to them and, I think, gave them additional confidence.

There was a concern—a concern that I share—that even if we deal effectively with the nuclear issue that we will still have a problem



with some of Iran's destabilizing activities. And a number of them did express the concern that with additional resources through the reduction in sanctions, that, was it possible that Iran would siphon off a lot of these resources into more destabilizing activity?

Secretary Jack Lew was there to explain that, first of all, there would be no sanctions relief until we could confirm that Iran had actually carried out its obligations under any nuclear deal. Secondly, we gave them our best analysis of the enormous needs that Iran has internally and the commitment that Iran has made to its people in terms of shoring up its economy and improving economic growth.

And as I pointed out, most of the destabilizing activity that Iran engages in is low-tech, low-cost activity. And so part of my emphasis to them was that if we are focusing more effectively on the things we need to do—to shore up defenses, improve intelligence, improve the capacity for maritime monitoring of what's taking place in the Gulf—if we are working in concert to address the terrorist activity and countering terrorist messages that are coming not just from state sponsors like Iran, but more broadly, from organizations like ISIL, then we're going to be able to fortify ourselves and deal with many of these challenges much more effectively, and we can do so from a position of strength and confidence.

So it's not to deny the concerns that were there about what happens when sanctions are reduced, but it was to emphasize that what matters more is the things that we can do now to ensure that some of this destabilizing activity is no longer taking place.

And of course, when you look at a place like Yemen, the issue there is that the state itself was crumbling and that if we can do a better job in places like Syria, Yemen, Libya, in building up functioning political structures, then it's less likely that anybody, including Iran, can exploit some of the divisions that exist there.

Michael Viqueira [Al Jazeera America].

### *Syria/Arctic Oil Drilling*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On Syria, one of the reasons we're here is because many of

the nations in the region were upset that more than 2 years ago when Bashar al-Asad deployed chemical weapons, there was no military response as you appeared to promise, no retaliation on the part of the U.S. part. Now there's a possibility that Asad has once again used chemical weapons. What did you tell these leaders here who are disappointed last time? And will you use a military response if it's confirmed that he used chemical weapons again, once again deployed them?

And if I could ask you a domestic question as well, sir. And this one is about the environment and the drilling that's recently been approved in the Arctic. This Nation, the United States, is now a net exporter for the first time in years of fossil fuels, partly due to fracking, something that environmentalists have objected to, something that you regard as an "all of the above" energy strategy. The oil company, Shell, has had a very mixed record of drilling in that region. Many environmentalists look at this and say, is it really worth the risk to drill in such a delicate ecosystem? Thank you.

*The President.* Well, first of all, Michael, I don't know why you're here, but the reason I'm here is not because of what happened in Syria a couple of years ago. The reason I'm here is because we've got extraordinary challenges throughout the region, not just in Syria, but in Iraq and Yemen and Libya and obviously the developments of ISIL and our interest in making sure that we don't have a nuclear weapon in Iran.

With respect to Syria, my commitment was to make sure that Syria was not using chemical weapons and mobilizing the international community to assure that that would not happen. And in fact, we positioned ourselves to be willing to take military action. The reason we did not was because Asad gave up his chemical weapons. And that's not speculation on our part. That, in fact, has been confirmed by the organization internationally that is charged with eliminating chemical weapons.

And I don't think that there is—are a lot of folks in the region who are disappointed that Asad is no longer in possession of one of the

biggest stockpiles of chemical weapons of any country on Earth. Those have been eliminated.

It is true that we've seen reports about the use of chlorine in bombs that have the effect of chemical weapons. Chlorine itself, historically, has not been listed as a chemical weapon, but when it is used in this fashion can be considered a prohibited use of that particular chemical. And so we're working with the international community to investigate that.

And in fact, if we have the kinds of confirmation that we need, we will, once again, work with the international community and the organization charged with monitoring compliance by the Syrian Government, and we will reach out to patrons of Assad, like Russia, to put a stop to it.

With respect to the situation in the Arctic, I think it's fair to say that I know a little something about the risks of offshore drilling given what happened in the Gulf very early in my Presidency. And so nobody is more mindful of the risks involved and the dangers. That's why, despite the fact that Shell had put in an application for exploration in this region several years ago, we delayed it for a very lengthy period of time until they could provide us with the kinds of assurances that we have not seen before, taking account of the extraordinary challenges if in fact there was a leak that far north and in that kind of an environment, which would be much more difficult to deal with than in the Gulf. Based on those very high standards, Shell had to go back to the drawing board, revamp its approach, and the experts at this point have concluded that they have met those standards.

But keep in mind that my approach when it comes to fracking, drilling, U.S. energy production of oil or natural gas has remained consistent throughout: I believe that we are going to have to transition off of fossil fuels as a planet in order to prevent climate change. I am working internationally to reduce our carbon emissions and to replace over time fossil fuels with clean energies.

Obviously, we start at home with all the work that we've done to, for example, double the use of clean energy. But I think that it is

important also to recognize that that is going to be a transition process. In the meantime, we are going to continue to be using fossil fuels. And when it can be done safely and appropriately, U.S. production of oil and natural gas is important.

I would rather us—with all the safeguards and standards that we have—be producing our oil and gas, rather than importing it, which is bad for our people, but is also potentially purchased from places that have much lower environmental standards than we do.

Toluse [Toluse Olorunnipa, Bloomberg News].

*Trade Promotion Authority/Senator Elizabeth Warren/Trans-Pacific Partnership/Arab-Israeli Peace Process*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to ask you about trade.

*The President.* Yes.

Q. The Senate moved forward on a bill today to approve your trade legislation. And it also moved forward with a proposal to punish countries like China for what they do in terms of manipulating their currency. Could you potentially see yourself accepting Senator Schumer's language on currency manipulation? Or would you have to veto that?

And, secondly, could you also talk about your relationship with Senator Warren? Do you regret the fact that things have become so personal with the back-and-forth on trade? And then, secondly, if I could ask—

*The President.* How many—wait, that was the second question, wasn't it? So now, thirdly, is what you're saying.

Q. Yes.

*The President.* Okay. [Laughter]

Q. Just really quickly, you mentioned the issue of a two-state solution with Israel. I was wondering if you would give your reaction to what the Pope is moving forward with in terms of recognizing the Palestinian state. Do you think that's a good idea? Do you think it's a mistake? And do you think it might help or hinder the two-state solution that you mentioned earlier?

*The President.* Okay. Well, first of all, I want to congratulate the Senate on moving forward

on providing me the authority to not only strike a smart, progressive, growth-promoting trade deal with some of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region and potentially in Europe as well, but also to give me the tools to enforce those agreements, which haven't always happened in the past.

So I want to thank all the Senators who voted to provide that authority, or at least to begin the debate on moving that process forward. Those who didn't vote for it, I want to keep on trying to make the case and provide them the information they need to feel confident that despite the fact that there have been very genuine problems with some trade deals in the past, the approach that we're taking here, I think, is the right one, not just for big U.S. businesses, but also for small U.S. businesses and medium-sized U.S. businesses and, most importantly, ultimately, American workers.

I would not be promoting any agreement that I didn't think, at the end of the day, was going to be creating jobs in the United States and giving us more of an opportunity to create ladders of success, higher incomes, and higher wages for the American people, because that's my primary focus. It has been since I came into office.

The issue with respect to myself and Elizabeth has never been personal. I mean, I think it's fun for the press to see if we can poke around at it when you see two close allies who have a disagreement on a policy issue. But there are a whole bunch of—some of my best friends in the Senate, as well in the House, some of my earliest supporters who disagree with me on this. And I understand. Because, like me, they came up through the ranks watching plants close, jobs being shipped overseas. Like me, they have concerns about whether labor agreements or environmental agreements with other countries are properly enforced. Like me, they have concerns about whether in fact trade ends up being fair and not just free.

And, like me, they have a deep concern about some of the global trends that we've seen and trends that we've seen in our own country in terms of increased inequality and

what appears to be the effects of automation and globalization in allowing folks at the very top to do really, really well, but creating stagnation in terms of incomes and wages for middle class families and folks working to get their way into the middle class.

So these are folks whose values are completely aligned with mine. I noticed that there was sort of a progressive statement of principles about what it means to be a progressive by some of these friends of mine, and I noted that it was basically my agenda, except for trade. [Laughter] Right? That was the one area where there was a significant difference. And this just comes down to a policy difference and an analysis in terms of what we think is best for our people, our constituents.

It is my firm belief that, despite the problems of previous trade deals, that we are better off writing high-standard rules with strong, enforceable provisions on things like child labor or deforestation or environmental degradation or wildlife trafficking or intellectual property; we are better off writing those rules for what is going to be the largest, fastest growing market in the world. And if we don't, China will, and other countries will. And our businesses will be disadvantaged, and our workers will ultimately suffer.

And in terms of some of the fears of outsourcing of jobs, it is my belief, based on the analysis, that at this point, if there was a company in the United States that was looking for low-cost labor, they have no problem outsourcing it under the current regime. And so what we do have the opportunity to do is to attract back companies to manufacture here in the United States.

And we're seeing some of that happen. That's why I went out to Nike. I understand that Nike has been manufacturing shoes with low-cost labor in many of these areas in the Asia-Pacific region and that hurt the American footwear industry in terms of jobs here in the United States. But that happened over the course of the last 30 years. And now, for Nike to announce that because of new technologies, they're potentially bringing 10,000 jobs back here because we've gone up the value chain,

we're manufacturing in different ways, that's an opportunity. But we've still got to be able to sell over there to take full advantage of those opportunities.

Which is why my argument with my progressive friends is, what we really need to be focusing on to meet the same objectives—the shared objectives—is the kinds of other issues that we all agree on: strong minimum wage, strong job training programs, infrastructure investments that put people back to work, stronger laws to protect collective bargaining and the capability of workers to have a voice, strong enforcement of rules around things like overtime pay, making sure that we have paid sick leave, making sure that we have a honest conversation about our budgets and that we're not slashing investments in the future simply to make sure that we're preserving loopholes for corporations that don't provide any economic benefit.

Those are the things that are going to help us address the very problems that they're concerned about. Blocking a trade deal will not, particularly since they're the first ones to acknowledge that the existing trade rules are a bad deal for U.S. workers. If they're not working for us now, how does hanging on to what's going on now help American workers? It doesn't make sense.

I'm all for enforcement and the provisions that were signed. I have expressed concerns about how the currency language that is in the bill is drafted. But I have to talk to Senator Schumer and Sherrod Brown and others about how we can work on language that does not end up having a blowback effect on our ability to maintain our own monetary policy.

I don't even remember what your other question was. [Laughter]

Q. The Pope—

Q. The Vatican.

*The President.* Oh. Well, rather than speak for others, I'll just reiterate what I've said previously. I continue to believe that a two-state solution is absolutely vital for not only peace between Israelis and Palestinians, but for the long-term security of Israel as a democratic and Jewish state.

And I know that a government has been formed that contains some folks who don't necessarily believe in that premise. But that continues to be my premise. And since we're up here at Camp David, I think it's important to remind ourselves of the degree to which a very hard peace deal that required incredible vision and courage and tough choices resulted in what's now been a lasting peace between countries that used to be sworn enemies. And Israel is better off for it. I think the same would be true if we get a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians.

That prospect seems distant now. But I think it's always important for us to keep in mind what's right and what's possible.

Okay. Last question. Scott Horsley [NPR].

*Overtime Regulations/Transportation Infrastructure Legislation*

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned at the outset our need for a world-class infrastructure. We're coming up on a deadline for the Highway Trust Fund. With gas prices where they are, why isn't this a good time to consider a hike in the Federal gas tax, which might also serve some of the carbon goals you talked about?

*The President.* Yes.

Q. And since you mentioned the overtime rules, I know it's been about 14 months since you asked the Labor Department to put those together. They went over to OMB last week. How soon might we see those?

*The President.* Soon.

And with respect to transportation, you're absolutely right that now is the time for us to get something done. I'm practical, and in order for us to get a transportation bill done, I've got to get cooperation from a Republican-controlled Congress. And so I'm in discussions with the majority and minority leaders in both Chambers, as well as the relevant committee chairpersons. We want to hear their ideas. We want to find out what's possible. I think that that's going to be something that we need to explore.

But this is not an area where either side should be looking for political points. This did

not used to be a partisan issue. Building roads, building bridges, building airports, sewer lines, dams, ports—this is how we grow. This is how America became an economic superpower, was investing in our people, investing in infrastructure, doing it better and faster and bigger than anybody else did. We should be doing the same thing now.

The first Republican President, a proud native of my home State named Mr. Lincoln, even in the midst of civil war was looking at how we join the country together through our railways and our canals. We shouldn't be thinking smaller today. We need to be thinking bigger in this global economy.

So my hope is, is that we have a chance to have a serious discussion and look at all potential revenue sources. What is absolutely true is, is that the Highway Trust Fund has consistently gotten smaller and smaller and smaller and inadequate for the needs. What's also true is

patchwork approaches of 3 months or 6 months at a time don't make any sense. We need some sort of long-term solution.

Nobody foresaw that we could actually get a "doc fix" done and actually solve the long-term problem there in terms of how we were managing Medicare payments for doctors. Who knows? Maybe we might see some intelligent bipartisan outbreaks over the next few months, because I think everybody recognizes this is important. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:53 p.m. in the Aspen Cabin. In his remarks, the President referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and House Majority Leader Kevin O. McCarthy and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

## Joint Statement—United States-Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement May 14, 2015

President Obama and Heads of Delegations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, the Secretary General of the GCC, and members the President's Cabinet met today at Camp David to reaffirm and deepen the strong partnership and cooperation between the United States and the GCC. The leaders underscored their mutual commitment to a U.S.-GCC strategic partnership to build closer relations in all fields, including defense and security cooperation, and develop collective approaches to regional issues in order to advance their shared interest in stability and prosperity.

The United States shares with our GCC partners a deep interest in a region that is peaceful and prosperous, and a vital interest in supporting the political independence and territorial integrity, safe from external aggression, of our GCC partners. The United States policy to use all elements of power to secure our core interests in the Gulf region, and to deter and confront external aggression against our allies

and partners, as we did in the Gulf War, is unequivocal.

The United States is prepared to work jointly with the GCC states to deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the UN Charter. In the event of such aggression or the threat of such aggression, the United States stands ready to work with our GCC partners to determine urgently what action may be appropriate, using the means at our collective disposal, including the potential use of military force, for the defense of our GCC partners.

As with Operation Decisive Storm, GCC states will consult with the United States when planning to take military action beyond GCC borders, in particular when U.S. assistance is requested for such action.

In this spirit, and building on the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum, the leaders discussed a new U.S.-GCC strategic partnership to enhance their work to improve security

cooperation, especially on fast-tracking arms transfers, as well as on counter-terrorism, maritime security, cybersecurity, and ballistic missile defense. They reviewed the status of negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran, and emphasized that a comprehensive, verifiable deal that fully addresses the regional and international concerns about Iran's nuclear program is in the security interests of GCC member states as well as the United States and the international community. The United States and GCC member states oppose and will work together to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region and stressed the need for Iran to engage the region according to the principles of good neighborliness, strict non-interference in domestic affairs, and respect for territorial integrity, consistent with international law and the United Nations Charter, and for Iran to take concrete, practical steps to build trust and resolve its differences with neighbors by peaceful means.

The leaders decided to enhance their counter-terrorism cooperation on shared threats, particularly ISIL/DAESH and Al-Qa'ida, to deter and disrupt terrorist attacks with a focus on protecting critical infrastructure, strengthening border and aviation security, combating money laundering and terrorist financing, interdicting foreign fighters, and countering violent extremism in all its forms.

The leaders, furthermore, discussed how best to address regional conflicts and defuse growing tensions. In this context, the leaders discussed the most pressing conflicts in the region, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, and what could be done to advance their resolution. They decided on a set of common principles, including a shared recognition that there is no military solution to the regions' armed civil conflicts, which can only be resolved through political and peaceful means; respect for all states' sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs; the need for inclusive governance in conflict-ridden societies; as well as protection of all minorities and of human rights.

With regard to Yemen, both the United States and GCC member states underscored

the imperative of collective efforts to counter Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, and emphasized the need to rapidly shift from military operations to a political process, through the Riyadh Conference under GCC auspices and UN-facilitated negotiations based on the GCC initiative, National Comprehensive Dialogue outcomes, and the Security Council's relevant resolutions. Taking into consideration the humanitarian needs of civilians, they welcomed the start of a five-day humanitarian pause to facilitate delivery of relief assistance to all those in need and expressed hope it would develop into a longer, more sustainable ceasefire. They expressed their appreciation for the generous grant of \$274 million provided by Saudi Arabia for the UN humanitarian response in Yemen. The United States reaffirmed its commitment, in partnership with GCC member states and other members of the international community, to seek to prevent the resupply of Houthi forces and their allies in contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 2216.

The United States and GCC member states further affirmed their commitment to assisting the Iraqi government and the international coalition in their fight against ISIL/DAESH. They stressed the importance of strengthening ties between GCC member states and the Iraqi government, based on the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs, and respect for state sovereignty. They encouraged the Iraqi government to achieve genuine national reconciliation by urgently addressing the legitimate grievances of all components of Iraqi society through the implementation of reforms agreed upon last summer and by ensuring that all armed groups operate under the strict control of the Iraqi state.

The leaders committed to continue working towards a sustainable political resolution in Syria that ends the war and establishes an inclusive government that protects all ethnic and religious minorities, and preserves state institutions. They reaffirmed that Assad has lost all legitimacy and has no role in Syria's future. They strongly supported increased efforts to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL/DAESH in Syria and warned against the influence of

other extremist groups, such as Al-Nusrah, that represent a danger to the Syrian people, to the region and to the international community. They expressed deep concern over the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and condemned the prevention of aid distribution to the civilian population by the Assad regime or any other party.

The leaders decided to move in concert to convince all Libyan parties to accept an inclusive power-sharing agreement based on proposals put forward by the UN and to focus on countering the growing terrorist presence in the country.

The United States and GCC member states strongly affirmed the necessity of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement that results in an independent and contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. To that end, the United States and GCC member states underscored the enduring importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the urgent need for the parties to demonstrate—through policies and actions—genuine advancement of a two-state solution, and decided to remain closely engaged moving forward. The United States and GCC member states also recommitted to continue to fulfill aggressively their pledges made for Gaza's reconstruction, to include

pledges made at the October 2014 Cairo Conference.

The leaders expressed their concern over the delay in electing a new president of Lebanon, called on all parties to strengthen Lebanese state institutions, and emphasized the critical importance of Lebanon's parliament moving forward to elect a president of the Lebanese Republic in accordance with the constitution. The leaders also emphasized their determination to support the Government of Lebanon in its resistance to ISIL/DAESH and Al-Nusrah which threaten Lebanon's security and stability.

The leaders pledged to further deepen U.S.-GCC relations on these and other issues in order to build an even stronger, enduring, and comprehensive strategic partnership aimed at enhancing regional stability and prosperity. They agreed to meet again in a similar high level format in 2016, in order to advance and build upon the US-GCC Strategic Partnership announced today.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement, which was supplemented by an annex released by the Office of the Press Secretary.

## Remarks at the National Peace Officers Memorial Service May 15, 2015

Thank you so much. Please be seated. Thank you, Chuck, for that kind introduction, for your years of proud service, not only as a police officer, but for all the advocacy that you do on behalf of law enforcement and their families. I want to thank the entire Fraternal Order of Police and its leadership, including Jim Pasco and Linda Hennie, for everything that you do to support those who protect and serve.

### *U.S. Marine Corps Helicopter Crash in Nepal*

Let me also say that as we gather here today, our prayers remain with the families of our ma-

rines and two Nepalese soldiers, now that the wreckage of their helicopter has been found in a remote part of Nepal. They went to that remote land to help people who suffered devastating losses in a terrible earthquake. They represent a truth that guides our work around the world: When our friends are in need, America helps.

Sometimes, those in uniform get attention only when there's a battle. But they do so much more than that, looking out for folks who are vulnerable or having a tough time, if—experienced a disaster. And it can involve great risk and great sacrifice. And we give thanks to

all our fellow Americans, military and civilian, who reflect the very best of American leadership around the world. The world is better for them.

We are here to honor heroes who have lost their lives in the line of duty, men and women who put themselves in the way of danger so that the rest of us could live in safety. They were beat cops, deputies, detectives, correctional and forest service officers, Federal agents, and tribal police. But to many here today, they went by different titles: caring husband, loving wife, my son, my daughter, Mom, Dad.

And so to all the families who are here today, whose loved one did not come home at the end of a shift, please know how deeply sorry we are for the loss that you've endured. Know how deeply grateful we are for your loved one's sacrifice.

We hold them up as heroes because that's what they are. It takes a special kind of courage to be a peace officer: to be the one people turn to in their most desperate moments, to be willing to run into a dangerous situation, when everyone else is running the other way. Scripture tells us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, but only a special few take that commandment so deeply to heart that they are willing to risk their lives so that others—often total strangers—can know peace and security. And that's what peace officers do. And today we honor 131 who made that ultimate sacrifice.

Officer Kevin Gordon [Jordan]<sup>o</sup> was a member of the police department of Griffin, Georgia. Husband to Tammy. Father to seven children. Army veteran. His daughter Deborah says, "We were his platoon." And Kevin deployed his own training to raise his young platoon, leading them in cadences: How motivated are you?

[At this point, Griffin, GA, Police Officer Kevin D. Jordan's children, who were seated in the audience, chanted a response.]

They were motivated. [Applause] Highly motivated.

He drilled them with the basics: to study hard and to push yourself and to take care of each other. And everywhere he went, he made friends. In Tammy's words, "He never met a stranger." To help make ends meet, Kevin took a night shift as a security guard at a Waffle House. And one night, some customers got rowdy, and as Kevin was placing one of the troublemakers under arrest, he was shot and killed. He was just 43 years old. One week later, Kevin's son Hezekiah graduated from Griffin High. And there to cheer him on were over a hundred of Kevin's fellow officers. And today, Hezekiah is in the Army, training to be an MP, and wants to be in law enforcement, just like his dad.

Senior Deputy Jessica Hollis started out as an EMT in San Antonio, Texas. She and her husband Ricky applied to the Austin Police Academy together, were accepted together, graduated together, just the second married couple in Austin to do that. Jessica eventually joined the Travis County Sheriff's Office, where she became a senior deputy and member of the prestigious dive team. She was a fierce animal lover. If she drove by a turtle trying to cross a road, she'd slam on the brakes and carry it gently on to the other side. She took her son Mason on special vacations—to the family lake house, New Orleans, on diving trips—just the two of them.

And last September, after heavy rains, Jessica went out to check for civilians trapped in rising water. It was around 2 o'clock in the morning when she radioed for help. Her car was being swept away by the floodwater. Minutes later, she was missing. Dozens of officers came out to join the search, but by the time they found her, it was too late.

More than 1,000 people attended Senior Deputy Hollis's funeral. And there, Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton made sure to tell all his officers that he never had the chance to say something to Jessica: "I love each and every one of you. And I'll do anything for you."

Officer Roberto Sanchez's parents brought him to California from Mexico when he was

<sup>o</sup> White House correction.



just 4 years old. It was his first trip on an airplane, and that airplane is what brought him to America. So he began to collect model airplanes. He took his high school sweetheart, Sonia, on “plane spotting” dates, even worked as a freight carrier at Orange County’s John Wayne Airport.

But he always had one big dream: to be a police officer. When he joined the LAPD, friends say it was one of the happiest days of his life. He lived within walking distance of his parents. He volunteered at the school where his niece teaches kindergarten. He married Sonia, his high school sweetheart. And his partner on the force was his best friend. So life was good.

One night, Officer Sanchez was in pursuit of a speeding vehicle when someone intentionally crashed into his patrol car. He was the third Los Angeles police officer killed in a crash in just 2 months.

Your jobs are inherently dangerous. The reminders are too common. Just a few days ago, two police officers were killed in the line of duty in Mississippi. A week before that, an officer was killed in the line of duty in Queens. A few months before that, two of his fellow officers in the NYPD were killed as well.

We cannot erase every darkness or danger from the duty that you’ve chosen. We can offer you the support you need to be safer. We can make the communities you care about and protect safer as well. You—we can make sure that you have the resources you need to do your job. We can do everything we have to do to combat the poverty that plagues too many communities in which you have to serve.

We can work harder, as a nation, to heal the rifts that still exist in some places between law enforcement and the people you risk your lives to protect. We owe it to all of you who wear the badge with honor. And we owe it to your fellow officers who gave their last full measure of devotion.

Most of all, we can say thank you. We can say we appreciate you and we’re grateful for the work that you do each and every day. And

we can thank the families who bear the burden alongside you.

On behalf of the American people, I offer the families, friends, and fellow officers of those we’ve lost my prayers and my deepest thanks. We could not be prouder of them, more grateful for their service. We could not be prouder of you and all who work so hard to keep us safe.

May God bless and keep the fallen. May He comfort the mourning. May He protect the peacemakers. And may He bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. at the National Peace Officers Memorial at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to K. Charles Canterbury, Jr., national president, Fraternal Order of Police; James O. Pasco, Jr., executive director, Steve Young Law Enforcement Legislative Advocacy Center, Fraternal Order of Police; Linda Hennie, president, Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary; Capt. Dustin R. Lukasiewicz, Capt. Christopher L. Norgren, Sgt. Ward M. Johnson IV, Sgt. Eric M. Seaman, and Cpl. Sara A. Medina, U.S. marines who were killed in a helicopter crash during an earthquake relief operation near Charikot, Nepal, on May 12; Tapendra Rawal and Basanta Titara, Nepalese soldiers who were also killed in the May 12 helicopter crash; Deborah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Issac, Jaleah, Jesshua, and Ketorah Jordan, children of Officer Jordan; Chantell Mixon, who was charged in connection with the May 31, 2014, murder of Officer Jordan; Francisco and Patricia Sanchez, parents of Los Angeles Police Officer Roberto Sanchez, who was killed in the line of duty on May 3, 2014; Mynor Enrique Varela, who was charged with the murder of Officer Sanchez; Hattiesburg, MS, Police Officers Benjamin Deen and Liquori Tate, who were killed in the line of duty on May 9, 2015; New York City Police Officer Brian R. Moore, who died on May 4 as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty on May 2; and New York City Police Officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, who were killed in the line of duty on December 20, 2014.

## Statement on the Death of B.B. King May 15, 2015

The blues has lost its king, and America has lost a legend. B.B. King was born a sharecropper's son in Mississippi, came of age in Memphis, Tennessee, and became the ambassador who brought his all-American music to his country and the world. No one worked harder than B.B. No one inspired more up-and-coming artists. No one did more to spread the gospel of the blues.

Three years ago, Michelle and I hosted a blues concert at the White House. I hadn't ex-

pected that I'd be talked into singing a few lines of "Sweet Home Chicago" with B.B. by the end of the night, but that was the kind of effect his music had and still does. He gets stuck in your head, he gets you moving, he gets you doing the things you probably shouldn't do, but will always be glad you did. B.B. may be gone, but that thrill will be with us forever. And there's going to be one killer blues session in heaven tonight.

## Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma May 15, 2015

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Burma that was declared on May 20, 1997, is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2015. The Government of Burma has made significant progress across a number of important areas, including the release of over 1,300 political prisoners, continued progress toward a nationwide cease-fire, the discharge of hundreds of child soldiers from the military, steps to improve labor standards, and expanding political space for civil society to have a greater voice in shaping issues critical to Burma's future. In addition, Burma has become a signatory of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol and ratified the Biological Weapons Convention, significant steps towards supporting glob-

al nonproliferation. Despite these strides, the situation in the country continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

Concerns persist regarding the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in the country, particularly in ethnic minority areas and Rakhine State. In addition, Burma's military operates with little oversight from the civilian government and often acts with impunity. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma.

Despite this action, the United States remains committed to supporting and strengthening Burma's reform efforts and to continue working both with the Burmese government and people to ensure that the democratic transition is sustained and irreversible.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,  
May 15, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## The President's Weekly Address May 16, 2015

Hi, everybody. Everything we've done over the past 6 years has been in pursuit of one overarching goal: creating opportunity for all. What we've long understood, though, is that some communities have consistently had the odds stacked against them. That's true of rural communities with chronic poverty. It's true of some manufacturing communities that suffered after the plants they depended on closed their doors. It's true of some suburbs and inner cities, where jobs can be hard to find and harder to get to.

And that sense of unfairness and powerlessness has helped to fuel the kind of unrest that we've seen in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and New York. It has many causes, from a basic lack of opportunity to groups feeling unfairly targeted by police, which means there's no single solution. But there are many that could make a difference and could help. And we have to do everything in our power to make this country's promise real for everyone willing to work for it.

That's why last Tuesday, at a summit organized by Catholics and evangelicals, I sat down with a conservative scholar and a poverty expert for a discussion on what it takes to open more doors of opportunity. We know our efforts matter: Since 1967, we've brought poverty down by about 40 percent, thanks in part to programs like Social Security and the earned-income tax credit for working families. And we know that there are folks from all faiths and across the ideological spectrum who care deeply about "the least of these." So I hope this conversation continues, not as a question of whether, but of how, we can work together to grow opportunity. Because it's not words, but deeds that make a difference. And from expanding tax cuts for working parents to raising high school graduation rates, to helping mil-

lions of Americans secure health insurance when they didn't have it just a few years ago, our actions are making a difference.

Of course, lack of opportunity is not the only barrier between too many of our young people and the kind of future they deserve. On Monday, I'll travel to Camden, New Jersey, a city that has faced one of the highest violent crime rates in America. I'll highlight some of the innovative things they've done to help police do their jobs more safely and reduce crime in the process. And I'll highlight steps all cities can take to maintain trust between the brave law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line and the communities they have sworn to serve and protect.

Whether we are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents, whether we live in one of our poorest communities, one of our wealthiest, or anywhere in between, we all want our country to be one where hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded. We want a place where you can make it if you try. That's the promise we make to our young people. That's the promise that makes us exceptional. And it's the promise I'll never stop fighting to keep, for my children and for yours.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:40 p.m. on May 15 in the Diplomatic Room at the White House for broadcast on May 16. In the address, the President referred to Arthur C. Brooks, president, American Enterprise Institute; and Robert D. Putnam, Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy, Harvard University. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 16.

## Statement on International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia *May 16, 2015*

Michelle and I join our fellow Americans and others around the world in commemorating the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia tomorrow, May 17. We take this opportunity to reaffirm that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights are human rights, to celebrate the dignity of every person, and to underscore that all people deserve to live free from fear, violence, and discrimination, regardless of who they are or whom they love.

We work toward this goal every day. Here at home, we are working to end bias-motivated

violence, combat discrimination in the workplace, and address the specific needs of transgender persons. Overseas, I am proud of the steps that the United States has taken to prioritize the protection and promotion of LGBT rights in our diplomacy and global outreach.

There is much more to do, and this fight for equality will not be won in a day. But we will keep working, at home and abroad, and we will keep fighting, for however long it takes, until we are all able to live free and equal in dignity and rights.

## Remarks in Camden, New Jersey *May 18, 2015*

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, thank you so much. It is good to be in Camden.

I want to thank your Lieutenant Governor, Kim Guadagno, your Congressman, Donald Norcross, and your mayor, Dana Redd, for being here. Give them all a big round of applause. I want to thank the outstanding facility, our hosts. The Salvation Army is doing great work, and the Ray Kroc Center here seems like just a wonderful, wonderful facility. So we're very proud of them. I want to thank Camden County Police Chief Scott Thomson for his outstanding work. Where's the Chief? There he is.

So I've come here to Camden to do something that might have been unthinkable just a few years ago, and that's to hold you up as a symbol of promise for the Nation. Now, I don't want to overstate it. Obviously, Camden has gone through tough times, and there are still tough times for a lot of folks here in Camden. But just a few years ago, this city was written off as dangerous beyond redemption, a city trapped in a downward spiral. Parents were afraid to let their children play outside. Drug dealers operated in broad daylight. There weren't enough cops to patrol the streets.

So 2 years ago, the police department was overhauled to implement a new model of community policing. They doubled the size of the force, while keeping it unionized. They cut desk jobs in favor of getting more officers out into the streets, not just to walk the beat, but to actually get to know the residents: to set up basketball games, to volunteer in schools, to participate in reading programs, to get to know small businesses in the area.

Now, to be a police officer takes a special kind of courage. And I talked about this on Friday at a memorial for 131 officers who gave their lives to protect communities like this one. It takes a special kind of courage to run towards danger, to be a person that residents turn to when they're most desperate. And when you match courage with compassion, with care and understanding of the community—like we've seen here in Camden—some really outstanding things can begin to happen.

Violent crime in Camden is down 24 percent. Murder is down 47 percent. Open-air drug markets have been cut by 65 percent. The response time for 911 calls is down from 1 hour to just 5 minutes. And when I was in the center, it was 1.3 minutes, right when I was there. And perhaps most significant is that the

police and residents are building trust. Building trust.

Now, nobody is suggesting that the job is done. This is still a work in progress. The police chief would be the first one to say it. So would the mayor. Camden and its people still face some very big challenges. But this city is on to something. You've made real progress in just 2 years. And that's why I'm here today, because I want to focus on the fact that other cities across America can make similar progress.

Everything we've done over the past 6 years, whether it's rescuing the economy or reforming our schools or retooling our job training programs, has been in pursuit of one goal, and that's creating opportunity for all of us, all our kids. But we know that some communities have the odds stacked against them and have had the odds stacked against them for a very long time, in some cases for decades. You've got rural communities that have chronic poverty. You have manufacturing communities that got hit hard when plants closed and people lost jobs. There are not only cities, but also suburbs, where jobs can be tough to find and tougher to get to because of development patterns and lack of transportation options. And folks who do work, they're working harder than ever, but sometimes don't feel like they can get ahead.

And in some communities, that sense of unfairness and powerlessness has contributed to dysfunction in those communities. Communities are like bodies, and if the immunity system is down, they can get sick. And when communities aren't vibrant, where people don't feel a sense of hope and opportunity, then a lot of times that can fuel crime, and that can fuel unrest.

We've seen it in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and New York. And it has many causes, from a basic lack of opportunity to some groups feeling unfairly targeted by their police forces. And that means there's no single solution. There have to be a lot of different solutions and different approaches that we try.

So one of the things that we did to address these issues was to create a Task Force on the future of community policing. And this Task

Force was outstanding because it was made up of all the different stakeholders. We had law enforcement. We had community activists. We had young people. They held public meetings across the country. They developed concrete proposals that every community in America can implement to rebuild trust and help law enforcement.

The recommendations were released in March; they were finalized today. They include everything from enhanced officer training to improving the use of body cameras and other technologies to make sure that police departments are being smart about crime and that there's enough data for them to be accountable as well.

And we're trying to support the great work that's happening at the local level where cities are already responding to these recommendations. And before I go further, I just want the members of our Task Force to stand, because they've done some outstanding work, and they deserve to be acknowledged. Thank you.

Now, we've launched a Police Data Initiative that's helping Camden and other innovative cities use data to strengthen their work and hold themselves accountable by sharing it with the public. Departments might track things like incidents of force so that they can identify and handle problems that could otherwise escalate.

Here in Camden, officers deal with some 41 different data systems, which means they have to enter the same information multiple times. So today we've brought a volunteer, elite tech team to help: a group of data scientists and software engineers and tech leaders. They're going to work with the police department here to troubleshoot some of the technical challenges so it's even easier for police departments to do the things they already want to do in helping to track what's going on in communities, and then also helping to make sure that that data is used effectively to identify where there are trouble spots, where there are problems, are there particular officers that may need additional help, additional training. All that can be obtained in a really effective, efficient way.

Today we're also releasing new policies on the military-style equipment that the Federal Government has in the past provided to State and local law enforcement agencies. We've seen how militarized gear can sometimes give people a feeling like there's an occupying force, as opposed to a force that's part of the community that's protecting them and serving them. It can alienate and intimidate local residents and send the wrong message. So we're going to prohibit some equipment made for the battlefield that is not appropriate for local police departments.

There is other equipment that may be needed in certain cases, but only with proper training. So we're going to ensure that departments have what they need, but also that they have the training to use it.

And we're doing these things because we're listening to what law enforcement is telling us. The overwhelming majority of police officers are good and honest and fair. They care deeply about their communities. They put their lives on the line every day to keep them safe. Their loved ones wait and worry until they come through the door at the end of their shift. So we should do everything in our power to make sure that they are safe and help them do the job the best they can.

And what's interesting about what Chief Thomson has done and what's happening here in Camden is these new officers—who I have to confess made me feel old—[laughter]—because they all look like they could still be in school. [Laughter] The approach that the Chief has taken—in getting them out of their squad cars, into the communities, getting them familiar with the people that they're serving—they're enjoying their jobs more because they feel as if, over time, they can have more of an impact, and they're getting more help from the community because the community has seen them and knows them before there's a crisis, before there's an incident.

So it's not just crisis response. It's not after the fact: There's a crime, there's a dead body, there's a shooting, and now we're going to show up. It's, we're here all the time, and

hopefully, we can prevent those shootings from happening in the first place.

But one of the things I also want to focus on is the fact that a lot of the issues that have been raised here, and in places like Baltimore and Ferguson and New York, goes beyond policing. We can't ask the police to contain and control problems that the rest of us aren't willing to face or do anything about.

If we as a society don't do more to expand opportunity to everybody who's willing to work for it, then we'll end up seeing conflicts between law enforcement and residents. If we as a society aren't willing to deal honestly with issue of race, then we can't just expect police departments to solve these problems. If communities are being isolated and segregated, without opportunity and without investment and without jobs, if we politicians are simply ramping up long sentences for nonviolent drug crimes that end up devastating communities, we can't then ask the police to be the ones to solve the problem when there are no able-bodied men in a community or kids are growing up without intact households.

We can't just focus on the problems when there's a disturbance and then cable TV runs it for 2 or 3 or 4 days and then suddenly we forget it—about it again, until the next time. Communities like some poor communities in Camden or my hometown in Chicago, they're part of America too. The kids who grow up here, they're America's children. Just like children everywhere else, they've got hopes, and they've got dreams, and they've got potential. And if we're not investing in them, no matter how good Chief Thomson and the police are doing, these kids are still going to be challenged. So we've all got to step up. We've all got to care about what happens.

Chief Thomson will tell you that his officers read to young children in the communities not just to build positive relationships, but because it's in the interests of the community to make sure these kids can read so they can stay in school and graduate ready for college and careers and become productive members of society. That's in his interest not just as a police chief, but also as a citizen of this country and

somebody who grew up in this area and, knows this area.

And that's why we've partnered with cities and States to get tens of thousands more kids access to quality early childhood education. No matter who they are or where they're born, they should get a good start in life.

That's why we've partnered with cities, including Camden, to create what we call Promise Zones, where all-hands-on-deck efforts to change the odds for communities start happening because we're providing job training and helping to reduce violence and expanding affordable housing.

It's why we're ready to work with folks from both sides of the aisle to reform our criminal justice system. We all want safety, and we all know how pernicious the drug culture can be in undermining communities. But this massive trend toward incarceration even of nonviolent drug offenders and the costs of that trend are crowding out other critical investments that we can make in public safety. If we're spending a whole lot of money on prisons and we don't have computers or books or enough teachers or sports or music programs in our schools, we are being counterproductive. It's not a good strategy.

And so in addition to the work we're doing directly on the criminal justice front, we're also launching something that we call "My Brother's Keeper," an initiative to ensure that all young people, but with a particular focus on young men of color, have a chance to go as far as their dreams will take them. Over the coming weeks, members of my Cabinet will be traveling around the country to highlight communities that are doing great work to improve the lives of their residents.

We know these problems are solvable. We know that we're not lacking for answers, we're just lacking political will. We have to see these problems for what they are: not something that's happening to—in some other city to some other people, but something that's happening in our community, the community of America.

And we know that change is possible because we've seen it in places like this. We've

seen it, thanks to people like Officer Virginia Matias. Where is Virginia? There she is right there. So, earlier this year, Vice President Biden and I got to sit with Officer Matias and rank-and-file law enforcement officers from around the country. And Virginia was talking about how when she was growing up in East Camden, crime was so bad she wasn't allowed to go to the store alone. Her mom was once robbed at gunpoint. When she was 17, her uncle was shot and killed in his own store. Instead of turning away from Camden, she decided she wanted to become a cop where she grew up to help the community that she loved. And today, she is a proud member of the Camden County Police Department.

And she's a constant presence in the community, getting to know everybody she passes on her beat, even volunteering in a kindergarten. Officer Matias isn't just helping to keep her community safe, she's also a role model for young people of Camden. And anybody who thinks that things aren't getting better, she says: "I see kids playing outside, riding bikes in the neighborhood, on their porches having a conversation. That's how I measure change."

And that's how we should all measure change. I had a chance to meet with some of the young people here who participated in a little roundtable with the officers, and they're extraordinary young people. And they've got hopes and dreams just like Malia and Sasha, and they're overcoming some bigger barriers than my children ever had to go through or I had to go through. And they're strong, and they're focused.

But in talking to them, some of them—the reason they've been able to make it and do well is because their parents don't let them out outside. Well, you know what, children shouldn't have to be locked indoors in order to be safe. That's not right. Some of them still have concerns about friends of theirs that have taken a wrong path and got involved in the streets and drugs. That's not the environment we need our kids to be growing up in.

I challenge everybody to get to know some of these young people. They're outstanding, and they're going to do great things in their

lives. But the point is, is that they shouldn't have to go through superhuman efforts just to be able to stay in school and go to college and achieve their promise. That should be the norm. That should be standard. And if it isn't, we're not doing something right. We as a society are not doing something right if it isn't.

So, ultimately, that's how we're going to measure change: rising prospects for our kids, rising prospects for the neighborhood. Do our children feel safe on the streets? Do they feel cared for by their community? Do they feel like the police departments care about them? Do they feel as if they—when they work hard they can succeed? Do they feel like the country is making an investment in them? Do they see role models for success? Are there pathways to jobs that they can identify? Do they know that if they put in effort, they can make it? Are they going to be treated fairly regardless of the color of their skin or what their last name is?

It's pretty basic. I travel around the country. The one thing that makes me always so optimistic is our children. And what you realize is everywhere, kids are kids. *[Laughter]* Sometimes, they'll drive you crazy. *[Laughter]* They'll make mistakes. But there's an inherent goodness in them. They want to do the right thing. They just need to be given a chance.

And some of them aren't going to be lucky enough to have the structures at home that

they need, in which case, then, we all have to pick up the slack. And if we do, they'll respond. They will. But we've got to feel like that they're our kids. We've got to see our children in them, in their eyes. And we haven't done enough of that. But we can.

This is a moment of great promise; this is a moment of great hope. And if we're seeing such extraordinary improvement in Camden because of the good efforts of a lot of elected officials and an outstanding police chief and some wonderful police officers and a community that's supportive and nonprofit organizations like Salvation Army and others that are doing some great work—if it's working here, it can work anywhere. *[Applause]* It can work anywhere.

On the City Hall of Camden, you got an inscription by Walt Whitman: "In a dream, I saw a city invincible." In a dream, I see a country invincible, if we care enough to make the effort on behalf of every child in this country. Camden is showing that it can be done. I want America to show everybody around the world that it can be done.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. at the Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center.

## Statement on the 50th Anniversary of Head Start May 18, 2015

For millions of families, Head Start has been a lifeline. And for millions of kids, it's been the start of a better life. Over the past half century, 32 million children have benefited from its early learning and development programs. They've recited their numbers and ABCs, raced around playgrounds, and learned thousands of new words. On this 50th anniversary, our challenge is to make Head Start even stronger and to help more children and family benefit from its good work. My administration has increased access to Head Start programs, and we've launched a new partnership with

childcare centers to reach tens of thousands more infants and toddlers. Plus, a growing number of States and cities are taking steps to boost access to quality preschool. Now we need Congress to give Head Start the resources to reach more eligible kids. And we need leaders at every level, including in our States and communities, to support Head Start, because early childhood education is one of the smartest investments we can make to keep America strong and competitive in the 21st century.



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the success of Head Start over the past 50 years. Now, let's make sure we keep serving families for the next 50 years and beyond. Because here in America, every child—no matter what they look

like, where they come from, or who they are—deserves to get a head start in life.

NOTE: The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks on Signing the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015

May 19, 2015

Well, as some of you aware, several weeks ago, we lost two of New York's finest, Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu. They were serving their community with great honor and dedication and courage. And all of New York grieved, and all of the Nation grieved. It was a reminder of the incredibly difficult and dangerous work that so many of our law enforcement officers are engaged in every single day.

I had a chance to meet the families of Officers Ramos and Liu at the memorial that we did just a few days ago. But it's important for us not only to honor their memory, it's also important for us to make sure that we do everything we can to help ensure the safety of our police officers when they're in the line of duty.

And this legislation, which has been sponsored on a bipartisan basis by people like Senators Cardin and Representatives Reichert and Pascrell, represent, I think, the best of a bipartisan support for law enforcement. What this legislation is going to do is to initiate a Blue Alert System so that when we know there is an active threat against law enforcement, that the alerts are going out at a comprehensive, expeditious way. That prevents the possibility that other officers may be caught by surprise, and it

ensures that appropriate steps can be taken as quickly as possible.

So I want to again thank the Members of Congress who have come together to put this legislation in place. Most of all, I want to thank the families who obviously are still grieving from a terrible tragedy, but have worked hard to make sure that it is translated into something concrete.

And we're very proud of them. I'm particularly proud of the children here, these young men who, I think, are obviously grief stricken, but we know they're going to do a great job looking after their mom moving forward.

So with that, what I'd like to do is sign the legislation.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

Done. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jaden and Justin Ramos, sons, and Maritza Ramos, wife, of Rafael L. Ramos, a New York City Police officer who was killed in the line of duty on December 20, 2014. S. 665, approved May 19, was assigned Public Law No. 114–12.

## Statement on Congressional Action on Trade Enforcement Legislation

May 19, 2015

I have made rigorous trade enforcement a central pillar of U.S. trade policy, and we have moved aggressively to protect American workers and to improve labor laws and working conditions with trading partners across the globe.

The nature of global trade continues to evolve, and in addition to setting high standards through new trade agreements, the administration supports new tools that would strengthen the administration's ability to level

the playing field for U.S. workers, businesses, and farmers.

I am pleased that Chairman Hatch, Senator Wyden, and Chairman Ryan have agreed to swift consideration of the bipartisan Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act by the end of June. Many of these new tools, such as Super 301—elements of the ENFORCE Act and the Level the Playing Field Act—and constructive tools to address unfair currency practices, would strengthen our abil-

ity to both facilitate trade and improve enforcement of the rules. We must also repeal the consumptive demand exception for child and forced labor.

I look forward to working with both Chambers to improve certain provisions and to ensure swift, strong, and effective enforcement. These critical enforcement tools are complementary to new trade agreements. This legislation should be considered and reach my desk as quickly as possible.

## Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq May 19, 2015

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq that was declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2015.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,  
May 19, 2015.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Commencement Address at the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut May 20, 2015

*The President.* Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Class of 2015: Ahoy!

*Audience members.* Ahoy! [*Laughter*]

*The President.* There are now fewer days to go until the class of 2015 graduates than—never mind. [*Laughter*] There are now zero days until the class of 2015 graduates.

Thank you, Admiral Zukunft, for your kind introduction and for your leadership of our

coastguardsmen on all seven continents; Governor Malloy, Secretary Johnson, Ambassador, distinguished guests, faculty and staff, families and friends.

And Admiral Stosz, as you prepare to conclude your time as Superintendent, thank you for your outstanding stewardship of this Academy. You made history as the first woman ever to lead one of our Nation's service academies.

And I know you'll keep making history, because I was proud to nominate you for your third star and as the Coast Guard's next Deputy Commandant for Mission Support.

It is wonderful to be with all of you here today on this beautiful day. Michelle sends her greetings as well. She is the proud sponsor of the Coast Guard cutter *Stratton*, which is tough to beat. But as Admiral Zukunft pointed out, both the Coast Guard and I were born on the same day. So I want you all to know, every birthday from now on, I will be thinking about the Coast Guard. [Laughter]

Now, the Coast Guard may be the smallest of our services, but I have to say, you may also be the loudest. [Laughter] Whenever I visit our military bases, there are always lots of soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines. They make a lot of noise. But wherever I am, across the country or around the world, including Afghanistan—nowhere near an ocean—the most determined cheer from the crowd comes from our proud coastguardsmen, because usually, there might only be one or two of them. [Laughter]

And as Paul mentioned, in my State of the Union Address this year, I mentioned how I've seen America at its best when commissioning our new officers, including here in New London. And it's true, some folks across the country didn't quite get the reference. One person tweeted that they were pretty sure I just made this up. And then there was one person in town who asked, "Did Obama name drop New London?" So let me do it again. It is a great honor to be back in New London, at the United States Coast Guard Academy, to salute the newest ensigns of America's oldest continuous maritime service.

Cadets, this is a day to celebrate all that you've achieved over these past 4 years. You have excelled at one of the most selective and rigorous academic institutions in America. You've held yourselves to a high code of conduct, proven yourself worthy to be called commissioned officers of the United States Coast Guard.

You pushed yourselves physically, from Swab Summer to beating your officers at basketball and softball and football. [Laughter]

You braced up, squared your meals, spent Friday nights waxing the floors, maybe a little "Rodeo Buffing." [Laughter] I saw the video. That looks dangerous, by the way. [Laughter] You made your mark, and you will be remembered: in Chase Hall, in this stadium, and at Hanafin's and Bulkeley House. Which reminds me, in keeping with longstanding tradition, I hereby absolve all cadets serving restrictions for minor offenses. [Laughter] Minor offenses.

You came together as one team. We are joined today by Commander Merle Smith, the first African American graduate of this Academy, class of 1966, a decorated Vietnam veteran. His legacy endures in all of you, because the graduating class of 2015 is the most diverse in Academy history. And you took care of each other, like family. Today we honor the memory of your classmate from the Republic of Georgia, Soso, along with Beso. Their spirits will live on in the partnerships you forge with coast guards all over the world.

Today you take your rightful place in the Long Blue Line. For Marina Stevens and her family, it is a very long line. Where is Marina? Just wave at me real quick. There she is right there. Marina's dad is Coast Guard civilian. Her mom Janet, an Academy graduate, was a Coast Guard captain and will pin on Marina's shoulder boards today. Marina's grandfather was a coastguardsman. Her great-grandfather joined the U.S. Lighthouse Service in 1918. That's four generations, spanning nearly the entire life of the modern Coast Guard. No wonder she's named Marina. [Laughter] It's in her blood.

And, cadets, I know that none of you reached this day alone. So join me in giving a huge round of applause to your mentors and your incredible parents and your family members, so many of them, themselves, veterans as well. Please give them a big round of applause.

Class of 2015, I'm here as your Commander in Chief, on behalf of the American people, to say thanks to each of you. Thanks for choosing to serve, for stepping up, for giving up the comforts of civilian life, for putting on that uniform. Thank you for the service you are about to render, the life of purpose that you've

embraced, the risks that you've accepted, and the sacrifices that you will make.

But I'm not here to just sing your praises. I want to speak to you about what comes next. Soon, you'll fan out across the Coast Guard, and some of you will go to sectors and shore command. Some of you will start your duty aboard cutters. Some of you will start flight training. America needs you. And we need the Coast Guard more than ever.

We need you to safeguard our ports against all threats, including terrorism. We need you to respond in times of disaster or distress and lead your rescue teams as they jump out of perfectly good helicopters. We need you in the Caribbean and Central America, interdicting drugs before they reach our streets and damage our kids. We need you in the Middle East, in the Gulf, alongside our Navy; in places like West Africa, where you helped to keep the ports open so that the world could fight a deadly disease. We need you in the Asia-Pacific, to help our partners train their own coast guards to uphold maritime security and freedom of navigation in waters vital to our global economy.

These are all demanding missions. The pace of operations is intense. And these are tight fiscal times for all our services, including the Coast Guard. But we are going to keep working to give you the boats and the cutters and the aircraft that you need to complete the missions we ask of you.

We're moving ahead with new Fast Response Cutters, new Offshore Patrol Cutters. We're on track to have a full fleet of new National Security Cutters, the most advanced in history. And I've made it clear that I will not accept a budget that continues these draconian budget cuts called sequestration, because our Nation and our military and our Coast Guard deserve better.

And this brings me to the challenge I want to focus on today, one where our coastguardsmen are already on the front lines and that, perhaps more than any other, will shape your entire careers, and that's the urgent need to combat and adapt to climate change.

As a nation, we face many challenges, including the grave threat of terrorism. And as

Americans, we will always do everything in our power to protect our country. Yet even as we meet threats like terrorism, we cannot—and we must not—ignore a peril that can affect generations.

Now, I know there are still some folks back in Washington who refuse to admit that climate change is real. And on a day like today, it's hard to get too worried about it. There are folks who will equivocate. They'll say, "You know, I'm not a scientist." Well, I'm not either. [Laughter] But the best scientists in the world know that climate change is happening. Our analysts in the intelligence community know climate change is happening. Our military leaders—generals and admirals, Active Duty and retired—know it's happening. Our homeland security professionals know it is happening. And our Coast Guard knows it's happening.

The science is indisputable. The fossil fuels we burn release carbon dioxide, which traps heat. And the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are now higher than they have been in 800,000 years. The planet is getting warmer. Fourteen of the 15 hottest years on record have been in the past 15 years. Last year was the planet's warmest year ever recorded.

Our scientists at NASA just reported that some of the sea ice around Antarctica is breaking up even faster than expected. The world's glaciers are melting, pouring new water into the ocean. Over the past century, the world sea level rose by about 8 inches. Now, that was in the last century; by the end of this century, it's projected to rise another 1 to 4 feet.

Cadets, the threat of a changing climate cuts to the very core of your service. You've been drawn to water, like the poet who wrote, "the heart of the great ocean sends a thrilling pulse through me." You know the beauty of the sea, but you also know its unforgiving power.

Here at the Academy, climate change—understanding the science and the consequences—is part of the curriculum, and rightly so, because it will affect everything that you do in your careers. Some of you have already served in Alaska and aboard icebreakers, and you know the effects. As America's Maritime

Guardian, you've pledged to remain always ready—*Semper Paratus*—ready for all threats. And climate change is one of those most severe threats.

And this is not just a problem for countries on the coasts or for certain regions of the world. Climate change will impact every country on the planet. No nation is immune. So I'm here today to say that climate change constitutes a serious threat to global security, an immediate risk to our national security. And make no mistake, it will impact how our military defends our country. And so we need to act, and we need to act now.

After all, isn't that the true hallmark of leadership? When you're on deck, standing your watch, you stay vigilant. You plan for every contingency. And if you see storm clouds gathering, or dangerous shoals ahead, you don't sit back and do nothing. You take action, to protect your ship, to keep your crew safe. Anything less is negligence. It is a dereliction of duty. And so too with climate change. Denying it or refusing to deal with it endangers our national security. It undermines the readiness of our forces.

It's been said of life on the sea, "The pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails." Cadets, like you, I reject pessimism. We know what we as Americans can achieve when we set ourselves to great endeavors. We are, by nature, optimists, but we're not blind optimists. We know that wishful thinking in the face of all evidence to the contrary would set us on a course for disaster. If we are to meet this threat of climate change, we must be realists. We have to readjust the sails.

And that's why confronting climate change is now a key pillar of American global leadership. When I meet with leaders around the world, it's often at the top of our agenda, a core element of our diplomacy. And you are part of the first generation of officers to begin your service in a world where the effects of climate change are so clearly upon us. It will shape how every one of our services plan, operate, train, equip, and protect their infrastructure, their capabilities, today and for the long term.

So let me be specific on how your generation will have to lead the way: to both prepare ourselves and how to prevent the worst effects in the future.

Around the world, climate change increases the risk of instability and conflict. Rising seas are already swallowing low-lying lands, from Bangladesh to Pacific islands, forcing people from their homes. Caribbean islands and Central American coasts are vulnerable as well. Globally, we could see a rise in climate change refugees. And I guarantee you, the Coast Guard will have to respond. Elsewhere, more intense droughts will exacerbate shortages of water and food, increase competition for resources, and create the potential for mass migrations and new tensions. All of which is why the Pentagon calls climate change a "threat multiplier."

Understand, climate change did not cause the conflicts we see around the world. Yet what we also know is that severe drought helped to create the instability in Nigeria that was exploited by the terrorist group Boko Haram. It's now believed that drought and crop failures and high food prices helped fuel the early unrest in Syria, which descended into civil war in the heart of the Middle East. So, increasingly, our military and our combatant commands, our services—including the Coast Guard—will need to factor climate change into plans and operations, because you need to be ready.

Around the world, climate change will mean more extreme storms. No single weather event can be blamed solely on climate change. But Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines gave us a possible glimpse of things to come: one of the worst cyclones ever recorded, thousands killed, many more displaced, billions of dollars in damage, and a massive international relief effort that included the United States military and its Coast Guard. So more extreme storms will mean more humanitarian missions to deliver lifesaving help. Our forces will have to be ready.

As Admiral Zukunft already mentioned, climate change means Arctic sea ice is vanishing faster than ever. By the middle of this century, Arctic summers could be essentially ice free.

We're witnessing the birth of a new ocean: new sea lanes, more shipping, more exploration, more competition for the vast natural resources below.

In Alaska, we have more than 1,000 miles of Arctic coastline. The United States is an Arctic nation, and we have a great interest in making sure that the region is peaceful, that its indigenous people and environment are protected, and that its resources are managed responsibly in partnership with other nations. And that means all of you are going to have to step up, because few know the Arctic better than the U.S. Coast Guard. You've operated there across nearly 150 years. And as the Arctic opens, the role that the Coast Guard plays will only grow. I believe that our interests in the Arctic demand that we continue to invest in an enduring Coast Guard icebreaking capacity.

I was proud to nominate your last Commandant, Admiral Papp, as our Special Representatives for the Arctic. And as the U.S. chairs the Arctic Council this year, I'm committed to advancing our interests in this critical region because we have to be ready in the Arctic as well.

Climate change, and especially rising seas, is a threat to our homeland security, our economic structure—infrastructure, the safety and health of the American people. Already, today, in Miami and Charleston, streets now flood at high tide. Along our coasts, thousands of miles of highways and roads, railways, energy facilities are all vulnerable. It's estimated that a further increase in sea level of just one foot by the end of this century could cost our Nation \$200 billion.

In New York Harbor, the sea level is already a foot higher than a century ago, which was one of the reasons Superstorm Sandy put so much of lower Manhattan underwater. During Sandy, the Coast Guard mounted a heroic response, along with our National Guard and Reserve. But rising seas and stronger storms will mean more disaster response missions. And we need the Coast Guard to be ready, because you are America's maritime first responder.

Climate change poses a threat to the readiness of our forces. Many of our military instal-

lations are on the coast, including, of course, our Coast Guard stations. Around Norfolk, high tides and storms increasingly flood parts of our Navy base and an airbase. In Alaska, thawing permafrost is damaging military facilities. Out West, deeper droughts and longer wildfires could threaten training areas our troops depend on.

So politicians who say they care about military readiness ought to care about this as well. Just as we're helping American communities prepare to deal with the impacts of climate change, we have to help our bases and ports as well. Not just with stronger seawalls and natural barriers, but with smarter, more resilient infrastructure, because when the seas rise and storms come, we all have to be ready.

Now, everything I've discussed with you so far is about preparing for the impacts of climate change. But we need to be honest: Such preparation and adaptation alone will not be enough. As men and women in uniform, you know that it can be just as important, if not more important, to prevent threats before they can cause catastrophic harm. And the only way—the only way—the world is going to prevent the worst effects of climate change is to slow down the warming of the planet.

Some warming is now inevitable. But there comes a point when the worst effects will be irreversible. And time is running out. And we all know what needs to happen. It's no secret. The world has to finally start reducing its carbon emissions now. And that's why I've committed the United States to leading the world on this challenge.

Over the past 6 years, we've done more than ever to reduce harmful emissions: unprecedented investments to cut energy waste in our homes and buildings, standards to double the fuel efficiency of our vehicles. We're using more clean energy than ever before: more solar, more wind. It's all helped us reduce our carbon emissions more than any other advanced nation. And today, we can be proud that our carbon pollution is near its lowest levels in almost two decades. But we've got to do more.

So going forward, I've committed to doubling the pace at which we cut carbon pollution. And that means we all have to step up. And it will not be easy. It will require sacrifice, and the politics will be tough. But there is no other way. We have to make our homes and buildings more efficient. We have to invest in more energy research and renewable technologies. We have to move ahead with standards to cut the amount of carbon pollution in our power plants. And working with other nations, we have to achieve a strong global agreement this year to start reducing the total global emission, because every nation must do its part. Every nation.

So this will be tough. But as so often is the case, our men and women in uniform show us the way. They're used to sacrifice and they are used to doing hard stuff. Class of 2015, you've built new equipment that uses less energy. You've designed new vessels with fewer harmful emissions. Stephen Horvath, selected as a Fulbright Scholar, will research new technologies for renewable energies. The Coast Guard is building more fuel-efficient cutters. So you're already leading. And, cadets, as you go forward, I challenge you to keep imagining and building the new future we need and make your class motto your life's work: "To go where few dare." This is a place where we need you.

Across our military, our bases and ports are using more solar and wind, which helps save money that we can use to improve readiness. The Army is pursuing new, lighter, more fuel-efficient vehicles. The Air Force F-22 broke the sound barrier using biofuels. And the Navy runs an entire carrier strike group, the Green Fleet, with biofuels. Our Marines have deployed to Afghanistan with portable solar panels, lightening their load and reducing dangerous resupply missions. So fighting climate change and using energy wisely also makes our forces more nimble and more ready. And that's something that should unite us as Americans. This cannot be subject to the usual politics and the usual rhetoric. When storms gather, we get ready.

And I want to leave you with a story that captures the persistence and the patriotism

that this work requires, because this is a nation made up of folks who know how to do hard things. Down in the front row is Dr. Olivia Hooker. In 1921, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when she was just 6 years old, her African American community was attacked by White mobs. It was a horrific racial incident. And hundreds of innocent African Americans were killed. The mobs destroyed her father's clothing store. They looted her house. They even burned the little clothes for her doll.

And Olivia could have given in to bitterness. She could have been pessimistic about her country. Instead, she made it better. So, in World War II, she enlisted as a SPAR, becoming the first African American woman in the Coast Guard. As a yeoman in Boston, she served with distinction. By the time the war was won, she was discharged, she was a petty officer second class.

With the GI bill, Olivia earned her master's, then her doctorate. She has been a professor and mentor to her students, a passionate advocate for Americans with disabilities, a psychologist counseling young children, a caregiver at the height of the AIDS epidemic, a tireless voice for justice and equality. And a few months ago, Olivia turned a hundred years old.

So, Olivia, you're going to have to tell us you're secret. She's still as sharp as they come, and as fearless. In Yonkers, New York, she even still volunteers as a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and was determined to be here with us today. So, Dr. Hooker, thank you. You're an inspiration. Hundred years old. So Dr. Hooker has led a remarkable life. But this is what she says: "It's not about you or me. It's about what we can give to this world."

Cadets, you're at the start of your careers. And we cannot know, each of us, how many days we will walk this Earth. We can't guarantee we're all going to live to a hundred. But what we can do is live each day to its fullest. What we can do is look squarely at what will make the biggest difference for future generations and be willing to tackle those challenges.

And as you embark on your life of service, as you man your stations and head to the seas and take to the skies, should the sea begin to surge

and the waves swell and the wind blows hard against your face, I want you to think back to this moment, to feel what you feel in your hearts today. And if you remember all that you've learned here at the Thames, how you came here and came together, out of many one, to achieve as a team what you could never do alone; if you resolve to stay worthy of traditions that endure—honor, respect, devotion to duty; if you heed the wisdom and humility of a petty officer second class from Oklahoma, to think not of yourself, but what you can give to this world, then I'm confident that you will truly go where few dare. And you will rise to meet the challenges that not only face our country, but face our planet. And your legacy will be a nation that is stronger and safer for generations to come.

So, class of 2015, thank you for your service. Congratulations. God bless you. God bless all our coastguardsmen. God bless our United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:42 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard Adm. Paul F. Zukunft, USCG; Georgia's Ambassador to the U.S. Archil Gegeshidze; Sandra Stosz, Superintendent, U.S. Coast Guard Academy; U.S. Coast Guard Academy cadets Bersarian "Beso" Gorgoladze and Soso Makaridze, who were killed in a car crash in Hopewell, NJ, on March 7; and Jim Stevens, father, and Mike Emerson, grandfather, of U.S. Coast Guard Academy graduate Marina Stevens.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With President Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia *May 21, 2015*

*President Obama.* It is a great pleasure to welcome back President Caid Essebsi to the Oval Office. We had the opportunity to meet early in the aftermath of the political transition that had begun in Tunisia. And it was very gratifying to hear about the excellent progress that's been made in Tunisia's transformation into an inclusive and functioning democracy.

It is important to recognize that the place where the Arab Spring began is the place where we have seen the most extraordinary progress in allowing all parties and all parts of the population, including women and minorities, participate fully in the civic and political life of the nation. And it bodes well for Tunisia's future and for the future of its children. And I emphasized to the President that the United States is fully committed to working with Tunisia so that it can continue to build on this success.

The friendship between the United States and Tunisia dates back centuries. But at this critical time in world history, we think it's very important for us to continue to expand the economic assistance that we're providing so that ordinary Tunisians can feel the concrete benefits of a change to a more open and competi-

tive economy. I committed to continuing to work to expand the education scholarship and exchange programs that have already been established between our two countries so that young Tunisians can continue to access the skills they need to get good jobs and compete in the international economy.

We discussed the importance of security and the recognition that, given the instability in the region, it is important for us to continue to partner effectively in counterterrorism efforts, but also in our efforts to stabilize Libya and bring the parties together so that we don't have a failed state and a power vacuum that ends up infecting the situation in Tunisia as well.

And in recognition of the importance that we place on the security and diplomatic relationship with Tunisia, I indicated to the President my intention to designate Tunisia as a major non-NATO ally of the United States. And I committed that as Tunisia continues to embark on important structural reforms to the economy that we will not only provide short-term aid, but also try to provide the kind of bridge and support that's necessary to complete those reforms and make sure that they're effective and benefiting the people of Tunisia.



So overall, this was an excellent discussion, but it was reflective of what had been ongoing consultations and a lot of work by our diplomatic and military and economic and intelligence teams during the course of this incredible transformation of Tunisia. And I want the President and the people of Tunisia to know that the United States believes in Tunisia, is invested in its success, and will work as a steady partner for years to come.

*President Caid Essebsi.* I have little to add to what Mr. President have kindly said. In this meeting, we have discussed all issues related to Tunisia-U.S. cooperation, in all fields. And I felt that there is the opportunity to continue this support to ensure the success of the democratic choice that Tunisia has opted for.

However important the milestone that Tunisia has reached in the democratic process, we are still in midway. The—we have a long way ahead of us. To reach the conclusion of the democratic system and the final consolidation of this system, still—there is still a lot to be done.

The democratic process is always fragile, vulnerable, and threatened by chaos, by parties that do not believe in democracy, that do not espouse democratic policies and discourse, but also by our regional environment, which could represent a threat to the democratic process.

## Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting May 21, 2015

Well, today I have the opportunity to welcome two of the newest members of our Cabinet who haven't had a chance to be at a Cabinet meeting before: our new Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, and our new Attorney General, Loretta Lynch. And we want to give them a big round of applause.

Each of the men and women around this table have a very simple mission, although it's hard to execute, and that is, how do we make sure that we are continually expanding opportunity, prosperity, and security for the American people? The good news is, about halfway through 2015, we've already seen some signifi-

Fortunately, the Tunisian people are very much aware about the importance of the gains it has acquired and about protecting these gains and continuing to work to ensure success.

We have a process of reforms that is underway. We have achieved a milestone in implementing these reforms. In—we are almost midway. We are committed to these reforms, and within this year, we are going to finalize all the reforms that we need to implement. The objective is to reform the economy, but also to send a potent message to the world, to investors, and to tell them that Tunisia is a favorable site for investment and for growth.

Mr. President Obama has underscored during our discussion his faith in Tunisia and his belief in Tunisia's chances for success. We, too, in Tunisia have trust in the friendship of the U.S. and with the longstanding history and the friendship between the two countries. We are integrating a new phase, a new chapter in our bilateral relations, and we need the support of the U.S., and maybe, the U.S. needs Tunisia too now. *Merci.*

*President Obama.* *Merci beaucoup.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Caid Essebsi spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

cant progress. The unemployment rate is now at its lowest in almost 7 years. Our businesses created 3 million jobs over the past 12 months, nearly the fastest pace in over a decade. On the health care front, the uninsured rate has now fallen by the largest amount in four decades, even as health care inflation continues to be lower than it has been in a very long time.

So our work is paying off. But we've got to build on that progress. And our overarching goal remains the same, which is, how do we make sure everybody in this country gets opportunity? That means that we're going to keep fighting to make sure that community colleges

are as free and as universal as high school. It means we're going to go after issues of poverty and inequality, both urban and rural. It means that we're going to continue to expand on our job training agenda and our apprenticeship agenda so that people of all ages have the skills that they need to succeed in this economy.

It means we're going to continue to go after ISIL, get a strong deal that prevents Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And as part of our agenda for middle class economics, it means that we're going to continue to pursue strong trade agreements that benefit American workers and American businesses.

And I want to thank the bipartisan group of Senators who took a big step forward this morning on the trade agenda that is consistent with strong labor standards, strong environmental standards, and is going to open up ac-

cess to markets that too often are closed even as these other countries are selling goods here in the United States. It's an agenda that's good for U.S. businesses, but most importantly, good for American workers.

So we've got a lot to do over the next year and a half. We're going to run through the tape. [Laughter] And I'm going to be hearing from everybody around this table in terms of how we are going to make sure that all of our agencies are working on all cylinders to accomplish these goals. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

## Remarks at Adas Israel Congregation May 22, 2015

*The President.* Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Well, good morning, everybody!

*Audience members.* Good morning!

*The President.* A slightly early *Shabbat shalom*. [Laughter] I want to thank Rabbi Steinlauf for the very kind introduction. And to all the members of the congregation, thank you so much for such an extraordinary and warm welcome.

I want to thank a couple of outstanding Members of Congress who are here. Senators Michael Bennet—where did Michael Bennet go? There he is. And Representative Sandy Levin, who is here. I want to thank our Special Envoy To Combat Anti-Semitism, Ira Forman, for his important work. There he is. But as I said, most of all I want to thank the entire congregation of Adas Israel for having me here today.

Earlier this week, I was actually interviewed by one of your members, Jeff Goldberg. And Jeff reminded me that he once called me “the first Jewish President.” [Laughter] Now, since some people still seem to be wondering about my faith—[laughter]—I should make clear,

this was an honorary title. [Laughter] But I was flattered.

And as an honorary member of the tribe—[laughter]—not to mention somebody who's hosted seven White House Seders and been advised by two Jewish Chiefs of Staff, I can also proudly say that I'm getting a little bit of the hang of the lingo. [Laughter] But I will not use any of the Yiddish-isms that Rahm Emanuel taught me because—[laughter]—I want to be invited back. [Laughter] Let's just say he had some creative new synonyms for *shalom*. [Laughter]

Now, I wanted to come here to celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month because this congregation, like so many around the country, helps us to tell the American story. And back in 1876, when President Grant helped dedicate Adas Israel, he became the first sitting President in history to attend a synagogue service. And at the time, it was an extraordinarily symbolic gesture, not just for America, but for the world.

And think about the landscape of Jewish history. Tomorrow night the holiday of Shavuot marks the moment that Moses received the Torah at Mount Sinai, the first link in a chain

of tradition that stretches back thousands of years and a foundation stone for our civilization. Yet, for most of those years, Jews were persecuted, not embraced, by those in power. Many of your ancestors came here fleeing that persecution.

The United States could have been merely another destination in that ongoing diaspora. But those who came here found that America was more than just a country, America was an idea. America stood for something. As George Washington wrote to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island: The United States “gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.”

It’s important for us to acknowledge that too often in our history, we fell short of those lofty ideals: in the legal subjugation of African Americans through slavery and Jim Crow, the treatment of Native Americans. And far too often, American Jews faced the scourge of anti-Semitism here at home. But our founding documents gave us a north star, our Bill of Rights; our system of government gave us a capacity for change. And where other nations actively and legally might persecute or discriminate against those of different faiths, this Nation was called upon to see all of us as equal before the eyes of the law. When other countries treated their own citizens as “wretched refuse,” we lifted up our lamp beside the golden door and welcomed them in. Our country is immeasurably stronger because we did.

From Einstein to Brandeis, from Jonas Salk to Betty Friedan, American Jews have made contributions to this country that have shaped it in every aspect. And as a community, American Jews have helped make our Union more perfect. The story of Exodus inspired oppressed peoples around the world in their own struggles for civil rights. From the founding members of the NAACP to a freedom summer in Mississippi, from women’s rights to gay rights to workers’ rights, Jews took the heart of Biblical edict that we must not oppress a stranger, having been strangers once ourselves.

Earlier this year, when we marked the 50th anniversary of the march in Selma, we remembered the iconic images of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Dr. King, pray-

ing with his feet. And to some, it must have seemed strange that a rabbi from Warsaw would take such great risks to stand with a Baptist preacher from Atlanta. But Heschel explained that their cause was one and the same. In his essay, “No Religion Is an Island,” he wrote, “We must choose between interfaith and internihilism.” Between a shared hope that says together we can shape a brighter future or a shared cynicism that says our world is simply beyond repair.

So the heritage we celebrate this month is a testament to the power of hope. Me standing here before you, all of you in this incredible congregation, is a testament to the power of hope. It’s a rebuke to cynicism. It’s a rebuke to nihilism. And it inspires us to have faith that our future, like our past, will be shaped by the values that we share. At home, those values compel us to work to keep alive the American Dream of opportunity for all. It means that we care about issues that affect all children, not just our own; that we’re prepared to invest in early childhood education; that we are concerned about making college affordable; that we want to create communities where if you’re willing to work hard, you can get ahead the way so many who fled and arrived on these shores were able to get ahead. Around the world, those values compel us to redouble our efforts to protect our planet and to protect the human rights of all who share this planet.

It’s particularly important to remember now, given the tumult that is taking place in so many corners of the globe, in one of the world’s most dangerous neighborhoods, those shared values compel us to reaffirm that our enduring friendship with the people of Israel and our unbreakable bonds with the State of Israel—that those bonds, that friendship cannot be broken. Those values compel us to say that our commitment to Israel’s security—and my commitment to Israel’s security—is and always will be unshakeable.

And I’ve said this before: It would be a moral failing on the part of the U.S. Government and the American people, it would be a moral failing on my part, if we did not stand up firmly, steadfastly not just on behalf of Israel’s right

to exist, but its right to thrive and prosper. Because it would ignore the history that brought the State of Israel about. It would ignore the struggle that's taken place through millennia to try to affirm the kinds of values that say everybody has a place, everybody has rights, everybody is a child of God.

As many of you know, I've visited the houses hit by rocket fire in Sderot. I've been to Yad Vashem and made that solemn vow: "Never forget. Never again." When someone threatens Israel's citizens or its very right to exist, Israelis necessarily take that seriously, and so do I. Today, the military and intelligence cooperation between our two countries is stronger than ever. Our support of the Iron Dome's rocket system has saved Israeli lives. And I can say that no U.S. President, no administration has done more to ensure that Israel can protect itself than this one.

As part of that commitment, there's something else that the United States and Israel agrees on: Iran must not, under any circumstances, be allowed to get a nuclear weapon. Now, there's a debate about how to achieve that, and that's a healthy debate. And I'm not going to use my remaining time to go too deep into policy—although, for those of you who are interested—[laughter]—we have a lot of material out there. [Laughter] But I do want everybody to just remember a few key things.

The deal that we already reached with Iran has already halted or rolled back parts of Iran's nuclear program. Now we're seeking a comprehensive solution. I will not accept a bad deal. As I pointed out in my most recent article with Jeff Goldberg, this deal will have my name on it, so nobody has a bigger personal stake in making sure that it delivers on its promise. I want a good deal.

I'm interested in a deal that blocks every single one of Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon—every single path. A deal that imposes unprecedented inspections on all elements of Iran's nuclear program so that they can't cheat and if they try to cheat, we will immediately know about it and sanctions snap back on. A deal that endures beyond a decade; that addresses this challenge for the long term. In

other words, a deal that makes the world and the region—including Israel—more secure. That's how I define a good deal.

Now, I can't stand here today and guarantee an agreement will be reached. We're hopeful. We're working hard. But nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. And I've made clear that when it comes to preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, all options are and will remain on the table.

Moreover, even if we do get a good deal, there remains the broader issue of Iran's support for terrorism and regional destabilization and ugly threats against Israel. And that's why our strategic partnership with Israel will remain, no matter what happens in the days and years ahead. And that's why the people of Israel must always know: America has its back, and America will always have its back.

Now, that does not mean that there will not be, or should not be, periodic disagreements between our two governments. There will be disagreements on tactics when it comes to how to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and that is entirely appropriate and should be fully aired. Because the stakes are sufficiently high that anything that's proposed has to be subjected to scrutiny, and I welcome that scrutiny.

But there are also going to be some disagreements rooted in shared history that go beyond tactics, that are rooted in how we might remain true to our shared values. I came to know Israel as a young man through these incredible images of kibbutzim and Moshe Dayan and Golda Meir and Israel overcoming incredible odds in the '67 war. The notion of pioneers who set out not only to safeguard a nation, but to remake the world; not only to make the desert bloom, but to allow their values to flourish, to ensure that the best of Judaism would thrive. And those values in many ways came to be my own values. They believed the story of their people gave them a unique perspective among the nations of the world, a unique moral authority and responsibility that comes from having once been a stranger yourself.

And to a young man like me, grappling with his own identity, recognizing the scars of race here in this Nation, inspired by the civil rights struggle, the idea that you could be grounded in your history, as Israel was, but not be trapped by it, to be able to repair the world, that idea was liberating. The example of Israel and its values was inspiring.

So when I hear some people say that disagreements over policy belie a general lack of support of Israel, I must object, and I object forcefully. For us to paper over difficult questions, particularly about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or about settlement policy, that's not a true measure of friendship.

Before I came out here, the Rabbi showed me the room that's been built to promote scholarship and dialogue and to be able to find how we make our shared values live. And the reason you have that room is because applying those values to our lives is often hard and involves difficult choices. That's why we study. That's why it's not just a formula. And that's what we have to do as nations as well as individuals. We have to grapple and struggle with how do we apply the values that we care about to this very challenging and dangerous world.

And it is precisely because I care so deeply about the State of Israel—it's precisely because, yes, I have high expectations for Israel the same way I have high expectations for the United States of America—that I feel a responsibility to speak out honestly about what I think will lead to long-term security and to the preservation of a true democracy in the Jewish homeland. And I believe that's two states for two peoples, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people on their land as well.

Now, I want to emphasize, that's not easy. [*Laughter*] The Palestinians are not the easiest of partners. [*Laughter*] The neighborhood is dangerous. And we cannot expect Israel to take existential risks with their security, so that any deal that takes place has to take into account the genuine dangers of terrorism and hostility.

But it is worthwhile for us to keep up the prospect, the possibility of bridging divides and

being just and looking squarely at what's possible, but also necessary in order for Israel to be the type of nation that it was intended to be in its earliest founding.

And that same sense of shared values also compel me to speak out—compel all of us to speak out—against the scourge of anti-Semitism wherever it exists. I want to be clear that, to me, all these things are connected. The rights I insist upon and now fight for, for all people here in the United States compels me then to stand up for Israel and look out for the rights of the Jewish people. And the rights of the Jewish people then compel me to think about a Palestinian child in Ramallah that feels trapped without opportunity. That's what Jewish values teach me. That's what the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches me. These things are connected.

And in recent years, we've seen a deeply disturbing rise in anti-Semitism in parts of the world where it would have seemed unthinkable just a few years or decades ago. This is not some passing fad; these aren't just isolated phenomena. And we know from our history they cannot be ignored. Anti-Semitism is, and always will be, a threat to broader human values to which we all must aspire. And when we allow anti-Semitism to take root, then our souls are destroyed, and it will spread.

And that's why, tonight, for the first time ever, congregations around the world are celebrating a Solidarity Shabbat. It's a chance for leaders to publicly stand against anti-Semitism and bigotry in all of its forms. And I'm proud to be a part of this movement, and I'm proud that six Ambassadors from Europe are joining us today. And their presence here—our presence together—is a reminder that we are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. Our traditions, our history, can help us chart a better course as long as we are mindful of that history and those traditions, and we are vigilant in speaking out and standing up against what is wrong. It's not always easy, I think, to speak out against what is wrong, even for good people.

So I want to close with the story of one more of the many rabbis who came to Selma 50 years

ago. A few days after David Teitelbaum arrived to join the protests, he and a colleague were thrown in jail. And they spent a Friday night in custody, singing *Adon Olam* to the tune of “We Shall Overcome.” [Laughter] And that in and of itself is a profound statement of faith and hope. But what’s wonderful is, is that out of respect many of their fellow protesters began wearing what they called “freedom caps”—[laughter]—yarmulkes—as they marched.

And the day after they were released from prison, Rabbi Teitelbaum watched Dr. King lead a prayer meeting before crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge. And Dr. King said, “We are like the children of Israel, marching from slavery to freedom.”

That’s what happens when we’re true to our values. It’s not just good for us, but it brings the community together—*tikkun olam*—it brings the community together, and it helps repair the world. It bridges differences that once looked unbridgeable. It creates a future for our children that once seemed unattainable. This congregation, Jewish American life is a testimony to the capacity to make our values live. But it requires courage. It requires

strength. It requires that we speak the truth not just when it’s easy, but when it’s hard.

So may we always remember that our shared heritage makes us stronger, that our roots are intertwined. May we always choose faith over nihilism, and courage over despair, and hope over cynicism and fear. As we walk our own leg of a timeless, sacred march, may we always stand together, here at home and around the world.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gil Steinlauf, senior rabbi, Adas Israel Congregation; Jeffrey Goldberg, national correspondent, the Atlantic magazine; Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago, IL, and Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew, in their former capacities as White House Chiefs of Staff; Cyprus’s Ambassador to the U.S. Georgios Chacalli; Georgia’s Ambassador to the U.S. Archil Gegeshidze; Germany’s Ambassador to the U.S. Hans Peter Wittig; Hungary’s Ambassador to the U.S. Réka Szemerényi; Sweden’s Ambassador to the U.S. Björn O. Lyrvall; and Spain’s Ambassador to the U.S. Ramón Gil-Casares Satrustegui.

## Statement on Senate Passage of Trade Promotion Authority and Trade Adjustment Assistance Legislation May 22, 2015

Today’s bipartisan Senate vote is an important step toward ensuring the United States can negotiate and enforce strong, high-standards trade agreements. If done right, these agreements are vital to expanding opportunities for the middle class, leveling the playing field for American workers, and establishing rules for the global economy that help our businesses grow and hire by selling goods made in America to the rest of the world. This trade promotion authority (TPA) legislation includes strong standards that will advance workers’ rights, protect the environment, promote a free and open Internet, and it sup-

ports new robust measures to address unfair currency practices. The legislation also includes an important extension of trade adjustment assistance (TAA) to help all American workers participate in the global economy.

I want to thank Senators of both parties for sticking up for American workers by supporting smart trade and strong enforcement, and I encourage the House of Representatives to follow suit by passing TPA and TAA as soon as possible.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1314.

## The President's Weekly Address

May 23, 2015

Hi, everybody. This weekend is Memorial Day, a time to pay tribute to all our men and women in uniform who've ever given their lives so that we can live in freedom and security. This year, the holiday is especially meaningful. It's the first Memorial Day since our war ended in Afghanistan.

On Monday, at Arlington Cemetery, I'll join our Gold Star families, veterans, and their loved ones to remember all our fallen heroes, including the more than 2,200 American patriots who gave their lives in Afghanistan. And I plan to share a few of their stories.

Growing up in Arizona, Wyatt Martin loved the outdoors. To him, a great day was a day spent fishing. After high school, he enlisted in the Army because he believed that the blessings he enjoyed as an American came with an obligation to give back to his country.

Ramon Morris was born in Jamaica and as a teenager came to Queens. Like so many proud immigrants, he felt a calling to serve his new country and joined the Army. He fell in love, got engaged, and the thing he wanted most was to make the world safer for his 3-year-old daughter.

In their lives, Specialist Wyatt Martin and Sergeant First Class Ramon Morris traveled different paths. But in December, their paths intersected as the final two Americans to give their lives during our combat mission in Afghanistan.

This weekend also reminds us that, around the world, our men and women in uniform continue to serve and risk their lives. In Afghanistan, our troops now have a new mission: training and advising Afghan forces. John Daw-

son was one of them. From Massachusetts, he loved the Bruins and the Pats. In April, he gave his life as an Army combat medic, the first American to give his life in this new mission. This Memorial Day, we'll honor Corporal Dawson as well.

Like generations of heroes before them, these Americans gave everything they had, not for glory, not even for gratitude, but for something greater than themselves. We cannot bring them back. Nor can we ease the pain of their families and friends who live with their loss.

But we are the Americans they died to defend. So what we can do—what we must do—is fulfill our sacred obligations to them, just like they fulfilled theirs to us. We have to honor their memory. We have to care for their families and our veterans who served with them. And as a nation, we have to remain worthy of their sacrifice, forever committed to the country they loved and the freedom they fought for and died for.

Thank you, and have a wonderful weekend. And may God bless our fallen heroes and their families.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:10 p.m. on May 22 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 23. In the address, the President referred to Ariana Morris, daughter of Sfc. Ramon S. Morris, USA, who was killed in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, on December 12, 2014. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 23.

## Statement on the Beatification of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez

May 23, 2015

I join people in El Salvador and around the world today in welcoming the beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero. I was deeply

moved when I had a chance to pay my respects to Monsignor Romero at his tomb on my visit to El Salvador in 2011. Archbishop Romero

was an inspiration for people in El Salvador and across the Americas. He was a wise pastor and a courageous man who persevered in the face of opposition from extremes on both sides. He fearlessly confronted the evils he saw, guided by the needs of his beloved *pueblo*, the poor and oppressed people of El Salvador. The day after he called on Salvadoran soldiers to cease carrying out the Government's orders for repression, he was assassinated while saying Mass. He became a martyr, and millions of people throughout the Americas and the world immediately thought of him as a saint.

El Salvador has come a long way in the last 35 years. Those who once fought on the battlefield now compete for votes and negotiate in

the National Assembly. But we and the Salvadoran people recognize there is much more to do. Today, in El Salvador and all of Central America, the United States is guided by the vision of Archbishop Romero. We partner with communities to promote economic opportunity, strengthen the rule of law, and create safer neighborhoods.

I am grateful to Pope Francis for his leadership in reminding us of our obligation to help those most in need and for his decision to beatify Blessed Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Let us hope that Archbishop Romero's vision can inspire all of us to respect the dignity of all human beings and to work for justice and peace in our hemisphere and beyond.

## Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia May 25, 2015

*The President.* Good morning, everybody.

*Audience members.* Good morning.

*The President.* Thank you, Secretary Carter, for your leadership of our men and women in uniform; General Dempsey; Major General Buchanan; Mr. Patrick Hallinan, Executive Director of Army National Military Cemeteries; Chaplain Studniewski; members of our Armed Services, veterans, and most of all, families and friends of our fallen: It is my deep honor to share this day with you again.

For 147 years, our Nation has set aside this day to pay solemn tribute to patriots who gave their last full measure of devotion for this country that we love. And while the nature of war has changed over that time, the values that drive our brave men and women in uniform remain constant: honor, courage, selflessness. Those values lived in the hearts of everyday heroes who risked everything for us in every American war, men and women who now rest forever in these quiet fields and across our land.

They lived in the patriots who sparked a revolution and who saved our Union. They lived in the young GIs who defeated tyranny in Europe and the Pacific. And this year, we mark a historic anniversary: 70 years since our victory in World War II. More than 16 million Ameri-

cans left everything they knew to fight for our freedom. More than 400,000 gave their lives. And today I ask all the family and friends of our fallen World War II heroes—spouses, children, brothers and sisters, and fellow veterans of World War II—to please stand if you can, or raise your hand so that our country can thank you once more.

These same values lived in those who braved the mountains of Korea, the jungles of Vietnam, the deserts of the Middle East. And in the past decade, we've seen these values on display again in the men and women of our 9/11 generation.

For many of us, this Memorial Day is especially meaningful; it is the first since our war in Afghanistan came to an end. Today is the first Memorial Day in 14 years that the United States is not engaged in a major ground war. So on this day, we honor the sacrifice of the thousands of American servicemembers—men and women—who gave their lives since 9/11, including more than 2,200 American patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan.

As an Arizona kid, Wyatt Martin loved the outdoors. He started fishing when he was 2 years old. His dad says he was pretty good for a toddler. Wyatt grew to 6-foot-4, became a



hunter, and wore flannel shirts every day, so his friends nicknamed him Paul Bunyan. He planned to go to college and work in the Arizona Game and Fish Department so that he could protect the land and waters he loved so much.

Wyatt's life was animated by the belief that the blessings that he and his family enjoyed as Americans came with an obligation to give back, an obligation to serve. So before he pursued his dream of being a good steward of the great outdoors, he enlisted in the Army. And when he deployed to Afghanistan as a combat engineer, there was no doubt in his mind that he was doing the right thing. Last summer, Wyatt told his sister, "If something happens to me, know that I went happy."

Ramon Morris was born in Jamaica, moved to Queens as a teenager. And like so many proud immigrants, he was called—compelled—to serve his new country. He too enlisted in the Army, and he even recruited his older brother Marlon to join as well. He served five tours, including several in Iraq. Along the way, he fell in love with an Army Reservist named Christina. And they had a little girl and named her Ariana. Ramon was the kind of leader who would do anything for his men, on and off the battlefield. But nothing was more important to him than being a great father to his little girl.

Now, Specialist Wyatt Martin and Sergeant First Class Ramon Morris were 15 years apart in age. They traveled greatly different paths in life. But those paths took them to the same unit. Those paths made them brothers-in-arms, serving together in Afghanistan. In December, an IED struck their vehicle. They were the last two Americans to give their lives during our combat mission in Afghanistan. Today, here in Arlington, in Section 60, Ramon lies in eternal rest. And we are honored to be joined by his brother, Sergeant First Class Marlon Laidley, who is deploying for Germany tonight. Thank you, Marlon. Thank you to your family.

These two men, these two heroes, if you saw them passing on the street, you wouldn't have known they were brothers. But under this flag,

in common cause, they were bonded together to secure our liberty, to keep us safe.

My fellow Americans, this hallowed ground is more than the final resting place of heroes, it is a reflection of America itself. It's a reflection of our history, the wars we've waged for democracy, the peace we've laid to preserve it. It's a reflection of our diversity: men and women of all backgrounds, all races and creeds and circumstances and faiths, willing to defend and die for the ideals that bind us as one Nation. It's a reflection of our character, seen not only in those who are buried here, but also in the caretakers who watch over them and preserve this sacred place, and in the Sentinels of the Third Infantry Regiment who dutifully, unfailingly watch over those patriots known only to God, but never forgotten. Today a grateful nation thanks them as well.

Most Americans don't fully see, don't fully understand the sacrifice made by the 1 percent who serve in this All-Volunteer Armed Forces, a sacrifice that preserves the freedoms we too often take for granted. Few know what it's like to take a bullet for a buddy or to live with the fact that he or she took one for you. But our Gold Star families, our military families, our veterans, they know this, intimately.

Whenever I meet with our Gold Star families, like I did this morning, I hear their pride through their tears, as they flip through old photos, run their fingers over shiny medals. I see that their hearts are still broken and yet still full of love. They do not ask for awards or honors. They do not ask for special treatment. They are unfailingly humble. In the face of unspeakable loss, they represent the best of who we are.

They're people like Ramon's mother, who could carry hate for the people who killed her son. But she says: "I have no anger, no bitterness, even for the person who did this. I feel sorry for them, and I ask God to change their hearts." That's one Gold Star mother's amazing grace.

Folks like Wyatt's parents, Brian and Julie Martin, who said of their son: "He's not just our kid, he's everybody's. He's an American

soldier. And as an American soldier, he belongs to everybody.”

They are siblings, like the Gold Star sister who wrote to me of her brother, Private First Class Stephen Benish, who gave his life in Iraq in 2004. She said, “Remember him not as the 1,253d war casualty, but the 6-foot-7 burst of light and positive influence he was on the world.”

These sons and daughters, these brothers and sisters who lay down their lives for us, they belong to us all. They’re our children too. We benefit from their light, their positive influence on the world. And it’s our duty, our eternal obligation, to be there for them too: to make sure our troops always have what they need to carry out the mission, to make sure we care for all those who have served, to make sure we honor all those whom we have lost, to make sure we keep faith with our military families, to make sure we never stop searching for those who are missing or trying to bring home our prisoners of war. And we are grateful for the families of our POW/MIAs.

This may be the first Memorial Day since the end of our war in Afghanistan. But we are acutely aware, as we speak, our men and women in uniform still stand watch and still serve and still sacrifice around the world.

Several years ago, we had more than a hundred thousand troops in Afghanistan. Today, fewer than 10,000 troops remain on a mission to train and assist Afghan forces. We’ll continue to bring them home and reduce our forces further, down to an Embassy presence by the end of next year. But Afghanistan remains a very dangerous place. And as so many families know, our troops continue to risk their lives for us.

Growing up in Massachusetts, John Dawson was an honor student who played varsity soccer, loved the Bruins, loved the Pats, was always up for fun, running into a room while spraying silly string, or photobombing long before it was in style.

John was passionate about service. He shared the same convictions of so many we honor today, who wanted nothing more than to join a common cause and be part of something bigger than himself. He channeled his love of

cycling into charity bike rides with his church. He joined the Army. And as a combat medic, he fulfilled his dream of helping people. He loved his job.

In April, an attacker wearing an Afghan uniform fired at a group of American soldiers. And Army Corporal John Dawson became the first American servicemember to give his life to this new mission to train Afghan forces. The words on John’s dog tag were those of Scripture: “Greater love has no other than this, than to lay down your life for your friends.”

The Americans who rest beneath these beautiful hills and in sacred ground across our country and around the world, they are why our Nation endures. Each simple stone marker, arranged in perfect military precision, signifies the cost of our blessings. It is a debt we can never fully repay, but it is a debt we will never stop trying to fully repay. By remaining a nation worthy of their sacrifice. By living our own lives the way the fallen lived theirs, a testament that “Greater love has no other than this, than to lay down your life for your friends.”

We are so grateful for them. We are so grateful for the families of our fallen. May God bless our fallen heroes and their families and all who serve. And may He continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter; Maj. Gen. Jeffrey S. Buchanan, USA, commanding general, and Col. Gary R. Studniewski, USA, Joint Force headquarters command chaplain, National Capital Region and Military District of Washington; Katie Martin, sister of Spc. Wyatt Martin, USA, who was killed in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, on December 12, 2014; Christina Strange, fiancée, Ariana Morris, daughter, and Ilsa Laidley, mother, of Sfc. Ramon S. Morris, USA, who was killed in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, on December 12, 2014; Kelly Benish, sister of Pfc. Stephen C. Benish, USA, who was killed near Ramadi, Iraq, on November 28, 2004; and Cpl. John Dawson, USA, who was killed in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on April 8.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization May 26, 2015

*President Obama.* Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome my friend, former Prime Minister of Norway Jens Stoltenberg, back to the Oval Office. The last time he was here, he came as a Prime Minister. He's now the Secretary General of NATO. And we've had an excellent discussion.

### *Flooding in Texas*

Before I mention some of the topics that we discussed on NATO, let me just say a couple of things. First of all, I had a chance this morning to talk to Governor Abbott of Texas to express condolences for the terrible flooding that's been taking place there. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and the communities that have been affected by some of these devastating, record-breaking floods.

I assured Governor Abbott that he could count on the help of the Federal Government. We have FEMA personnel already on the ground. They are coordinating with Texas Emergency Management authorities, and I will anticipate that there will be some significant requests made to Washington. My pledge to him is that we will expedite those requests to make sure that both search-and-rescue operations where necessary, but also recovery operations occur as efficiently and as quickly as possible.

### *Electronic Surveillance Legislation*

The second thing I want to just mention very quickly: Last week, Congress obviously was busy. It left town without finishing necessary work on FISA and some of the reforms that are necessary to the PATRIOT Act.

I said over a year ago that it was important for us to properly balance our needs for security with civil liberties. And this administration engaged on a bipartisan, bicameral basis, talking to Republicans and Democrats about how we could preserve necessary authorities, but

provide the public greater assurance that those authorities were not being abused.

The House of Representatives did its work and came up with what they've called the USA FREEDOM Act, which strikes an appropriate balance. Our intelligence communities are confident that they can work with the authorities that are provided in that act. It passed on a bipartisan basis and overwhelmingly. It was then sent to the Senate. The Senate did not act. And the problem we have now is that those authorities run out at midnight on Sunday.

So I strongly urge the Senate to work through this recess and make sure that they identify a way to get this done. Keep in mind that the most controversial provision in there, which had to do with the gathering of telephone exchanges in a single government database, that has been reformed in USA FREEDOM Act. But you have a whole range of authorities that are also embodied in the PATRIOT Act that are noncontroversial, that everybody agrees are necessary to keep us safe and secure. Those also are at risk of lapsing.

So this needs to get done. And I would urge folks to just work through whatever issues can still exist, make sure we don't have, on midnight Sunday night, this task still undone, because it's necessary to keep the American people safe and secure.

### *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*

Now, with respect to NATO, obviously, this is a challenging and important time for NATO, and we are very lucky to have General Secretary Stoltenberg at the helm during this time. We had a chance to discuss the situation in Ukraine and the increasingly aggressive posture that Russia has taken, and we affirmed that NATO is the cornerstone not just of transatlantic security, but in many ways is the cornerstone for global security.

In Wales, we were able to not only affirm the intentions of the alliance to uphold its

article 5 obligations, but we also put in place a whole host of measures to reassure front-line states and to put in place what we call the readiness action plan. That is currently being implemented, and I was pleased to hear that not only the United States, but our other NATO allies have been doing what's necessary to make sure that we have positioned the resources and assets necessary to protect all NATO members.

We also reaffirmed the importance of implementing the Minsk agreement and ensuring that Ukraine is able to enjoy the same territorial integrity and sovereignty as any other country. And we'll continue to support Ukraine through the NATO-Ukraine partnership that predates the crisis that occurred both in Crimea and now in eastern Ukraine.

We also had an opportunity to discuss the fact that NATO is involved not just in the fault line of East and West that has traditionally been NATO's concern; NATO is necessarily recognizing a whole range of global challenges, particularly on what we call the southern front. And we are working closely with NATO allies to make sure that we are partnering with other countries to address issues of counterterrorism; making sure that we continue to coordinate effectively in the fight against ISIL, because all 28 NATO members are members of the coalition to support the Iraqi Government against the ISIL fight; to address the challenges that exist in Libya, right across from the Mediterranean, and obviously, there's great concern among a number of NATO members about the spillover effects of a chaotic situation there.

That means increased defense capacity-building with other countries like Iraq or GCC countries that are interested in working with us, as well as the African Union. It also means that we have to think about whether we are deploying and arranging our assets effectively to meet that goal.

And finally, we had a chance to discuss not only how NATO is positioned, but also making sure that we finish the job with respect to Afghanistan. And when we meet in Warsaw later this year, we'll have an opportunity to assess

how we will continue to support the Afghan National Security Forces, now that we have transitioned out of our combat mission, to make sure that they can do the job, that they can secure and protect their own country. That will require resources, training, and assistance from not only the United States, but also from all NATO countries. And I'm very gratified that the General Secretary, I think, has made this an important focus of the work that's to be done.

So we have a busy agenda. There are many challenges. The one thing that we know is that NATO is going to be a central component of us being able to meet those challenges. And as the strongest alliance in the history of the world, we need to make sure that each member country is properly resourcing and committing to the NATO missions that have been set forth. That's the only way that we're going to maintain the kind of collective self-defense that has been the hallmark of peace and prosperity for many, many decades now.

So, Jens.

*Secretary General Stoltenberg.* Thank you. It's great to be back in the White House and to meet with President of the United States, Barack Obama. And, Barack, it's great to meet you again, also because I feel that we have very much developed a common understanding of—that the alliance is facing a new security environment.

And I would like to start to thank you by to—for everything that you personally have done to show leadership in a time where we really need U.S. leadership and also the initiative you took—the European Reassurance Initiative—which you launched a year ago and which has been of great importance when it comes to U.S. presence in Europe. And the U.S. military presence in Europe is the key to provide reassurance to all allies.

And I have traveled around in the alliance, and all the places I have gone, I have met U.S. service men and women. And the message they send is the same: that America stands with Europe, Europe and America stand together, and NATO will defend and protect all allies against any threat.

This is even more important because we are facing new threats, new challenges, coming both from the east and from the south. And as you stated, or as you said, we are adapting, we are responding, we are increasing the readiness and the preparedness of our forces. European allies are taking the lead in establishing a speed of force—[inaudible]—in this joint task force. And in addition, we have the great commitment and the contributions from the United States.

And altogether, this is the biggest reinforcement of our collective defense since the end of the cold war. And we are also setting up command-and-control units in all the eastern allied countries, underlining that NATO is present, NATO is there to protect and defend all allies.

We discussed Crimea, Ukraine, and the importance of the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. That's the path to peace, and I urge all parties to fully implement the Minsk agreements and Russia to stop supporting the separatists and to rid all its forces from eastern Ukraine.

When it comes to the south, I welcome that all NATO allies are contributing to the U.S.-led coalition against ISIL. NATO, in addition, support countries in the region to increase their ability to defend themselves, to create stability. And the aim is to be able to project stability without always deploying large number of forces.

And defense capacity-building is, therefore, key to NATO. We have increased our support for Jordan. We are in the process of developing defense capacity-building for Iraq. And we stand ready to do so also in Libya when the situation on the ground allows.

And of course, we will continue to support Afghanistan also after the end of our current

mission, to continue to support Afghans to be able to take care of their own security also in the future.

All of this will require resources, both for collective defense, for cooperative security, for defense capacity-building. And therefore, they are high on my agenda. The main topic I raise in all capitals I visit is the importance of delivering on the defense investment pledge we made to stop the cuts in defense budgets and to start gradually to increase and to aim at 2 percent.

The U.S. is already well above that, so this is something which is about all the allies. And I spend a lot of time urging them to increase their defense budgets, because we need more resources to be able to deliver what we already promised both when it comes to collective defense and when it comes to cooperative security.

We will meet again at—all allies will meet again at the NATO summit in July in Warsaw, 2016. I'm looking forward to that because that will be a basis for take stock of the progress we have made, but also to chart the course forward. And the key issue is always the unity, the cohesion of the alliance. I am very grateful for your strong personal commitment to the alliance, to transatlantic security. And I'm looking forward to continue to work together with you. All right?

Thank you.

*President Obama.* Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 2048; the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on Termination of the Emergency With Respect to the Risk of Nuclear Proliferation Created by the Accumulation of a Large Volume of Weapons-Usable Fissile Material in the Territory of the Russian Federation

May 26, 2015

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

Consistent with subsection 204(b) of the In-

ternational Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(b), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order that terminates the

national emergency declared in Executive Order 13617 of June 25, 2012, and revokes that Executive Order. I have determined that the situation that gave rise to this national emergency has been significantly altered by the successful implementation of the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation Concerning the Disposition of Highly Enriched Uranium Extracted from Nuclear Weapons, dated February 18, 1993, and related contracts and agreements (collectively, the “HEU Agreements”).

I issued Executive Order 13617 to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States constituted by the risk of nuclear proliferation created by the accumulation of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation. Executive Order 13617 and its predecessor, Executive Order 13159 of June 22, 2000, helped to ensure the preservation and proper and complete transfer to the Government of the Russian Federation of all payments due to it under the HEU Agreements, thereby protecting those assets from attachment, judgment, decree, lien, execution, garnishment, or other judicial process, which would have had the effect of jeopardiz-

ing the full implementation of the HEU Agreements to the detriment of U.S. national security and foreign policy.

With the successful conversion of 500 metric tons of highly enriched uranium extracted from Russian nuclear weapons into low enriched uranium, the transfer to the United States of that low enriched uranium for use as fuel in commercial nuclear reactors, and the completion of all payments to the Russian Federation, there is no further need for the protective blocking imposed by Executive Order 13617. For this reason I have determined that it is necessary to terminate the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13617 and revoke that order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. Executive Order 13695 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

## Statement on the Clean Water Rule *May 27, 2015*

For more than 40 years, American families and businesses across the country have counted on the Clean Water Act to protect the streams and wetlands we rely on for our way of life, from recreation to public health to a growing economy. In recent years, however, court decisions have led to uncertainty and a need for clarification. One in three Americans now gets drinking water from streams lacking clear protection, and businesses and industries that depend on clean water face uncertainty and delay, which costs our economy every day. Too many of our waters have been left vulnerable to pollution. That’s why I called on the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to clear up the confu-

sion and uphold our basic duty to protect these vital resources.

Today, after extensive input from the American public, they’re doing just that: finalizing the Clean Water Rule to restore protection for the streams and wetlands that form the foundation of our Nation’s water resources, without getting in the way of farming, ranching, or forestry. This rule will provide the clarity and certainty businesses and industry need about which waters are protected by the Clean Water Act, and it will ensure polluters who knowingly threaten our waters can be held accountable. My administration has made historic commitments to clean water, from restoring iconic watersheds like the Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes

to preserving more than a thousand miles of rivers and other waters for future generations.

With today's rule, we take another step towards protecting the waters that belong to all of us.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami, Florida May 27, 2015

Well, first of all, let me thank Stephen and Sabina. And they have just been such great friends for such a long time through thick and thin. And I just want to say how much I appreciate everything that they've done, not just for me, but for the Democratic Party—[*inaudible*]*—so we're proud of her and her mom. There's nothing more important than teaching.*

And I want to thank all of you. I see a lot of friends, folks like the Adlers who have supported me and Joe and been there. And I would not have the great privilege and the great honor of serving this country had it not been for some of the folks in this room.

I'm going to be very brief on the front end because I want to spend as much time as possible in a conversation, answer questions or take comments, ideas. Let me just say that we're at a fascinating time in the country's history. Since I took office, we've pulled ourselves out of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. And by almost every economic measure, by every economic measure, we are better off and, in some cases, significantly better off than when I came into office.

Not just the stock market or corporate profits, but unemployment going from 10 percent to 5.4 percent, cutting the deficit by two-thirds, expanding Pell grants, providing 16 million people health care that didn't have it so we've got the lowest uninsured rate since they started keeping track, making sure that more children have access to early childhood education, improvements in reading scores, improvements in high school graduation rates, improvements in college attendance rates, doubling of clean energy. By almost every measure, this country has come bouncing back in ways that a lot of folks in 2009 might not have anticipated.

But what's also true is, is that there is so much work that's left undone, so many things we could be doing to make sure that more peo-

ple have access to the ladders of opportunity that have been the hallmark of this country. If we pass immigration reform, that would not only improve our economy, drive down our deficit, but it would make sure that America continued to be a land—a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants—where we're attracting incredible talent and vitality from every corner of the globe.

If we were serious about rebuilding our infrastructure, we could put people back to work right now, and half a percentage, maybe a full percentage point of GDP growth, and lay the foundation for continued expansion and economic competitiveness for decades to come. If we have a budget that continues to put our money into research so that we are at the cutting edge of innovation, then who knows what new inventions and new industries will be created right here in the United States, putting Americans back to work. If we continue to make investments in job training and early childhood education, making college more affordable, then our young people will be prepared for a 21st-century global economy.

On all these fronts, we've done great work, but we have so much more that we could be doing. And the reason it's not getting done is not because we don't know what to do, it's because we're stuck in Congress on so many of these issues.

And as I made very clear my determination—talked to my staff about several years ago, after it became apparent there were some things that Congress was having trouble getting done, we're not waiting for Congress—we're moving forward on everything from precision medicine to rationalizing where we can our immigration system.

But ultimately, the great genius of this democracy is that the most important office is the office of citizen. We've got to get people involved so that Congress ultimately responds to

an electorate that is expressing our highest and best values around issues like climate change and issues like education and issues like opportunity and poverty.

And I am confident that we're going to be able to do that, but I can't do it without folks like you. Michelle is very pleased that I cannot run—[laughter]—and it is a liberating feeling in the sense that the amount of time I have left, it concentrates the mind, and I think a lot of folks have been surprised at the degree to which we are moving and pushing and trying whatever we can to advance the goals of making sure that every American in this country and every child in this country, if they're willing to work hard, can get ahead, and that that opportunity and prosperity is broad based.

But ultimately, an 8-year span in the life of a country is pretty short. We can get a lot done, but part of what we're also doing is laying the foundation so that we then pass that baton to the next administration and we institutionalize some of the progress that we've been making.

And ultimately, how much staying power these things have depends on a Congress that is thinking about our future. And that's why your presence here is so important. This is not something I'm doing for me, this is something we are doing together. Because it's going to be just the blink of an eye before I am, like you, a citizen, who has returned from office, but still occupies the most important position in a democracy. And together, I want us to make sure that we are doing everything we can to pass on the kind of America that gave us such incredible opportunity and allowed us to be here today.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:40 p.m. at the residence of Stephen H. and Sabine Bittel. In his remarks, he referred to Michael M. Adler, chairman and chief executive officer, Adler Group, Inc., and his wife Judith; and Vice President Joe Biden. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks During a Hurricane Preparedness Briefing at the National Hurricane Center in Miami, Florida

May 28, 2015

Well, I am here at the National Hurricane Center for our annual update on preparations for hurricane season, which begin on Monday. And I want to thank our NOAA Administrator Kathy Sullivan, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, and their teams for helping to lead this briefing.

### *Flooding in Texas and Oklahoma*

Before we talk a little bit about the hurricane season, obviously, our thoughts and prayers are still with the families and the communities that have been devastated by the flooding in Texas and Oklahoma. Lives have been lost, and our condolences go out to the families that have been affected. But there's going to be a lot of work that has to be done for rebuilding.

Craig just informed me, gave me an update on the coordination that we're doing between

Federal and State and local respondents. The coordination is good. They appear to have the assets they need at this stage to respond, but there's going to be a lot of rebuilding. And we as a nation are going to have to help the same way we do anytime that folks are affected by these natural disasters.

And so we will stay in close coordination with them to make sure that our response is quick, that we're cutting through bureaucracy, and that we're helping them recover. And there's still going to be some weather events over the next several days that will potentially make things a little tougher for folks, but I'm confident, obviously, that these communities will ultimately get back on their feet.

### *Hurricane Preparedness*

It does remind us that it is never too early for disaster preparation. Today FEMA released



our national preparedness report, summarizing new progress at a national level, along with submissions from across the country. We are in constant coordination with our State and local partners to make sure that their action plans are up to date.

We're joined today by our State partners who are critical in all this work, because they are the first responders, the people on the ground who are actually making a difference and taking a lot of the information that we get here and funneling that to local communities. So we've got partners from Florida, North Carolina, Virginia; they've done great work to prepare for hurricane season.

The truth is, we are better prepared than ever for the storms of today. The technology has improved, the forecasting has improved, the tools we have to model what may happen with something like storm surge has all gotten a lot better. And so not only do we have better information, but we have new mechanisms to disseminate it.

We're also focusing on making ourselves more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate that are having significant effects on both the pace and intensity of some of these storms. The best climate scientists in the world are telling us that extreme weather events like hurricanes are likely to become more powerful. When you combine stronger storms with rising seas, that's a recipe for more devastating floods.

Climate change didn't cause Hurricane Sandy, but it might have made it stronger. The fact that the sea level in New York Harbor is about a foot higher than a century ago certainly made the storm surge worse. And that's why we are seeking to work with Congress to make sure that we are focused on resilience and the steps we can take to fortify our infrastructure in these communities. We're fortunate to have a couple of outstanding Members of Congress here on a bipartisan basis. Congressman Carlos Curbelo and Congressman Ted Deutch both represent Florida and obviously have a shared interest in making sure that we are building the kind of resilience that we may need.

Miami, for example, already has to spend hundreds of millions of dollars just to adapt its water system to the more frequent flooding that it's already experiencing from rising seas. That's why I put forward America's first Climate Action Plan 2 years ago. I called for a climate resilience toolkit to help families and business owners in communities plan for the impacts of a changing climate, and that toolkit is now online at [toolkit.climate.gov](http://toolkit.climate.gov).

Responding to a hurricane is a team effort. From the Federal to the local levels, we all have a role to play. So I encourage every American, no matter where you live, to check out [ready.gov](http://ready.gov)—[ready.gov](http://ready.gov)—where you will find information on making plans for your family, building an emergency supply kit, knowing what to do when disaster strikes. This is something that Administrator Fugate has been like a broken record about every single year, but he's absolutely right that the best preparedness is the preparedness that's being taken by individual families, homeowners, business owners. If they have a plan, if they have ideas about how they will respond to warnings, and they're paying attention, then the collective effort obviously goes a lot more smoothly.

Finally, I just want to thank all the hard-working public servants who help America prepare for and respond to and recover from emergencies. Sometimes, we take for granted what our public servants do. Sometimes, we spend a lot of time griping about government, and we spend a lot of time complaining about folks that we're not seeing and bureaucrats and don't really appreciate that basic information, like what the weather is like, when storms come, how we're going to respond. That all involves our public servants at the Federal, State, and local levels. And they may be in the background until a disaster strikes, and suddenly, we realize how much we depend on them.

And so I think now is a good time for us to remind ourselves and make sure we're properly resourcing folks who, in dire straits, we really depend on to make sure we're safe, our families are safe, and that we can recover from really devastating attacks by Mother Nature.

And I also want to thank our military, our National Guard, for the work that they do. But our first responders and our folks at the local level, they've been doing some outstanding work.

I really want to lift up in particular some of the men and women who deploy on search and rescue, not just here domestically, but internationally. We've just had a couple of teams made up of expert, finely trained, local first responders who essentially volunteer. They just

came back from Nepal, where they saved a couple of lives. In the past, they have saved lives in places like Haiti, after the devastating earthquake there. They've been working around the clock in Texas. They are always ready to do the selfless work that we should all be very, very proud of. So thank you so much for the outstanding work that you do.

All right, everybody, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch and an Exchange With Reporters May 29, 2015

*The President.* Attorney General Lynch and I just discussed a wide range of issues in the regular meetings that I have with my—some of my top Cabinet members. And we discussed issues of cybersecurity. We discussed the important role that the FBI and the Justice Department play in our counterterrorism efforts, as well as discussing issues like community policing and human trafficking.

But I thought this would be a good opportunity before we break for the weekend to just remind everyone that on Sunday at midnight, a whole bunch of authorities that we use in order to prevent terrorist attacks in this country expire. Now, fortunately, the House of Representatives was able to put forward a piece of legislation, the USA FREEDOM Act, that received overwhelming bipartisan support. And what it does is not only continue authorities that currently exist and are not controversial: for example, the capacity of the FBI or our other law enforcement agencies to use what's called a roving wiretap. So if we know that there is an individual who—where there's probable cause, that that individual might be engaged in a terrorist act, but is switching cell phones, we can move from cell phone to cell phone. Not a controversial provision. Those authorities would be continued.

What the USA FREEDOM Act also does is, it reforms the bulk data collection program that had been of significant concern and that I

promised we could reform over a year and a half ago. So we now have Democrats and Republicans in both the House and the Senate who think this is the right way to go. We've got our law enforcement and national security teams and civil liberties proponents and advocates who say this is the right way to go. The only thing that's standing in the way is a handful of Senators who are resisting these reforms despite law enforcement and the IC saying let's go ahead and get this done.

So we've only got a few days. These authorities expire on Sunday at midnight. And I don't want us to be in a situation in which, for a certain period of time, those authorities go away, and suddenly, we're dark and, heaven forbid, we've got a problem where we could have prevented a terrorist attack or apprehended someone who was engaged in dangerous activity, but we didn't do so simply because of inaction in the Senate. So I have indicated to Leader McConnell and other Senators I expect them to take action and take action swiftly. That's what the American people deserve.

And this is not an issue in which we have to choose between security and civil liberties; this is an issue in which we, in fact, have struck the right balance and shaped a piece of legislation that everybody can support. So let's go ahead and get it done. All right?

Q. Mr. President—

Thank you.

May 29 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

*Former Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Dennis Hastert/International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) Corruption Allegations/Iraq*

Q. Do you have a reaction to the indictment of Speaker Hastert and to the FIFA scandal?

*The President.* Thank you very much. Great to see you guys. Thank you.

Q. Any reaction to Iraq?

Q. Rahm Emanuel says he is saddened by the indictment of Speaker Hastert. Are you saddened by it?

*The President.* Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:23 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 2048. A reporter referred to Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago, IL.

## The President's Weekly Address

May 30, 2015

Hi, everybody. As President and Commander in Chief, my greatest responsibility is the safety of the American people. And in our fight against terrorists, we need to use every effective tool at our disposal, both to defend our security and to protect the freedoms and civil liberties enshrined in our Constitution.

But tomorrow—Sunday at midnight—some important tools we use against terrorists will expire. That's because Congress has not renewed them and because legislation that would, the USA FREEDOM Act, is stuck in the Senate. I want to be very clear about what this means.

Today, when investigating terrorist networks, our national security professionals can seek a court order to obtain certain business records. Our law enforcement professionals can seek a roving wiretap to keep up with terrorists when they switch cell phones. We can seek a wiretap on so-called lone wolves, suspected terrorists who may not be directly tied to a terrorist group. These tools are not controversial. Since 9/11, they've been renewed numerous times. FBI Director James Comey says they are "essential" and that losing them would "severely" impact terrorism investigations. But if Congress doesn't act by midnight tomorrow, these tools go away.

The USA FREEDOM Act also accomplishes something I called for a year and a half ago: It ends the bulk metadata program—the bulk collection of phone records—as it currently exists and puts in place new reforms. The Gov-

ernment will no longer hold these records, telephone providers will. The act also includes other changes to our surveillance laws, including more transparency, to help build confidence among the American people that your privacy and civil liberties are being protected. But if Congress doesn't act tomorrow, at midnight, these reforms will be in jeopardy as well.

It doesn't have to be this way. The USA FREEDOM Act reflects ideas from privacy advocates, our private sector partners, and our national security experts. It already passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support: Republicans and Democrats. That doesn't happen very often. A majority of the Senate—Republicans and Democrats—have voted to move it forward.

So what's the problem? A small group of Senators is standing in the way. And, unfortunately, some folks are trying to use this debate to score political points. But this shouldn't and can't be about politics. This is a matter of national security. Terrorists like Al Qaida and ISIL aren't suddenly going to stop plotting against us at midnight tomorrow. And we shouldn't surrender the tools that help keep us safe. It would be irresponsible. It would be reckless. We shouldn't allow it to happen.

So today I'm calling on Americans to join me in speaking with one voice to the Senate: Put the politics aside. Put our national security first. Pass the USA FREEDOM Act now. And let's protect the security and civil liberties of every American. Thanks very much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:55 a.m. on May 29 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 30. In the address, the President referred to H.R. 2048; and the Islamic State of

Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 29, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 30.

## Statement on the Death of Joseph R. “Beau” Biden III *May 30, 2015*

Michelle and I are grieving tonight. Beau Biden was a friend of ours. His beloved family—Hallie, Natalie, and Hunter—are friends of ours. And Joe and Jill Biden are as good as friends get.

Beau took after Joe. He studied the law like his dad, even choosing the same law school. He chased a life of public service like his dad, serving in Iraq and as Delaware’s attorney general. Like his dad, Beau was a good, big-hearted, devoutly Catholic, and deeply faithful man, who made a difference in the lives of all he touched. And he lives on in their hearts.

But for all that Beau Biden achieved in his life, nothing made him prouder, nothing made him happier, nothing claimed a fuller focus of his love and devotion than his family. Just like his dad.

Joe is one of the strongest men we’ve ever known. He’s as strong as they come, and nothing matters to him more than family. It’s one of the things we love about him. And it is a testament to Joe and Jill—to who they are—that Beau lived a life that was full, a life that mat-

tered, a life that reflected their reverence for family.

The Bidens have more family than they know: in the Delaware they love, in the Senate Joe reveres, across this country that he has served for more than 40 years. And they have a family right here in the White House, where hundreds of hearts ache tonight: for Hallie, Natalie, and Hunter; for Joe and for Jill; for Beau’s brother Hunter, his sister Ashley; and for the entire Biden clan.

“I have believed the best of every man,” wrote the poet William Butler Yeats, “And find that to believe it is enough to make a bad man show him at his best or even a good man swing his lantern higher.” Beau Biden believed the best of us all. For him, and for his family, we swing our lanterns higher. Michelle and I humbly pray for the good Lord to watch over Beau Biden and to protect and comfort his family here on Earth.

NOTE: The statement referred to Hallie O. Biden, wife of Joseph R. “Beau” Biden III, and their children R. Hunter and Natalie P. Biden.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands *June 1, 2015*

*President Obama.* Well, it is a great honor to welcome His and Her Majesties, Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima. They have been wonderful friends to myself and Michelle and the girls personally. I want to thank, once again, the people of the Netherlands for the incredible hospitality they had shown us in the past, including most recently during the Nuclear Security Summit that took place in Amsterdam and The Hague.

We have 400 years of history between our two countries. In Europe, that doesn’t mean a lot—[laughter]—but in the United States, that is as old as it gets. And so the Dutch are some of our oldest and most precious allies. That continues to this day.

We had the opportunity to discuss the shared work that we do through NATO in making sure that the transatlantic relationship stays strong. We discussed the continuing

challenges in Ukraine and the importance of making sure that the Minsk agreement moves forward. And I continued to make the solemn commitment to support the Dutch in the investigation of the Malaysian Airlines tragedy and to make sure that not only is the truth brought forward, but there's accountability for what took place.

We discussed our shared concerns in other parts of the world, including in the Middle East, where Dutch troops work alongside U.S. and other coalition members to help defeat ISIL and to stabilize Iraq.

We talked about the excellent work that the United States partnered with the Dutch when it comes to Ebola and the work that still remains to be done around establishing the kind of health infrastructure that's going to be so important to preventing diseases in the future.

I was particularly impressed with the outstanding work that Her Majesty the Queen is doing with the United Nations around inclusive financing. One of the things that we know is that all around the world there is enormous human potential that so often is locked up because of the difficulty of accessing capital. And the creative work that Her Majesty is doing in providing microloans and new mechanisms for credit can make an enormous difference, particularly, I should add, when it is provided equally to women, who so often are even facing greater challenges in accessing capital.

And we discussed the ongoing work that we'll be doing to build on the progress that's been made over the last several years through the Nuclear Security Summit and the importance of nonproliferation.

So whether it's in Afghanistan, whether it's in public health issues, whether it's in Europe and the need for us to maintain solidarity and uphold the principles that have been central to building a unified and peaceful Europe, the Netherlands has consistently been one of our greatest allies. And I think for His Majesty the King and Queen to have gone to Arlington and to honor not only the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but to meet some of that greatest generation who helped to liberate Europe and the

Netherlands and to usher in this era of peace and prosperity, is extraordinarily significant.

So many of our World War II veterans during this 70-year anniversary are at the twilight of their lives, and for them to hear directly from such important people how much of a difference they made and to get that recognition is truly significant. So I'm grateful, Your Majesty, for that and even more grateful for the continuing friendship that the Dutch people have shown the United States of America.

*King Willem-Alexander.* Well, thank you very much, Mr. President, for your warm words of welcome here. On behalf of my wife and myself, we're very thankful to be back in the White House. Great to see you again since last year at the Nuclear Security Summit.

First of all, I'd like to express my sympathies to the people in Texas and Oklahoma who are suffering in such severe weather conditions right now. The floodings are terrible. The victims and families are going through a rough time. And if we can help, as the Netherlands, of course we are willing to help.

Second of all, my heartfelt condolences for the Vice President Biden for a second big tragedy in his life, now losing a son while he is serving as best he can as a Vice President here in the United States.

The main reason for our visit obviously was to thank the United States for what you've done for us 70 years ago. Especially the 82d and 101 Airborne have played a major role in liberating our country, giving—taking away the Nazi oppression and giving us back justice and rule of law and freedom. And ever since that moment, we are grateful. And as long as the Netherlands exist, we will be grateful for the United States for the—giving that to us.

This morning, at Arlington, the wreath-laying ceremony, we honored those people that gave their utmost, their life, for our country. And speaking with the veterans and the Rosies was very impressive for us: veterans that have liberated my country, the Rosies that took the place in the industry here and that kept this country running so that the men could fight on the other side of the ocean. Very, very impressive, I must say. And once again, U.S.A., thank you very much for liberating us.

Those values that you stood for at the time and that were not available to us and we regained, we now stand shoulder by shoulder fighting ISIL—“shoulder by shoulder,” meaning a small shoulder and a big shoulder. [Laughter] But still, we stand next to each other, and we have the same values we want to defend facing ISIL.

So having said that, the next part of our visit will be also looking back at the Dutch history. First, Hudson in nineteen—1609 and then the first salutes to the American flag from the Island of Statia in November 1776. When the *Andrew Doria* sailed there, the Dutch saluted the flag. And ever since, we’ve had a great bond with your country. Four and a half million Americans are from Dutch descent. You are the largest investor in our country; we are the third largest in your country. So this is really worthwhile to continue our relationship, and that’s what we are working on these days.

We’re going to Michigan—to Holland, Michigan, to Grand Rapids—to see a lot of these descendants, and we’re going to Chicago, where the—where we hope to have a party—your hometown, obviously. But also the origin of House—the House of Orange is hoping to see some good music there at Millennium Park and also look at some serious topics as healthy aging, urban farming, so all in all, a lot of things that we can learn from each other.

But once again, Mr. President, thank you very much for receiving my wife and myself here. It is great to see you again. All the best of luck for United States.

*President Obama.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. King Willem-Alexander referred to Joseph R. “Beau” Biden III, son of Vice President Joe Biden, who died on May 30.

## Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Hall Meeting With Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Fellows June 1, 2015

*The President.* Well, thank you so much, Zin Mar, for your introduction and for your example and your commitment to build a free and open press in Myanmar and all the hope that you represent. Please give her a big round of applause. She did an outstanding job.

Well, to all of you, welcome to Washington. Welcome to the White House. And while I know that you’ve been here a few weeks, let me just say again, on behalf of the American people, welcome to the United States of America. We are thrilled to have you here.

I’m not going to give a long speech, because what I really want to do is have a conversation with you like the one that I had when I was in Myanmar. So this is a town hall meeting; the less I speak, the more questions you get to ask. [Laughter] But I do want to take a few minutes to explain why I believe so strongly in the work that brings us together today and why your presence here is so important.

I think all of you know I have a special attachment to Southeast Asia. As a boy, I lived in Jakarta. My mother spent years working in villages to help women improve their lives. So Southeast Asia helped shape who I am and how I see the world. And as President, I’ve made it a pillar of my foreign policy to make sure that the United States is more deeply engaged in the Asia-Pacific region, including Southeast Asia. And I want to welcome the Ambassadors from across ASEAN. Thank you for being here and for your partnership. Give them a big round of applause.

So I’ve deepened America’s ties with Southeast Asia because your region is critical to our shared future. There are more than 600 million people who live in the ASEAN countries, and you reflect an incredible diversity of faiths and ethnic groups and backgrounds and cultures. And that diversity has to be celebrated, and it has to be protected. We have incredible economic engines like Singapore. We’ve got growing economies like

the Philippines and Vietnam and Malaysia. And we can see growth that is lifting people out of poverty and creating more jobs and trade and opportunity for all of our countries.

We've seen a historic democratic transition in Indonesia. We've got elections coming later this year in Myanmar. Communities in Laos and Brunei are working for development that's sustainable and protecting the environment. And we're seeing new commitments to the education of young women and girls, as is true in Cambodia. The people of Thailand played a critical role in the global response to the earthquake in Nepal. And we are mindful of the King of Thailand's health issues lately, and we wish him the best, and our hopes and prayers are with him. So Southeast Asia is stepping up. It's on the move.

And today, America's relationship with the region is stronger than ever. I'm proud to be the first American President to meet regularly with all 10 ASEAN leaders. I will continue to do so until I am no longer President.

We've strengthened our alliances, including with the Philippines. We've forged new partnerships with Indonesia and Malaysia and Vietnam. Our trade with ASEAN has been growing. We're pursuing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We're working with ASEAN to bind the region more closely together and confront shared challenges and uphold international rules and norms, including freedom of navigation, to—and to ensure that disputes are resolved peacefully. At the moment, several of our nations are working to rescue desperate Rohingya migrants who are at sea, which reflects our commitment to the security and dignity and human rights of every human being.

But despite all the work I've been doing and the Ambassadors have been doing, building these stronger ties is not just the work of government. They have to be rooted in partnerships between our people and especially young people like you.

All across Southeast Asia, almost two-thirds of the population is under 35 years old. So this is a young part of the world. Technology is giving you more power to communicate and to organize like never before. In Vietnam, tens of

millions of people are connected on Facebook. Across the region, you are civil society leaders working for democracy and human rights and religious tolerance. You are entrepreneurs who are turning your ideas into new businesses, activists fighting for the environment and against climate change. And that's the power that young people have and the spirit of optimism and idealism that you represent. So you're inspiring to me. And I've made it clear that America wants to be your partner. We want to help you succeed.

So, 2 years ago, we launched the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative—YSEALI—to help empower young people like you, to give you more of the skills and resources and networks that you need to turn your ideas into action. And since then, we've offered workshops, online networking, exchanges, professional development, hands-on training. And today, YSEALI network includes nearly 35,000 young people like you.

Last year in Myanmar, at the town hall meeting that Zin Mar mentioned, I announced our fellowship program to bring young leaders from across the region to the United States to help develop their skills. And for this first class of 75, more than 1,000 people applied. The competition was intense. Today I'm proud to welcome you as the first class of YSEALI Fellows. We're very proud of you. And I've had a chance to read about some of you and the amazing things that you've been doing. And I suspect that Niema Remejoso, from the Philippines—there she is right there—[laughter]—she spoke for a lot of you. She said, "Am I dreaming, or is this really happening?" So it's really happening. [Laughter]

You come from all 10 ASEAN nations, from capital cities and rural towns. You represent different faiths and backgrounds and different beliefs. Obviously, there are men and women here—in fact, the majority are women—[laughter]—because one of the best measures of a country's success is whether it empowers women and girls. And you're all bound together by a common belief that you have the talent and the drive and the power to improve the lives of your fellow human beings.

So for the last 5 weeks, you've been all across America. You've experienced State legislatures and city councils. You've seen how our day-to-day democracy works. You've worked at nonprofits, learning how to organize and advocate for change. You've interned in some American companies, seeing how to build and manage a business. And I want to thank all of our leaders and partners who are here—we've got universities and academic institutions, we've got businesses—all who have been very generous in their support of this overall process.

So you've been experiencing America. Some of you were very lucky and had a chance to go to my home State of Hawaii. [Laughter] I heard—I had that some of you tried to hula dance. [Laughter] Some of you went to my hometown of Chicago, and you saw American ingenuity at its best, including, I hear that you saw ATMs that give cupcakes. [Laughter]

And I also know that Americans have learned from you as well. They—you shared your culture and traditions and foods. You discovered American foods like Jell-O. [Laughter] I hear somebody had Jell-O, which, I was very excited about that. And the friendships and the understanding that you have forged will help to bring our countries together for a long time.

And soon, you'll return home. Each of you has developed a project, an action plan, and you'll take what you've learned here and put it into practice. And we're going to be with you during this process as you build your ventures, expand your networks, and—mentoring young people that are coming behind you. We're going to welcome 500 fellows like you every single year. So this may be the end of your visit to America, but you've really begun this process of building partnerships that will last a lifetime.

And we want you to make sure that you are realizing your dreams. I just want to take a couple of examples. We've got Seth Suonvisal. Where's Seth? Here's Seth. [Laughter] So in Cambodia, Seth works with Parliament. So in Tulsa, he witnessed city government at work, the legislative process in Tulsa, Oklahoma. And, Seth, we're proud to be your partner as

you strive to ensure that governments deliver for all of the Cambodian people.

We have Muchamad Dafip. Where's Muchamad? There he is. He is an advocate for the environment in Indonesia. *Apa kabar?* And at the East-West Center—

[At this point, two audience members stood up.]

There aren't two of you, is there? [Laughter] The—so at the East-West Center in Hawaii, he learned new ways to empower citizens and effect change. So we're proud to be your partner. Together, we can promote sustainable development and help our—help the next generation meet the urgent challenges of climate change.

We've got Khine Muang—there's Khine, and—is a doctor in Myanmar where she offers free surgeries to children for cleft palates and lips and gives them a new smile and new confidence. So we're very proud. At the Oklahoma University School of Community Medicine, she focused on ways to expand outreach and free clinics. And we are so proud to be your partner, working for the health and dignity of children across Myanmar. Although, I have to say that you are the youngest doctor I've ever seen. [Laughter] I mean, she looks like she's 14. It's very impressive. So thank you.

And where is Pern Phansiri? There's Pern, from Thailand, a tireless fighter against human trafficking. And at the city manager's office in Lee's Summit, Missouri, she saw how a community takes a comprehensive approach to social services. So we're proud to be your partner in standing up for the rights of women and children. We have to end the outrage of human trafficking, and we so appreciate the work that you do.

So this just gives you an example of the incredible talent and commitment that these young people represent. And I want to close with a quick story that captures the spirit of our work together.

Thongvone Sosamphan is here from Laos. Where's—please, stand up. So the—she's here from Laos. In Atlanta, she visited the memorial and center honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And she was struck by one of



Dr. King's quotes, which says, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

And that prompted her to think about the true meaning of leadership. And she wrote something very beautiful that I want everybody to hear. "Leadership is inside you," she said. "Everyone can be a leader, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to lead. You don't need to know more than the others. All you need is a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love." Well, that's pretty good.

So that's what I see in all of you. That's why I believe so strongly that you're going to keep answering that question Dr. King asked: What are you doing for others? That's why I'm confident that all of you will be extraordinary leaders. Already, you're doing great work in your communities and your countries, with hearts full of grace and souls generated by love. And you will continue to have a friend and partner in the United States of America.

So we are very, very proud of you. And with that, let's—I want to hear from you, both questions or you can tell me a story about the exciting food that you've had—[laughter]—in all across the country.

So we have some microphones in the audience, right? And what I'll do is, I'll just call on people, and I'll—I'm going to go boy, girl, boy, girl so that it's very fair. [Laughter] All right? So we'll start with this young lady here. Please introduce yourself and tell us where you're from.

#### *Malaysia/Democratic Governance*

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is—[inaudible]. I am an elected representative from Malaysia. My question to you is, what is your view on the democracy in Malaysia with the recent jailing of Anwar Ibrahim, the opposition leader, and the crackdown on the oppositions? Thank you.

*The President.* Well, Malaysia has a history of democracy that has to be preserved. And I have a very good relationship with Prime Minister Najib, and we are close partners and cooperating on a whole host of issues.

I think that Malaysia, like all our countries—not just ASEAN countries, but countries here in the United States—have to recognize that democracy is not just elections, but it's how open and transparent and accountable government is between elections. And it's important that free speech, freedom of the press, an independent judiciary, the right to assemble peacefully—that all those rights are observed to make democracy work. So I—as a general rule, I don't comment on even individual cases in this country, much less some—another country, because I think it's important for the legal system to work.

But I do know that it is important if an opposition leader who is well known has been charged with a crime, that that process of how that is adjudicated and how open it is and how clear the evidence is, that that is all subject to scrutiny. Because what you don't want is a situation in which the legitimacy of the process is questioned. That has an adverse impact on democracy as a whole. And I think we all have to guard against making sure that there's not a chilling effect on potential opposition in government.

So as I always point out, democracy is hard. I mean, I think that many of the things that are said about me are terribly unfair. [Laughter] But the reason American democracy has survived for so long is because people—even if they're wrong—have a right to say what they think. George Washington, our first President, he complained terribly about some of the foolishness that was said about him. But part of the reason he is considered one of our greatest Presidents is because he set an example of recognizing that if democracy was to work, then you had to respect the rights of even those people who you disagreed most with, because otherwise, there's no way that a democracy can flourish over the long term.

So these are things that I said publicly when I was in Myanmar. I had—when I was in Malaysia, rather. I had an opportunity to meet with some community activists and civil society leaders there. And this is something that I say everywhere we go. And it's important for America to recognize that we're not perfect, ei-

ther, and so we have to make sure that we are constantly seeing, how do we improve our democracy? I mean, the amounts of money, for example, that are involved in our elections these days is disturbing because it makes it seem as if a few people have more influence in the democracy than the many.

And so I will continue to speak out about these issues, even with friends. Maybe sometimes we are even more willing to say something when it's friends because we know that they can do better. Good. Thank you.

Yes, sir.

*Association of Southeast Asian Nations-U.S. Trade/Asian Infrastructure Bank/China/Deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia/Sustainable Development*

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My name is—[inaudible]. I am from Indonesia. I am working with Ministry of Finance. My YSEALI theme is economic empowerment. My question is, what is your expectation about economic relationship between United States and ASEAN countries in the future? Thank you.

*The President.* Well, we already have a very strong economic relationship. As I pointed out, this is a region that is growing fast. It is—it has a big population. You have very hard-working people, entrepreneurial people. I expect it will continue to grow. And the United States wants to be a partner in all sorts of ways.

Trade is the most obvious and important relationship, economically. And so one of the reasons why I think the Trans-Pacific Partnership is so important is because it sets up a set of principles to ensure fair trade between countries. It calls for higher labor standards for all countries, higher environmental standards for all countries. It makes sure that countries are being treated fairly—companies are being treated fairly when they are operating in a foreign market.

And there's the potential, I think, if we get this right and completed in the next few months, to be able to ensure that the United States and ASEAN countries that already have a massive amount of trade, that that's able to increase and that there's more opportunity for

everybody. But it's at a high standard rather than a low standard.

Part of the goal for ASEAN countries, most of them are now entering into a stage of development where they don't want to just be sending raw materials to someplace else to have them developed, they want to be creating value starting their own businesses, making sure that they are part of the 21st-century economy. And that requires upgrading skills, education for their populations. We think we can be helpful in those areas.

And we want to encourage high educational levels in ASEAN countries because then it's less likely that workers are exploited. And that means then that you're competing with us because you have the best ideas and the best products, as opposed to just you have the cheapest labor. And if all that ASEAN countries are offering are cheap labor, then what happens is, U.S. workers get hurt and you don't necessarily see an improvement in standards of living for those ASEAN countries.

If everybody is operating at a higher level, then we're all competing on an even playing field, and over time, that will result in more growth and more development in ASEAN countries. But I think it—skills training for—is the most important thing. I think that the power of the Internet to access markets and ideas will be particularly important for ASEAN countries.

Infrastructure is something that still needs to get done. I think there is still underinvestment of infrastructure in that region. I know there was some controversy a while back because China wanted to start an Asia infrastructure bank; we haven't yet signed on to participate.

I want to be very clear. We actually want China to invest in infrastructure in that region. We want to make sure that the investments are actually good for the people in those countries, which means transparency in terms of how decisions are made at this new bank. But we'll continue with the Asian Development Bank and World Bank and other institutions, try to encourage not only investment in human capital, but also the infrastructure that's needed.

And finally, I think sustainability is going to be critical. I worry about the great forests of Indonesia and Malaysia. If those all just become palm oil plantations and deforestation continues at the same pace it has, then the prospects of additional accelerated climate change are very powerful, not to mention the loss of species and biodiversity. The oceans, if you get overfishing, that's a problem; pollution. Given how populated these areas are, it's very important that economic development ties in with sustainable development. Otherwise, I think we'll all have problems. Good.

Okay. [Laughter] That's good. So yes, young lady right here.

*Q. Mabuhay.*

*The President. Mabuhay.*

*The President's Advice to Young Political Leaders*

*Q. Mabuhay, Mr. President. I'm—[inaudible]—a city council member of Davao City, by Philippines. There are a handful—or a there are a few elected officials, some are YSEALI fellows. I really would like to know what is your word of advice for a young, budding political leader, young legislator, elected official like me in a developing democracy like the Philippines? Thank you.*

*The President. Oh, that's great. Well, the—I think—my first advice is don't be shy, and obviously, you're okay. [Laughter] I think you're going to do great.*

I think that when I think about my own political career, when I look at other political careers that I admire, I think the most important thing is to have a sense of principles and why you're in public service. I think sometimes people want to be in public service just because they like seeing their name up in lights, they like being important. And that's a bad reason to go into politics. You should be, like, an actress or a singer or make a lot of money.

But if you're going into politics and public service, there's only one good reason to do it, and that is because you want to help people. And you should know what it is that you stand for and what you believe in. It doesn't mean that you won't have to compromise. It doesn't mean that you might not change your mind

about an issue as you go forward and you learn more and you have more experience. But you should have something inside of you that says, these are the things that are really important to me that I will not compromise on, all right?

So for me, throughout my political career, even before I was in politics and I was just working as a community organizer, I knew that I wanted to work to create more opportunity for all people; that my orientation was always, how does this help the poor or the marginalized or somebody who has less opportunity than me? How is this going to help them if they work hard to get ahead?

I know that one of the important principles for me has always been treating everybody fairly. So whether that's women or people of different races or different religious faiths or different sexual orientations, that part—one of my core principles is that I will never engage in a politics in which I'm trying to divide people or make them less than me because they look different or have a different religion. That's a core principle. I—that's not something I would violate, right?

So, if you have a clear view of what you stand for, then as you move forward, you'll have setbacks. There will be times where you didn't succeed. There will be times where you're frustrated. There will be times—you might even lose an election sometimes. But at least, you'll know every morning when you wake up and you look at yourself in the mirror, I know who I am and why I'm doing what I'm doing. And I think those are the people who eventually end up having successful careers because people sense that integrity and that leadership. Even if they don't agree with you, at least they know you believe in something.

And unfortunately, too many politicians, they're just climbing the ladder, but they don't know why. And when they get there, then they're not very effective leaders. Or they become much more subject to the temptations of corruption because all they're worried about is I want to hang on to my power, and I'm willing to give up anything in order to stay in power and do anything to stay in power. And that's when you lose your way.

Right? You have to be willing to lose something for your principles. You have to be willing to lose an election because you think that there's something that's more important than you just winning an election. And if you do that now—but you have to—you should try to win. I'm not saying you should try to lose. [Laughter] But you have to stand for something. And that's my most important advice.

The gentleman in the gray suit right there. Yes, you.

*ASEAN-U.S. Relations/South China Sea Territorial Disputes/Burma*

*Q. Xin chào kahm uhn.* I say in Vietnamese. Thank you. I am—[inaudible]. I come from Vietnam. Like many others, I look forward to see you and the First Lady visiting my country, Vietnam, in the near future. I have a question. Mr. President, what do you expect the young people in the Southeast Asian countries doing in dealing with the current challenges to the peace, stability, respect to international law like the—[inaudible]—while promoting the cooperation between the 10 countries with others, including especially with the United States? Thank you.

*The President.* Especially with? I'm sorry, the last part?

*Q.* Especially with the United States.

*The President.* Oh, with the United States. Well, look, the—I think that I've seen already significant progress with ASEAN countries over the last 6 years that I've been attending the ASEAN meetings and the East Asia Summit. And I think initially the meetings would oftentimes just be symbolic, and there would be a lot of pleasantries and a lot of meetings and cultural events. But we don't—we didn't always have an agenda. And I think one of the things that you've started to see is people working much more concretely on, what are we trying to accomplish here? How do we develop more capacity, for example, in the region around disaster relief so that if, heaven forbid, there's another typhoon of the sort that we saw in the Philippines, or if in fact, that we see some other natural tragedy, that all the countries' assets can be brought to bear, and we've

done the training ahead of time to know who can help and how they can help?

I think the—trying to work on coming up with standards around maritime law is a big challenge. And obviously, there's significant tension right now between many of the ASEAN countries and China, as well as the United States with China, around the South China Sea and how those issues are going to be resolved. ASEAN has been very constructive in trying to put together a code of conduct that all countries should abide by so that disputes around maritime boundaries are resolved through law and a impartial process, rather than just based on who's the biggest. And that, I think, is going to be very important. ASEAN can play an important role in those areas.

Environmental issues I've already mentioned. This is a very fast growing region, and it is important to make sure that there's a lot of cooperation between countries because small fisheries, et cetera—those don't always observe national boundaries. And so working together, you can accomplish more.

And then, human rights issues and democracy issues, reinforcing good habits among the countries is very important. I think it's fair to say that the elections that will be taking place in Myanmar would not have happened if it hadn't been for the good example that Indonesia set with its transition and other ASEAN countries showing the path from military rule towards democracy and how, through all the lessons that have been learned, that could be accomplished. And that, I think, created more space within Myanmar to—and President Thein Sein to feel that this is possible.

So part of the goal here is to make sure that each country is reinforcing the best habits and laws and observing human rights and being critical when one country slips, but in a constructive way that allows for a path to improvement. And I think ASEAN can do that uniquely.

And the United States will be a partner. We have, obviously, bilateral relationships with each of these countries, but we also want to be a partner with the group as a whole to encourage this cooperative model going forward.

Okay. [Laughter] Young lady right there, yes. Uh-huh.

*The President's Accomplishments*

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm—[inaudible]. I'm from Indonesia. I work as a data analyst in the World Bank Indonesia Country Office. My YSEALI theme is civic engagement. My question to you: Now that your second term in the office is about to end, how do you want the world to remember you? Thank you. [Laughter]

*The President.* Fondly, I hope. [Laughter] I still have 20 months in office—[laughter]—so I've got a lot of work still to do before I can start thinking about looking backwards. I'm still very much focused on what's in front of me.

But obviously, there are things that I've been proud of. When I came into office, the United States and the world was going through a terrible economic crisis, the worst, really, since the 1930s. And it was hard, but we ended up avoiding a terrible depression. And within a year, the economy was growing again. Here in the United States now, we're back to the precrisis employment levels. Our auto industry was saved. But also, internationally, we averted a much worse crisis because of, in part, the leadership the United States showed, along with international institutions and central banks managing—that was very important. That's an important legacy for me.

I think that the work that I've done to provide health insurance for people here in the United States and to provide more educational opportunity is consistent with the principles that I talked about, the reason I got into politics.

Internationally, we've reinvigorated diplomacy in a whole variety of ways. People don't remember, when I came into office, the United States in world opinion ranked below China and just barely above Russia. And today, once again, the United States is the most respected country on Earth. And part of that, I think, is because of the work that we did to reengage the world and say that we want to work with you as partners with mutual interest and mutu-

al respect. It's on that basis that we were able to end two wars while still focusing on the very real threat of terrorism and to try to work with our partners on the ground in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. It's the reason why we've— are moving in the direction of normalizing relations with Cuba. The nuclear deal that we're trying to negotiate with Iran. Our efforts to help encourage democracy in Myanmar.

I think the people of Myanmar deserve the credit for this new opening. But my visit there didn't hurt in trying to reinforce the possibilities of freedom for 40 million people. And so that direct engagement, the work that we've done to build and strengthen international organizations—including on issues like public health, and the fight against Ebola is just the most recent example of that—I think we've been able to put our international relationships on a very strong footing that allows us then to work more cooperatively with other countries moving forward to meet the important challenges ahead.

But I've still got a lot of work to do. So maybe in 18 months, I'll check back with you, and I'll let you know. [Laughter]

Okay. All right. Gentleman right here with the sash.

*Burma/Singapore/Economic Development*

Q. Hello, Mr. President Obama. I'm from Burma. And firstly, I would like to say hello on behalf of my family. And my question is, I'm working tourism business in Burma, and my question is this: What do you see critical areas in where the U.S. can contribute economic development in Burma? Thank you so much.

*The President.* Well, Burma, Myanmar, it lost a lot of time over the last 40 years because of the very tight controls on the economy and the discouragement of entrepreneurship and new businesses. I mean, part of the reason why I was so struck when I traveled to Myanmar was, it reminded me of when I first arrived in Indonesia back in 1967, whereas when I go to Jakarta now or Singapore or Bangkok, it looks completely different. This looked like the past.

So there's a lot of catching up to do. The good news is, though, countries that are still at

those early stages of development, they can grow very fast because there's so much pent-up energy and opportunity. And I think the most important thing is going to be establishing rule of law and systems and practices where if you start a business, you can feel confident that you don't have to pay a hundred bribes and you don't have to hire somebody's son, that—and that you can make a profit; that if there's a foreign investor, that they can invest and be treated fairly and that their rights and their intellectual property and their property are protected.

Those basic systems of law, where those are established, those countries can do well because the natural talents of the people and the incredible resources and hard work of the people then pay off.

I mean, you look at Singapore. Right? I mean, Singapore is a tiny, little place. It has really nothing, no resources to speak of. But today, when you travel to Singapore, it is as prosperous as any place in the world. Why is that? Well, part of it is that it set up a set of systems where if businesses were started or investors came in, they knew that they could find a very skilled workforce; they knew that the rules were international-standard rules in terms of operations.

So it will take some time for, I think, Myanmar to move in that direction. But you have your own models even in—among the ASEAN countries. You don't have to look to the United States; you can look at just your—some of your neighbors to see what is required for success. And what the United States will try to do is to provide technical assistance, and we will also try to provide direct assistance, particularly around building skills and education. Because one of the keys is to make sure that you have a workforce that can add value.

That—in the age of the Internet, when companies can locate anywhere, the most important thing is to find someplace where there is security so there's no conflict, where there's rule of law, and the people are highly skilled. And if you have those three things, then people will invest. Okay?

Yes, go ahead. Yes.

*Burma's Rohingya Minority/Indonesia/Singapore/Religious, Ethnic, and Gender Equality*

*Q. Sawadtee khaa.* Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Pern Phansiri. I'm from Thailand. And now I work on the anti-human trafficking issue in Thailand and neighboring country. So today I would like to ask you, if you were a Rohingya, which country would you prefer to live with and why? [*Laughter*] Thank you so much.

*The President.* That's an interesting question. Let me speak more broadly, and then I'll answer your question. [*Laughter*]

We were talking earlier about what's required for Myanmar to succeed. I think one of the most important things is to put an end to discrimination against people because of what they look like or what their faith is. And the Rohingya have been discriminated against significantly, and that's part of the reason they're fleeing.

I think if I were a Rohingya, I would want to stay where I was born. I'd want to stay in the land where my parents had lived. But I'd want to make sure that my government was protecting me and that people were treating me fairly. That's what I'd want. And that's why it's so important, I think, as part of the democratic transition, to take very seriously this issue of how the Rohingya are treated.

One of the things about discriminating against people or treating people differently is, by definition, that means that people will treat you differently, and you never know when you will find yourself in a situation in which you are a minority, where you are vulnerable, where you are not being treated fairly. And right now, obviously, our focus is on making sure that those who are being subject to human trafficking and are, in some cases right now, still in a very perilous situation out in the open sea, that they are relocated. I want to commend Indonesia and Malaysia for their willingness to take on thousands of these displaced persons. The United States, as part of our refugee process, will take some. We put over \$100 million in—over the last several years in Burma to

make sure that minority groups, including the Rohingya, are protected against.

But ultimately, this is going to be a great test for the democracy of the future. Not just in Burma and Myanmar, but in areas all throughout the country. When I was—and I know this directly because when I was young and I was living in Indonesia, there were times where there were anti-Chinese riots that were very violent and vicious. And in fact, sometimes, the Chinese Indonesians were treated very similarly to how Jewish Europeans were treated in Europe and subject to stereotypes and resentments.

And the truth of the matter is, one of the reasons that Singapore, I mentioned earlier, has been successful, is that it has been able to bring together people who may look different, but they all think of themselves as part of Singapore. And that has to be a strength, not a weakness. But that requires leadership and government being true to those principles.

To their credit, the Indonesian Government when I was growing up was very good about not discriminating on the base of religion, despite the fact that it was 98-percent Muslim. And I think that the tolerance towards other faiths historically in Indonesia has been part of what's contributed to progress there. You haven't seen the same kind of sectarian animosity that you've seen in parts of the Middle East.

But the one thing I know is, countries that divide themselves on racial or religious lines, they do not succeed. They do not succeed. That's rule number one. Rule number two is, nations that suppress their women do not succeed. They don't succeed. Not only is it bad because half of the country is not successful—because they're not getting education and opportunity—but it's women who teach children, which means the children are less educated, if you're not teaching the moms. So there are some—each country is different, but there are some rules, if you look at development patterns around the world, that are pretty consistent. And those are two pretty good rules.

Don't divide yourself on religious and ethnic lines and racial lines. And don't discriminate against women. If you do those two things, you

know, you're not guaranteed success, but at least you're not guaranteed failure.

I've got time for one more, two more. I definitely don't have time for 30 more. [Laughter] What do you think? What time is it? Two more. I've got time for two more. Okay? It's a gentleman's turn. So, yes, sir. Right there. Yes.

#### *Leadership/U.S. Presidency*

*Q.* Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Sreedaran Raman. I'm from Malaysia. I'm working with Department of Irrigation and Drainage in Malaysia. My YSEALI theme is environmental sustainability. And my question for you is, what has you—what have you learned about leadership and life as being President in comparison to what you have might not learned if you were not a President? [Laughter]

*The President.* As President you—I think probably what makes this job unique is that you are the ultimate decisionmaker. So there are other people who work as hard as I do. My staff works very, very hard. They're just as smart or smarter than I am. They care just as much or more than I do. They have wonderful qualities.

But the one thing as President is that ultimately, there's nobody you can pass it on to. Harry Truman, one of our best Presidents, once said, the buck stops here. He meant at his desk. And it's true.

And usually by the time a decision comes to my desk, you know that it's a very hard problem because if it was easy, somebody else would have solved it. And so the—probably the thing that I uniquely have had to learn in the Presidency that is—I hadn't learned as well in other jobs is the ability to look at all the information that you have, listen to all the advice that's there, and the different viewpoints that may exist about an issue, to try to make a decision based not on what is easiest, but what I think is the best long-term solution; and then feel comfortable in the knowledge that I may be wrong and that there will be significant consequences if I am wrong, to have to have the courage then, maybe 6 months later or a year later, to admit this didn't work and then to try something new.

But being willing to take responsibility for making hard decisions, not being paralyzed because you know there are big consequences to them, and then being able to adapt based on the evidence as to whether it worked or not I think is the most important lesson I've learned. And that's not something that you have to—is just unique to being President.

I think in whatever your job is, you should be willing to take responsibility for getting the best information and to listening to everybody, but then, you have to just—you have to make a decision and understand then that you have to continue to evaluate it. And I think that that's been very important.

The second lesson, which is something that you just learn more of as President, but all of you have already learned in some ways in your work, is to surround yourself with the best people. Your most important job is to create a team of people, some of whom have talents that you don't have, to make up for your weaknesses; and then to want to make them better and make them successful.

Because if they're successful, then the team is successful. So you're not a good leader if you don't want somebody who is smarter than you because you think, oh, well, maybe they'll shine more than you do. Then, you're not a very good leader, because your team won't succeed.

So I'm always looking for—who are people who are much smarter than me, or much more organized than I am, or much better analysts? And my job then is just to be able to weave them together so they're all working together effectively. And if you're doing that, then you're a good leader. And you should be constantly thinking, how can I help this person do their jobs even better?

And the good news is, if you do that and people recognize that you care about them being successful, then they'll work harder, and they'll want to do even better. And they'll appreciate you because they know that you're helping them, instead of trying to keep them subordinate to you.

All right. Last question. And it's—all the men should put down their hands because it's a

woman's turn. [Laughter] Oh, no, all the guys have to put their hands down. This young lady in the yellow right here, right in the corner, right here. Yes.

#### *South China Sea Territorial Disputes/China*

*Q.* Thank you, President. Good afternoon, sir. My name is Tram Bui, and I'm from Vietnam. Currently, I'm working for the Da Nang Institute for Socio-Economic Development. And first of all, I would like to say thank you to you for giving us this unique opportunity to come to the United States and to meet you today. My question for you is, what is your opinion about disputes and China's action in the East Sea or so-called the South China Seas?

*The President.* Well, as I already mentioned, what has allowed all of Asia to prosper over the last two, three decades—including China—is, there's been relative peace and stability, freedom of navigation, freedom of commerce. And all of that has been underwritten, all of that has been because there have been certain rules that everybody has followed. Freedom of navigation requires that people observe basic conduct about, this far off, your territory is your territory; after that, you're—it's international waters. If there's a dispute, then there's international mechanisms to adjudicate that dispute.

If you start losing that approach and suddenly conflicts arise and claims are made based on how big the country is or how powerful its navy is instead of based on law, then I think Asia will be less prosperous and the Pacific region will be less prosperous. And that's why we've said directly to China and to other claimant countries, we don't have a claim to these areas. We're not parties in the dispute. But we do have a stake in making sure that they are resolved peacefully, diplomatically, and in accordance with internationally established standards.

And for that reason, we think that land reclamation, aggressive actions by any party in that area are counterproductive. And we will continue as a Asia-Pacific power to support all countries who are prepared to work with us to establish and enforce norms and rules that can



continue growth and prosperity in the region. And the truth is, is that China is going to be successful. It's big, it's powerful. Its people are talented, and they work hard. And it may be that some of their claims are legitimate, but they shouldn't just try to establish that based on throwing elbows and pushing people out of the way. If in fact their claims are legitimate, people will recognize them.

I will say this, though, that I am very confident, much more confident, in the future of Southeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific, and the world, because I've had the opportunity to spend time with you. I think all of you are going to do outstanding work. And I want to make sure that you know that not only will this administration and the United States Government continue to

support the work that you do, but I personally, even after I leave office, will continue to have a great interest in seeing not only you succeed, but those coming behind you, young people like yourselves, succeed. And I think you should be interested in making sure to promote YSEALI and the network and try to provide similar opportunities to other young people as you become more important in whatever your fields are in the future. All right?

Congratulations. Good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:26 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Zin Mar Myint, fellow, Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative; and King Phumiphon Adunyadet of Thailand.

## Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Medal of Honor to Private Henry Johnson and Sergeant William Shemin

June 2, 2015

*The President.* Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

*Audience members.* Good morning.

*The President.* Welcome to the White House. Nearly a hundred years ago, a 16-year-old kid from the Midwest named Frank Buckles headed to Europe's western front. An ambulance driver, he carried the wounded to safety. He lived to see our troops ship off to another war in Europe and one in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan. And Frank Buckles became a quietly powerful advocate for our veterans and remained that way until he passed away 4 years ago, America's last surviving veteran of World War I.

On the day Frank was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery, Vice President Biden and I went to pay our respects. And we weren't alone. Americans from across the country came out to express their gratitude as well. They were of different ages and different races, some military, some not. Most had never met Frank. But all of them braved a cold winter's day to offer a final tribute to a man with whom they shared a powerful conviction: that

no one who serves our country should ever be forgotten.

We are a nation, a people, who remember our heroes. We take seriously our responsibilities to only send them when war is necessary. We strive to care for them and their families when they come home. We never forget their sacrifice. And we believe that it's never too late to say thank you. That's why we're here this morning.

Today America honors two of her sons who served in World War I, nearly a century ago. These two soldiers were roughly the same age, dropped into the battlefields of France at roughly the same time. They both risked their own lives to save the lives of others. They both left us decades ago, before we could give them the full recognition that they deserved. But it's never too late to say thank you. Today we present America's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, to Private Henry Johnson and Sergeant William Shemin.

I want to begin by welcoming and thanking everyone who made this day possible: family, friends, admirers. Some of you have worked for years to honor these heroes, to give them

the honor they should have received a long time ago. We are grateful that you never gave up. We are appreciative of your efforts.

As a young man, Henry Johnson joined millions of other African Americans on the Great Migration from the rural South to the industrial North, a people in search of a better life. He landed in Albany, where he mixed sodas at a pharmacy, worked in a coal yard and as a porter at a train station. And when the United States entered World War I, Henry enlisted. He joined one of only a few units that he could: the all-Black 369th Infantry Regiment. The Harlem Hellfighters. And soon, he was headed overseas.

At the time, our military was segregated. Most Black soldiers served in labor battalions, not combat units. But General Pershing sent the 369th to fight with the French Army, which accepted them as their own. Quickly, the Hellfighters lived up to their name. And in the early hours of May 15, 1918, Henry Johnson became a legend.

His battalion was in Northern France, tucked into a trench. Some slept, but he couldn't. Henry and another soldier, Needham Roberts, stood sentry along no man's land. In the predawn, it was pitch black and silent. And then, a click, the sound of wire cutters.

A German raiding party—at least a dozen soldiers, maybe more—fired a hail of bullets. Henry fired back until his rifle was empty. Then he and Needham threw grenades. Both of them were hit. Needham lost consciousness. Two enemy soldiers began to carry him away while another provided cover, firing at Henry. But Henry refused to let them take his brother-in-arms. He shoved another magazine into his rifle. It jammed. He turned the gun around and swung it at one of the enemy, knocking him down. Then, he grabbed the only weapon he had left, his Bolo knife, and went to rescue Needham. Henry took down one enemy soldier, then the other. The soldier he'd knocked down with his rifle recovered, and Henry was wounded again. But armed with just his knife, Henry took him down too.

And finally, reinforcements arrived, and the last enemy soldier fled. As the Sun rose, the

scale of what happened became clear. In just a few minutes of fighting, two Americans had defeated an entire raiding party. And Henry Johnson saved his fellow soldier from being taken prisoner.

Henry became one of our most famous soldiers of the war. His picture was printed on recruitment posters and ads for Victory War Stamps. Former President Teddy Roosevelt wrote that he was one of the bravest men in the war. In 1919, Henry rode triumphantly in a victory parade. Crowds lined Fifth Avenue for miles, cheering this American soldier.

Henry was one of the first Americans to receive France's highest award for valor. But his own Nation didn't award him anything—not even the Purple Heart, though he had been wounded 21 times. Nothing for his bravery, though he had saved a fellow soldier at great risk to himself. His injuries left him crippled. He couldn't find work. His marriage fell apart. And in his early thirties, he passed away.

Now, America can't change what happened to Henry Johnson. We can't change what happened to too many soldiers like him, who went uncelebrated because our Nation judged them by the color of their skin and not the content of their character. But we can do our best to make it right. In 1996, President Clinton awarded Henry Johnson a Purple Heart. And today, 97 years after his extraordinary acts of courage and selflessness, I'm proud to award him the Medal of Honor.

We are honored to be joined today by some very special guests: veterans of Henry's regiment, the 369th. Thank you, to each of you, for your service. And I would ask Command Sergeant Major Louis Wilson of the New York National Guard to come forward and accept this medal on Private Johnson's behalf.

[At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Jillian C. Malzone, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citation, and the President presented the medal, assisted by Maj. Wesley N. Spurlock III, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President.]

*The President.* Growing up in Bayonne, New Jersey, William Shemin loved sports: football, wrestling, boxing, swimming. If it

required physical and mental toughness, if it made your heart pump, your muscles ache, he was all in. [Laughter] As a teenager, he even played semi-pro baseball. So when America entered the war and posters asked if he was tough enough, there was no question about it, he was going to serve. Too young to enlist? No problem. He puffed his chest and lied about his age. [Laughter] And that's how William Shemin joined the 47th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, and shipped out for France.

On August 7, 1918, on the western front, the Allies were hunkered down in one trench, the Germans in another, separated by about 150 yards of open space, just a football field and a half. But that open space was a bloodbath. Soldier after soldier ventured out, and soldier after soldier was mowed down. So those still in the trenches were left with a terrible choice: die trying to rescue your fellow soldier or watch him die, knowing that part of you will die along with him.

William Shemin couldn't stand to watch. He ran out into the hell of no man's land and dragged a wounded comrade to safety. And then, he did it again and again. Three times, he raced through heavy machine gunfire. Three times, he carried his fellow soldiers to safety.

The battle stretched on for days. Eventually, the platoon's leadership broke down. Too many officers had become casualties. So William stepped up and took command. He reorganized the depleted squads. Every time there was a lull in combat, he led rescues of the wounded. As a lieutenant later described it, William was "cool, calm, intelligent, and personally utterly fearless." That young kid who lied about his age grew up fast in war. And he received accolades for his valor, including the Distinguished Service Cross.

When he came home, William went to school for forestry and began a nursery business in the Bronx. It was hard work, lots of physical labor, just like he liked it. He married a red-head, blue-eyed woman named Bertha Schiffer, and they had three children who gave them 14 grandchildren. He bought a house upstate, where the grandkids spent their summers swimming and riding horses. He taught them how to salute. [Laughter] He taught

them the correct way to raise the flag every morning and lower and fold it every night. He taught them how to be Americans.

William stayed in touch with his fellow veterans too. And when World War II came, William went and talked to the Army about signing up again. [Laughter] By then, his war injuries had given him a terrible limp. But he treated that limp just like he treated his age all those years ago. Pay no attention to that, he said. He knew how to build roads, he knew camouflage; maybe there was a place for him in this war too. To Bertha's great relief, the Army said that the best thing William could do for his country was to keep running his business and take care of his family. [Laughter]

His daughter Elsie—who's here today with what seems like a platoon of Shermans—Shemins—[laughter]—was a—has a theory about what drove her father to serve. He was the son of Russian immigrants, and he was devoted to his Jewish faith. "His family lived through the pogroms," she says. "They saw towns destroyed and children killed. And then, they came to America. And here they found a haven, a home, success. And my father and his sister both went to college. All that in one generation. That's what America meant to him. And that's why he'd do anything for this country."

Well, Elsie, as much as America meant to your father, he means even more to America. It takes our Nation too long sometimes to say so, because Sergeant Shemin served at a time when the contributions and heroism of Jewish Americans in uniform were too often overlooked. But William Shemin saved American lives. He represented our Nation with honor. And so it is my privilege, on behalf of the American people, to make this right and finally award the Medal of Honor to Sergeant William Shemin. I want to invite his daughters Elsie and Ina—86 and 83, and gorgeous—[laughter]—to accept this medal on their father's behalf.

[Lt. Cmdr. Malzone read the citation, and the President presented the medal, assisted by Maj. Spurlock.]

*The President.* Well, it has taken a long time for Henry Johnson and William Shemin to re-

ceive the recognition they deserve. And there are surely others whose heroism is still unacknowledged and uncelebrated. So we have work to do, as a nation, to make sure that all of our heroes' stories are told. And we'll keep at it, no matter how long it takes. America is the country we are today because of people like Henry and William, Americans who signed up to serve and rose to meet their responsibilities and then went beyond. The least we can do is to say: We know who you are. We know what you did for us. We are forever grateful.

May God bless the fallen of all of our wars. May He watch over our veterans and their families and all those who serve today. May God bless the United States of America.

With that, I'd ask Chaplain to return to the podium for a benediction.

[*Maj. Gen. Paul K. Hurley, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains, said a prayer.*]

*The President.* Amen. With that, we conclude the formal ceremony. But I welcome everybody to join in a wonderful reception. And let's give our Medal of Honor winners one big round of applause.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ina Bass and Elsie Shemin-Roth, daughters of Sgt. Shemin. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

## Statement on Congressional Passage of the USA FREEDOM Act June 2, 2015

For the past 18 months, I have called for reforms that better safeguard the privacy and civil liberties of the American people while ensuring our national security officials retain tools important to keeping Americans safe. That is why, today, I welcome the Senate's passage of the USA FREEDOM Act, which I will sign when it reaches my desk.

After a needless delay and inexcusable lapse in important national security authorities, my administration will work expeditiously to ensure our national security professionals again have the full set of vital tools they need to continue protecting the country. Just as important, enactment of this legislation will strengthen civil liberty safeguards and provide greater

public confidence in these programs, including by prohibiting bulk collection through the use of section 215, FISA pen registers, and national security letters and by providing the American people with additional transparency measures.

I am gratified that Congress has finally moved forward with this sensible reform legislation. I particularly applaud Senators Leahy and Lee as well as Representatives Goodlatte, Sensenbrenner, Conyers, and Nadler for their leadership and tireless efforts to pass this important bipartisan legislative achievement.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 2048.

## Memorandum on Creating a Preference for Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies June 2, 2015

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies*

*Subject:* Creating a Preference for Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible

Antibiotic-Use Policies

Antibiotics support nearly all of modern medicine—including care for premature babies, cancer patients, and people who need

surgery. Yet, overuse and misuse can reduce the effectiveness of these miracle drugs. Antibiotic resistance—when bacteria change so that they are able to grow in the presence of an antibiotic that would normally kill them or limit their growth—threatens to return us to a time when many people died from common infections, posing a serious threat to public health and the economy. Reducing antibiotic resistance will require stewardship practices in the use of antibiotics in medical and agricultural settings, including eliminating the practice of feeding medically important antibiotics to food-producing animals for growth promotion.

It is the policy of the Federal Government to encourage responsible uses of medically important antibiotics in the meat and poultry supply chain by supporting the emerging market for meat that has been produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies. This policy will build on the important work of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and antibiotic manufacturers, which are already taking substantial steps to phase out the use of medically important antibiotics in food animals.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to protect the health of the American people, I hereby direct as follows:

*Section 1. Making Available in Certain Federal Cafeterias Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies.* The Administrator of General Services, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), shall take the following steps to make meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies available in Federal cafeterias that the General Services Administration (GSA) manages (GSA cafeterias):

(a) within 120 days of the date of this memorandum, GSA shall initiate a process in which vendors, under new contract awards (including renewals), offer in GSA cafeterias, as an option, meat and poultry from animals that have been raised according to responsible antibiot-

ic-use policies, to the extent such an option is available and cost effective.

(b) In conducting this effort, GSA shall:

(i) take steps to minimize price impact through:

(A) using competitive procedures, consistent with law, in the selection of vendors; and

(B) continuing to make available alternative food options, in addition to meat and poultry from animals that have been raised according to responsible antibiotic-use policies;

(ii) work to develop, for inclusion in food-service contracts in GSA cafeterias, appropriate contractual requirements to verify that vendors are providing meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies;

(iii) analyze, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services, customer demand, product supply, and market prices; and

(iv) ensure that GSA cafeteria vendors appropriately identify meat and poultry items from animals that have been raised according to responsible antibiotic-use policies.

(c) For 3 years after the initiation of the process described in this section, GSA shall report annually on the customer demand, product supply, and market prices of meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies to the Director of OMB and the Task Force for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria (Task Force) established by Executive Order 13676 of September 18, 2014.

(d) During this 3-year period, executive departments and agencies (agencies) that contract for food in their own cafeterias and make meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies available in their own cafeterias, may choose to similarly submit customer demand, product supply, and market price information to the Director of OMB and the Task Force, subject to the re-

quirements of this section and under their own authorities.

*Sec. 2. Broadening the Availability of Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies in Federal Cafeterias.* By 2020, each agency shall develop and implement a strategy that creates a preference for awarding contracts to vendors that offer, as an option, meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies for sale in domestic Federal cafeterias to civilian Federal employees and visitors, to the extent such an option is available and cost effective. In furtherance of this requirement, I hereby direct that:

(a) The Task Force shall:

- (i) on an ongoing basis, review the data received pursuant to section 1 of this memorandum as it becomes available and, considering such data and other relevant data sources, conduct an ongoing analysis of the customer demand, product supply, and market prices of meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies; and
- (ii) develop a recommended strategy for creating the preference described in the opening paragraph of this section.

(b) Agencies operating cafeterias in the United States for the primary purpose of serving civilian employees and visitors shall:

- (i) consider the recommended strategy developed by the Task Force and, subject to their own authorities, develop a strategy that creates a preference as described in the opening paragraph of this section; and
- (ii) implement the strategy developed under section 2(b)(i) of this memorandum for poultry by 2018 and for meats by 2020.

*Sec. 3. Developing a Strategy for Federal Acquisition of Meat and Poultry Produced According to Responsible Antibiotic-Use Policies.*

(a) The Task Force shall recommend a strategy for consideration by the Federal Acquisition

Regulatory Council (FAR Council) for applying a preference in Federal acquisitions for meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies served or sold in all Federal facilities. The strategy shall include criteria for appropriate exceptions, including exceptions to ensure acquisitions of such products can be made at fair and reasonable prices and within a reasonable timeframe.

(b) By 2020, to the extent permitted by law, the FAR Council shall issue a proposed rule to amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation to implement a preference, with appropriate exceptions, for acquisitions of meat and poultry produced according to responsible antibiotic-use policies served or sold in all Federal facilities.

*Sec. 4. Definitions.* (a) “Medically important antibiotics” shall have the meaning it is given in FDA’s Guidance for Industry (GFI) 213, Appendix A.

(b) “Responsible antibiotic-use policies,” such as FDA GFI 209 and 213, are those policies under which meat and poultry producers use medically important antibiotics only under veterinary oversight and only when needed to prevent, control, and treat disease—but not for growth promotion.

*Sec. 5. General Provisions.* (a) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law, including international trade obligations, and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(b) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to a department, agency, or the head thereof; or
- (ii) the functions of the Director of OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(c) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

## Remarks Honoring the 2014 World Series Champion San Francisco Giants June 4, 2015

Hello, everybody! Have a seat, have a seat. Welcome to the White House. For these folks, I guess, it's welcome back. [Laughter] This is the third time in the last 5 years: the world champion San Francisco Giants!

We have a lot of Giants fans in the house. We've got some Members of Congress, including Leader Nancy Pelosi. Mayor Lee is here. The outstanding CEO of the Giants, Larry Baer. I am particularly honored to have a couple of trailblazing Hall of Famers here: Monte Irvin and the "Say Hey Kid," Willie Mays. And of course, we've got a manager who seems to be making his own case for Cooperstown, Bruce Bochy.

So this is quite a crew that we've got up here. They have won three titles in 5 years, probably only matched soon by the white—by the Blackhaws, who are—but that's hockey, so I'll—[laughter]. This is the first National League team in almost 70 years to do that. They have not lost a playoff series since 2003. And they're doing it all at a time when we've got more playoff teams than ever, more parity than we've seen in a long time. I mean, even the Cubs have a shot this year. [Laughter] And I continue to hold out hope that my White Sox can turn it around.

But all that parity seems to wipe away whenever the Giants make the playoffs. I mean, the truth is, it seems like if they get in, they'll probably win it. [Laughter] They've got that "even year" magic. They've got that championship experience. I seem to be good luck for them. [Laughter] Apparently. And I guess they do have one other thing: Madison Bumgarner. [Applause] They've got Madison.

So last October, Madison put together a string of performances that I think is pretty hard to believe, and I'm not talking about his locker room celebrations. [Laughter] Twenty-five years old and is already one of the best pitchers in postseason history. For his career, he's 4 and 0 with a 0.25 ERA in the World Series. Last year, he set a new record for postseason innings pitched.

And of course, there's Game 7, which is what kids in their backyards dream about. Madison comes in from the bullpen on just 2 days' rest after throwing a complete game shutout in Game 5. Throws five more scoreless innings to wrap up the title with one of the greatest performances in World Series history. As a courtesy to my Press Secretary, Josh Earnest, I won't mention the team he beat. [Laughter] He's from Kansas City, but—[laughter].

But you can't win a World Series—or you certainly can't win three of them—just with one guy. The Giants have those pillars that all great teams have. Buster Posey. Matt Cain. Tim Lincecum couldn't be here today, but obviously has made an enormous contribution. The Core Four out of the bullpen.

And then there are guys like Yusmeiro Petit, who set a world League record by retiring 46 consecutive batters during the season. Veteran All-Star Tim Hudson. Joe Panik, a rookie last year. And of course, we've got Hunter Pence. I told Hunter I was going to talk about him a little bit. He was not only named to the All-Star team, he inspired a craze of signs from opposing fans like "Hunter Pence eats pizza with a fork," "Hunter Pence likes Godfather 3." [Laughter] Not everybody would have laughed at those signs, but not everybody is Hunter Pence. [Laughter]

So it was another great season for the Giants. But what's best about this organization is the example they set off the field. Their Junior Giants program works to get our young people active, teaches them skills like self-esteem and teamwork and leadership. They've given out nearly \$500,000 in scholarships to students.

Today I'm proud to announce that the Giants Community Fund is teaming up with San Francisco State University and Major League Baseball to build a multimillion-dollar Junior Giants Urban Youth Academy, complete with training facilities, classrooms, batting cages, two baseball fields.

The academy will target boys and girls from underserved areas of San Francisco and will in-

clude mentoring and tutoring and college prep programming. It's the kind of initiative that fits right in with the goals of our "My Brother's Keeper" initiative to keep all of our young people out of trouble and give them the opportunity to stretch as far as their dreams will take them. And it builds on the work that Major League Baseball is already doing to lift up young people in communities like Compton and New Orleans and right here in Washington, DC.

So it's a tremendous commitment from a tremendous team. Congratulations, everybody. Good luck this year. We're proud of you. Ev-

erybody, give a big round of applause. San Francisco Giants. Hey!

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Edwin M. Lee of San Francisco, CA; Monford M. "Monte" Irvin, former left fielder, New York Giants; and Willie H. Mays, Jr., former center fielder, Gerald D. "Buster" Posey, catcher, Matt Cain, Timothy L. Lincecum, Jeremy Affeldt, Javier Lopez, Sergio Romo, Santiago Casilla, Yusmeiro A. Petit, and Timothy A. Hudson, pitchers, Joseph M. Panik, second baseman, and Hunter A. Pence, outfielder, San Francisco Giants.

## The President's Weekly Address

*June 6, 2015*

Hi, everybody. One of the remarkable things about America is that nearly all of our families originally came from someplace else. We're a nation of immigrants. It's a source of our strength and something we all can take pride in. And this month, Immigrant Heritage Month, is a chance to share our American stories.

I think about my grandparents in Kansas, where they met and where my mom was born. Their family tree reaches back to England and Ireland and elsewhere. They lived and raised me by basic values: working hard, giving back, and treating others the way you want to be treated.

I think of growing up in Hawaii, a place enriched by people of different backgrounds: native Hawaiian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and just about everything else. Growing up in that vibrant mix helped shape who I am today. And while my father was not an immigrant himself, my own life journey as an African American and the heritage shared by Michelle and our daughters, some of whose ancestors came here in chains, has made our family who we are.

This month, I'm inviting you to share your story too. Just visit [whitehouse.gov/new-americans](http://whitehouse.gov/new-americans). We want to hear how you or your family made it to America, whether you're an immi-

grant yourself or your great-great-grandparents were.

Of course, we can't just celebrate this heritage, we have to defend it by fixing our broken immigration system. Nearly 2 years ago, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate came together to do that. They passed a commonsense bill to secure our border, get rid of backlogs, and give undocumented immigrants who are already living here a pathway to citizenship if they paid a fine, paid their taxes, and went to the back of the line. But for nearly 2 years, Republican leaders in the House have refused to even allow a vote on it.

That's why, in the meantime, I'm going to keep doing everything I can to make our immigration system more just and more fair. Last fall, I took action to provide more resources for border security; focus enforcement on the real threats to our security; modernize the legal immigration system for workers, employers, and students; and bring more undocumented immigrants out of the shadows so they can get right with the law. Some folks are still fighting against these actions. I'm going to keep fighting for them. Because the law is on our side, it's the right thing to do, and it will make America stronger.

I want us to remember people like Ann Dermody from Alexandria, Virginia. She's originally