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Remarks Following a Meeting on the Federal Government's Procurement Process

April 30, 2009

Well, the main thing that I wanted to do was to thank the four leaders who are here, Congressman Skelton and McHugh and Senators Levin and McCain.

The GAO last year looked at 95 major acquisitions in the Defense Department and found that we had $295 billion worth of overruns and wasteful spending—$295 billion. And as Secretary Gates has said, every dollar that's wasted because of inappropriate no-bid contracts and waste and abuse, that's a dollar that could be going to help our—protect our troops, advance our national security, keep the American people safe.

These four leaders have put together a procurement reform package that is long overdue. They've shown extraordinary courage and extraordinary leadership in moving it forward. It's fully bipartisan. It has the support of the Department of Defense, and it has my full support.

And so I'm eager to get this legislation on my desk before Memorial Day, so that we can start getting on track to spending all our money wisely, not just in the Defense Department, but as I've said, if we can crack this nut, as tough as it is, it gives us further momentum to continue to make the changes in our budget that can start assuring taxpayers that their money is being well spent. And in the process, it means that we're going to be spending our money in ways that are more likely to keep the American people safe.

So I just want to thank these legislators. They have the full support of the White House moving forward. And as part of this, I also just want to mention I think that Secretary Gates has done a tremendous job with the budget that he's crafted going forward in reflecting some of the same principles, that we spend our money where it's needed based on national security interests and not based on politics. And I'm going to be urging everybody to take a hard, close look at the reforms that Secretary Gates has proposed. I think it's part and parcel of the overall attempt at gaining efficiency and improving out national security.

So, thank you, gentlemen, for the great work you're doing. Okay, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

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Names: Gates, Robert M.; Levin, Carl; McCain, John; McHugh, John M.; Skelton, Isaac Newton "Ike," IV.

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