

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2014*

**Remarks at the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride Opening Ceremony**  
*April 17, 2014*

*The President.* Hello, everybody! Welcome to the White House. Thank you to Ric for not just a nice introduction, but more importantly, for your outstanding service to our country and for your service to our veterans and fellow wounded warriors.

Now, I also want to mention that our Vice President here has been relentless in his support, along with our spouses, Michelle and Jill Biden, for military families. And we're very proud of everything that Joe has done.

This is now the fifth time that I've had the honor of welcoming the Soldier Ride to the White House. And I have to tell you, this is one of my favorite events of the year. First of all, you know it's spring when—or at least it's supposed to be spring—[*laughter*]*—*when the Soldier Ride comes around. But mainly, it's because those who participate are such an incredible inspiration to me and to our country.

To all the riders, you look outstanding, especially after biking 17 miles yesterday. You're doing another 17 miles tomorrow, another 17 miles after that—all told, nearly 60 miles. Today we wanted to come cheer you on. And I think we've got some folks from the Army here, is that right?

*Audience members.* Hooah!

*The President.* And the Navy.

*Audience members.* Hooah!

*The President.* Air Force.

*Audience members.* Hooah!

*The President.* Marines.

*Audience members.* Hooah!

*The President.* Oh, that was good. [*Laughter*] Coast Guard.

*Audience members.* [*Applause*].

*The President.* And we've got some extraordinary families here today. Yay, families.

By now, everybody knows the story about how this got started. You had a bartender on Long Island, Chris Carney, who came up with the idea of riding his bike across America to support wounded warriors. Chris couldn't be here today. He owns a gym now. I think you all inspired him to trade the bar in for some barbells. But today there are Soldier Rides all across the country, and we want to thank everybody at the Wounded Warriors Project for their incredible support.

I know some of you are doing this for the very first time; some of you have ridden three or four times. Some of you are riding in tandem with your parents. Biking nearly 60 miles in 3 days would be a challenge for anybody, but for all of you, this is a lot more than a bike ride, this is a mark of how far you've come.

Many of you are recovering from devastating injuries. Some of you have had to learn the basics all over again: how to stand again, how to walk again, how to run again. And now you're here today because that's what Soldier's Ride is all about: seeing each other through the finish line.

Lieutenant Commander John Jae Terry is here. Three years ago, he was on foot patrol in Afghanistan when he was hit by an IED, ended up losing his leg. But reflecting on his service, he said he would do it all again. Now he's got a new goal: get in the best shape possible so he can play with his three kids. And so today he's here on his first Soldier Ride.

You've got Master Sergeant Louis Alfonso Ramirez. Serving in Afghanistan, he lost good friends in a terrible ambush. He even assisted at the airport as they began their dignified transfer home. Later diagnosed with posttraumatic stress, credits the Wounded Warriors Project with helping him heal. He says, "You know that they got you." This is now his fourth ride.

Sergeant Major Sedrick Banks is here. An explosion in Iraq left him with injuries to his neck and his back and traumatic brain injury. But after years of rehab, Sedrick is focused on the future. He volunteers here in Washington, helps mentor young men with the life skills they need to succeed. He calls himself now a "warrior for society." This is his first Soldier Ride.

Major Jeanette Nieves-Ayala is here. And I first met Jeanette a few years ago at Walter Reed, where she was recovering from an injury received in Iraq. As some of you know, when I visit with our troops, I often hand out coins marked with the Seal of the President. Jeanette shook my hand, and she said: "Mr. President, all these men think your coin is the best; I don't. I made a bet with them that there was a coin that could trump yours." I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "I want the First Lady's coin." [Laughter] "The First Lady's coin would beat yours."

Now, it is true that the First Lady trumps me. But Jeanette says her proudest accomplishment is being a peer mentor to other wounded warriors. She says that during her recovery: "I was definitely being carried. Now I feel like I am helping to carry others." So I want to thank you, Jeanette.

This ride is first and foremost for these incredible riders. But it's men and women like John and Louis and Sedrick and Jeanette and all of you who make the ride so special for all of us, because you inspire us. You inspire the country, some of whom will be out cheering along your ride. You inspire me with your courage, your resolve, your resilience, your tenacity, your optimism. It makes me proud to be your Commander in Chief. And Michelle and I treasure every moment that we get to spend with you and your families.

Every day I have the honor of serving as this country's Commander in Chief. And as long as I have that honor, I will keep fighting to make sure you and your families get the care and treatment and benefits that you have earned and deserve. When people ask of you to serve your country, to give your all, to make your sacrifices, you've raised your hands. You've stepped up. You held up your end of the bargain. And it's especially now, as we're winding down the war in Afghanistan, after having ended over a decade of war, that we are standing up for you. Our obligations to our veterans endure for your entire lives. That's our mission. That's why we're here, not just during this ride, but all year long.

So with that, the sun is out. It's a spectacular day. The racers look like they're ready. I think it's time for us to get this party started.

God bless you. God bless America. Let's get this going.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride, opening ceremony.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Banks, Sedrick ; Biden, Jill T.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Carney, Chris; Nieves-Ayala, Jeanette; Obama, Michelle; Ramirez, Louis A.; Shinseki, Eric K.; Terry, John J.

*Subjects:* Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), treatment efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Secretary; White House Office : Vice President; Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201400270.