

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2014*

## **Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony**

*November 26, 2014*

*The President.* Good afternoon, everybody.

*Audience members.* Good afternoon.

*The President.* Please have a seat. Normally we do this outside. The weather is not cooperating today. But I want to, first of all, on behalf of Malia and Sasha, wish everybody an early happy Thanksgiving. I am here to announce what I'm sure will be the most talked about executive action this month. Today I'm taking an action, fully within my legal authority—*[laughter]*—the same kind of action taken by Democrats and Republican Presidents before me—to spare the lives of two turkeys, Mac and Cheese, from a terrible and delicious fate. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Joel Brandenberger, the president of the National Turkey Federation; Gary Cooper, its chairman; and his son Cole Cooper, who personally raised Mac and Cheese. Give them a big round of applause for—*[applause]*. Cole is keeping a pretty careful eye there on Cheese. *[Laughter]* Uh-oh, he's not—he's getting pretty excited about this.

Thanks to all those who voted online to pick the official National Thanksgiving Turkey. Cheese wants you to know that he won. *[Laughter]* Mac, the alternate, is not so badly off either. Let's face it, if you're a turkey, and you're named after a side dish—*[laughter]*—your chances of escaping Thanksgiving dinner are pretty low. So these guys are well ahead of the curve. They really beat the odds.

It is important to know that turkeys have always had powerful allies. Many of you know that Benjamin Franklin once wrote: "I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character. The turkey is, in comparison, a much more respectable bird." *[Laughter]* I think these two turkeys would agree with Mr. Franklin. And they'll get to live out the rest of their days, respectably, at a Virginia estate with 10,000 [1,000]<sup>°</sup> acres of roaming space.

I know some will call this amnesty—*[laughter]*—but don't worry, there's plenty of turkey to go around. *[Laughter]* In fact, later this afternoon Michelle, Malia, and Sasha and I will take two turkeys that didn't make the cut to a local food pantry that works hard year round to make sure that folks in our Nation's Capital have food and clothes—food to eat and clothes to wear. I want to thank Jaindl Turkey Farm in Pennsylvania for donating, once again, those birds for—it's, in fact, been 6 years in a row that they've made these contributions—and for making Thanksgiving dinner possible for some of our fellow Americans.

Finally, the Washington Post recently questioned the wisdom of the whole turkey pardon tradition. Typically, on the day before Thanksgiving, the story went, the man who makes decisions about wars, virus outbreaks, terrorism cells, and other dire matters of state, chooses to pardon a single turkey, plus an alternate.

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<sup>°</sup> White House correction.

Tell me about it. It is a little puzzling that I do this every day—every year. [Laughter] But I will say that I enjoy it because, with all the tough stuff that swirls around in this office, it's nice, once in a while, just to say: Happy Thanksgiving. And this is a great excuse to do it.

Tomorrow is a pretty special moment when we give thanks for the people we love, and where we're mindful of the incredible blessings that we have received. We remember the folks who can't spend their holiday at home, especially the brave men and women in uniform who help keep our country secure. And we celebrate a holiday that, at its best, is about what makes this Nation great, and that's its generosity and its openness and, as President Franklin Roosevelt once said, our commitment to make a country in which no one is left out.

Now, because I know everyone wants to get out of town, Mac and Cheese included—[laughter]—it is time for me to engage in the official act. So let's see what we can do here with Cheese.

Careful there! Careful, Cole.

Come on, girls. [Laughter] Don't, don't. Come on. They always keep a little bit of a distance. You got to be right next to him. All right, are we ready? All right? Cheese, you are hereby pardoned from the Thanksgiving dinner table. [Laughter] Congratulations. Gobble, gobble.

He looks pretty happy about it. [Laughter] All right, if you want to take Cheese down, that's okay. [Laughter] He—I will tell you, though, turkeys don't have the best looking heads. [Laughter] You know what I'm saying?

*Cole Cooper.* They're beautiful.

*The President.* You think they're beautiful?

*Cole Cooper.* I think they're beautiful.

*Gary Cooper.* And if you think about it, they're red, white, and blue, so they're American and patriotic too.

*The President.* There's a patriotism element to it. [Laughter] Absolutely. You guys want to pet him?

*Malia Obama.* No. [Laughter]

*The President.* Thank you. How you doing? Good to see you. Appreciate you.

Thank you, everybody. Happy Thanksgiving.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Thanksgiving turkey presentation ceremony.

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