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working through difficult issues surrounding comprehensive immigration. And the idea is very simple here. We're going to leverage cutting-edge technology to reduce the unnecessary paperwork, backlogs, and the lack of transparency that's caused so many people so much heartache.

Now, we all know that comprehensive immigration reform is difficult. We know it's a sensitive and politically volatile issue. One of the things that was said around the table is the American people still don't have enough confidence that Congress and any administration is going to get serious about border security. And so they're concerned that any immigration reform simply will be a short-term legalization of undocumented workers with no long-term solution with respect to future flows of illegal immigration.

What's also been acknowledged is that the 12 million or so undocumented workers are here, who are not paying taxes in the ways that we'd like them to be paying taxes, who are living in the shadows, that that is a group that we have to deal with in a practical, common-sense way. Now, I think the American people are ready for us to do so. But it's going to require some heavy lifting. It's going to require a victory of practicality and common sense and good policymaking over short-term politics. That's what I'm committed to doing as President.

I want to especially commend John McCain, who's with me here today, because along with folks like Lindsey Graham, he has already paid a significant political cost for doing the right thing. I stand with him; I stand with Nydia Velazquez and others who have taken leadership on this issue. I am confident that if we enter into this with the notion that this is a nation of laws that have to be observed and this is a nation of immigrants, then we're going to create a stronger nation for our children and our grandchildren.

So thank you all for participating. I'm looking forward to us getting busy and getting to work. All right? Thank you. Oh, and by the way, I hope everybody has got their Hawaiian shirts and their muumuus for our luau tonight.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra; White House Chief Performance Officer Jeffrey D. Zients; and White House Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra.

Statement on the National Endowment for Democracy's 2009 Democracy Award Recipients

June 25, 2009

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend the National Endowment for Democracy's 2009 Democracy Award recipients Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, Librado Linares, Ivan Hernandez Carrillo, and Iris Tamara Perez Aguilera and all the brave men and women who are standing up for the right of the Cuban people to freely determine their country's future. Like too many of their fellow citizens, four of these individuals have been unjustly jailed for defending the basic freedoms we all hold dear in the Americas. It is my sincere hope that all political prisoners who remain jailed, including three of today's award recipients, will be unconditionally released and allowed to fully participate in a democratic future in Cuba.

Remarks at the Congressional Luau

June 25, 2009

Aloha. It is wonderful to see you all. I am not going to make a long speech. I just want to say to all the Members of Congress, you've been working hard. I wish I could give you all trips to