

And I've said it before—and I know I may sound like a broken record—but I'm going to say it again: Government alone cannot get our children to the promised land. Government can't put away the PlayStation. Government can't put our kids to bed at a reasonable hour. Government can't attend those parent-teacher conferences. Government can't read a book to your child at night. Government can't help them with their homework. Government can't make sure they leave to school on time. These are things only a mother can do and a father can do. These are things that a parent can do.

We need to accept our responsibilities, as parents and community leaders. We need to be good role models and encourage excellence in all our children, every last one of them. We need to let them know there are no excuses for not doing your best every day, all the time, in order to achieve your dreams.

We've got to push our kids to aim higher. I don't want all our kids aspiring to be ballers or rappers. I want them aspiring to be teachers and doctors and scientists and engineers. I want them aspiring to be Members of Congress and Supreme Court Justices. I want them aspiring to be the President of the United States of America. I want them to have their sights set high.

No excuses for mediocrity. If they come home with a "B," don't tell them, "That's great." I know some of you all do that. [*Laughter*] Tell them to work harder and get an A. Set their heights high.

A world-class education; affordable, quality health insurance; jobs and opportunity; all of us accepting responsibility for ourselves and our children and our common future, that's how we'll make life better for the African American community, and thereby make life

better for the larger American community. That is how we will build a new foundation for our economy that yields lasting, shared prosperity. That's how we'll take up the cause of freedom and justice and equality in our time, just as earlier generations of Americans took it up in theirs.

Remember what it was like for George Henry White in the early days of the 20th century, as he was bidding farewell to the House of Representatives, the last African American to serve there for a quarter century. Remember the taunts and the threats and the attacks braved by White, braved by Lewis, braved by Chisholm. Remember all they did, all so many others did, to make it possible for us to be here tonight, to make it possible for you to be here tonight, to make it possible for me to be here tonight.

Because I know that if we can act as they did—with the same sense of unity, the same sense of possibility, the same determination, the same sense of purpose—then we will not only help America's peoples live healthier lives, we won't just help America's children live out their dreams, but it will be said of us, as it was said of our forbearers, that when the need was great and the moment was hard, when the odds seemed against us, we did our part to perfect our Union.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:20 p.m. at Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Geoffrey Canada, president and chief executive officer, Harlem Children's Zone. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 27.

Remarks Following a Meeting With North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen September 29, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. I just want to welcome Secretary General Rasmus-

sen to the Oval Office. He and I had the opportunity to get to know each other at the

NATO summit in Strasbourg, at which he was nominated and then selected as the new Secretary General of NATO.

I can say that given his experience as a head of state, that everybody had confidence in his decisive and effective leadership abilities. That confidence has proven justified. In the brief time that he has been in NATO, I think he's already shown himself to be an active and effective Secretary General, interested in reforming and renewing the NATO alliance and always rooted in the understanding that this is the most successful military alliance in history and the cornerstone of transatlantic relationships.

We had a very fruitful discussion while he was here. We talked about, obviously, the most important NATO mission right now, and that is Afghanistan. And we both agree that it is absolutely critical that we are successful in dismantling, disrupting, destroying the Al Qaida network, and that we are effectively working with the Afghan Government to provide the security necessary for that country.

This is not a American battle; this is a NATO mission as well. And we are working actively and diligently to consult with NATO at every step of the way. And I'm very grateful for the leadership that Secretary General Rasmussen has shown in committing NATO to a full partnership in this process.

We also discussed missile defense, and we both agreed that the configuration that we have proposed is one that, ultimately, will serve the interests of not only the United States but also NATO alliance members most effectively. It allows for a full collaboration with NATO members, and we are very optimistic that it will achieve our aims and deal with the very real threat of ballistic missiles.

We also agree that it is important for us to reach out to Russia and explore ways in which the missile defense configurations that we envision could potentially lead to further collaboration with Russia on this front, and that we want to improve generally not only U.S.-Russian relations but also NATO-Russian relations, while making absolutely clear that our commitments to all of our allies in NATO is sacrosanct and that our commitment to Article 5 continues.

Finally, we discussed the process that we're putting forward for a strategic concept review. NATO has been so successful that sometimes, I think, that we forget this was shaped and crafted for a 20th century landscape. We're now well into the 21st century, and that means that we are going to have to constantly renew and revitalize NATO to meet current threats and not just past threats.

There has been a process that has been put forward; we are fully supportive of it. I am confident that under Secretary General Rasmussen's leadership that it will ultimately be successful, and that we will continue to see NATO operate in a way that is good for U.S. national security interests, good for our allies, and good for the world.

So, Mr. Secretary General, thank you for the excellent work that you're doing, and we appreciate it very much. And please feel free to share a few words.

Secretary General Rasmussen. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind words. The President and I have had a very constructive meeting. I have thanked the President for his strong support. I look very much forward to cooperating with the President and his administration on reforming, transforming, and modernizing NATO. We are going to elaborate a new strategic concept, which I hope can serve as leverage for renewal of NATO.

Of course, our main focus today has been our cooperation in Afghanistan. I say "our" focus deliberately, because our operation in Afghanistan is not America's responsibility or burden alone. It is and it will remain a team effort. I agree with President Obama in his approach: strategy first, then resources. The first thing is not numbers, it is to find and fine-tune the right approach to implement the strategy already laid down. And all NATO allies are right now looking at McChrystal's review.

I'm convinced that success in Afghanistan is achievable and will be achieved. And don't make any mistake: The normal discussion on the right approach should not be misinterpreted as lack of resolve. This alliance will stand united, and we will stay in Afghanistan as long as it takes to finish our job.

As the President mentioned, we have all—also discussed missile defense. I welcome the new U.S. approach, which will allow all allies to participate, which will protect all allies. And in fact, I think the proposed new system can serve as an instrument to bind all allies, new and old, even stronger together.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you so much. All right, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Secretary General Rasmussen referred to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland September 30, 2009

Francis, thank you for the extraordinary introduction. I want to echo what has just been said about my Secretary of HHS. She is, I just think, outstanding. She hit the ground running, and with all the burdens that she carries, she always has a sense of fun and energy and is just good to be around. So please give Kathleen Sebelius a big round of applause.

I want to acknowledge that we are in Congressman Chris Van Hollen's district, a Democrat from Maryland, and Chris is here and a great supporter of NIH historically. We are very grateful for him. And we are so happy to have Senator Arlen Specter, who is directly responsible for so much of the funding for NIH research. He is a huge champion for your cause. And I know you already gave him a round—rousing round of applause, but I just want to echo what a great job he's been doing and what a great partner he's been.

Finally, somebody who's not here but deserves a little credit is my Vice President, Joe Biden, who is managing the stimulus process—

[*At this point, there was a microphone feedback problem.*]

Whoa! That's Joe trying to call in. [*Laughter*] Joe is doing a great job and—but he is pretty tough when it comes to tracking the money, and so he's going to be paying attention—doc—[*laughter*—to make sure that it's going where it's supposed to be going.

Before I begin my remarks about this extraordinary institution, I want to say a word about the tragic events that took place yester-

day in America Samoa. My deepest sympathies are with the families who've lost loved ones and the many people whose lives have been affected by the earthquake and the tsunami. To aid in the response, I've declared this a major disaster to speed the deployment of resources. And FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is working closely with emergency responders on the ground, and the Coast Guard is helping to provide immediate help to those in need. We also stand ready to help our friends in neighboring Samoa and throughout the region, and we'll continue to monitor the situation closely as we keep the many people who've been touched by this tragedy in our thoughts and in our prayers.

Now, today I'm here to talk about our Nation's commitment to research. I want to thank Dr. Collins and his team for showing me and Kathleen some of the extraordinary groundbreaking research being done at the National Institutes of Health. The work you do is not easy. It takes a great deal of patience and persistence. But it holds incredible promise for the health of our people and the future of our Nation and our world. That's why I'm here today.

For decades, the NIH has been at the forefront of medical invention and innovation, helping to save countless lives and relieve untold suffering. And yet, if we're honest, in recent years, we've seen our leadership slipping as scientific integrity was, at times, undermined and research funding failed to keep pace.