

Oct. 30 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2009

democracy, and our people have forged a strong and lasting partnership that is grounded in these shared values. Czech Americans trace their roots back to before our country was founded, they have enriched our communities

and our country, and they continue to play a key role in shaping the direction of our Nation.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 30.

## Statement on the Anniversary of the Founding of Turkey October 29, 2009

The people of the United States join the people of Turkey in celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey. The friendship between our nation is strong, and our alliance is enduring. More than 50 years ago, the United States and Turkey began a partnership based on shared values and mutual respect, a partnership and friendship that has deepened over the years as we have over-

come many shared challenges. Turkish Americans help to forge the bonds that join our nations in friendship, and they continue to contribute to our society in a wide range of field, including arts, athletics, education, business, medicine, and science.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 30.

## Remarks on Signing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009 October 30, 2009

*The President.* Good morning, everybody.

*Audience members.* Good morning.

*The President.* We often speak about AIDS as if it's going on somewhere else, and for good reason. This is a virus that has touched lives and decimated communities around the world, particularly in Africa. But often overlooked is the fact that we face a serious HIV/AIDS epidemic of our own, right here in Washington, DC, and right here in the United States of America. And today we are taking two important steps forward in the fight that we face here at home.

It has been nearly three decades since this virus first became known. But for years, we refused to recognize it for what it was. It was coined a "gay disease." Those who had it were viewed with suspicion. There was a sense among some that people afflicted by AIDS somehow deserved their fate and that it was acceptable for our Nation to look the other way.

A number of events and advances over the years have broadened our understanding of this cruel illness. One of them came in 1984, when a 13-year-old boy from central Indiana

contracted HIV/AIDS from a transfusion. Doctors assured people that Ryan White posed no risk to his classmates or his community, but ignorance was still widespread. People didn't yet understand or believe that the virus couldn't be spread by casual contact. Parents protested Ryan's attendance in class. Some even pulled their kids out of school. Things got so bad that the White family had to ultimately move to another town.

It would have been easy for Ryan and his family to stay quiet and to fight the illness in private. But what Ryan showed was the same courage and strength that so many HIV-positive activists have shown over the years and shown around—show around the world today. And because he did, we didn't just become more informed about HIV/AIDS, we began to take action to fight it.

In 1990, the year Ryan passed away, two great friends and unlikely political allies, Ted Kennedy and then Orrin Hatch, came together and introduced the Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act, the CARE Act, which was later named after Ryan.

In a few minutes, I'm going to sign the fourth reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act. Now, in the past, policy differences have made reauthorizations of this program divisive and controversial. That didn't happen this year. And for that, the Members of Congress that are here today deserve extraordinary credit for passing this bill in the bipartisan manner that it deserves: Tom Harkin and Mike Enzi in the Senate, we are grateful to you for your extraordinary work; Speaker Pelosi, who's always leading the charge on so many issues; Frank Pallone, Jr., Joe Barton, Barbara Lee, and Donna Christensen in the House, thank you for your extraordinary work. Oh, don't worry, I'm getting to Henry. [*Laughter*] Nancy is always looking out for Members—[*laughter*]—but we've got a special section for Henry.

And Chairman Henry Waxman, who began holding hearings on AIDS in 1982, before there was even a name for AIDS, was leading here in Washington to make sure that this got the informed attention that it deserved and who led the House in passing the original Ryan White legislation in 1990.

I also want to acknowledge the HIV community for crafting a consensus document that did so much to help move this process forward. Some of the advocates so important to this legislation are with us here today: Ernest Hopkins from Cities Advocating for Emergency AIDS Relief; Frank Oldham, Jr., president and CEO of the National Association of People with AIDS; and Julie Scofield, executive director of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors.

And I'm especially honored that Ryan White's mother, Jeanne White-Ginder, is here today. For 25 years, Jeanne had an immeasurable impact in helping ramp up America's response to this epidemic. While we lost Ryan at too young an age, Jeanne's efforts have extended the lives and saved the lives of so many others. And we are so appreciative to you. Thank you.

You know, over the past 19 years, this legislation has evolved from an emergency response into a comprehensive national program for the care and support of Americans living with HIV/AIDS. It helps communities that are most se-

verely affected by this epidemic and often least served by our health care system, including minority communities, the LGBT community, rural communities, and the homeless. It's often the only option for the uninsured and the underinsured. And it provides lifesaving medical services to more than half a million Americans every year in every corner of the country.

It's helped us to open a critical front on the ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS. But let me be clear: This is a battle that's far from over, and it's a battle that all of us need to do our part to join. AIDS may no longer be the leading killer of Americans ages 25 to 44, as it once was, but there are still 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, and more than 56,000 new infections occur every single year.

Some communities still experience unacceptably high rates of infection. Gay men make up 2 or 3 percent of the population, but more than half of all new cases. African Americans make up roughly half of all new cases. Nearly half of all new cases now occur in the South. And a staggering 7 percent of Washington, DC's residents between the ages of 40 and 49 live with HIV/AIDS, and the epidemic here isn't as severe as it is in several other U.S. cities.

So tackling this epidemic will take far more aggressive approaches than we've seen in the past, not only from our Federal Government but also State and local governments, from local community organizations, and from places of worship.

But it will also take an effort to end the stigma that has stopped people from getting tested, that has stopped people from facing their own illness, and that has sped the spread of this disease for far too long. A couple of years ago, Michelle and I were in Africa, and we tried to combat the stigma when we were in Kenya by taking a public HIV/AIDS test. And I'm proud to announce today we're about to take another step towards ending that stigma.

Twenty-two years ago, in a decision rooted in fear rather than fact, the United States instituted a travel ban on entry into the country for people living with HIV/AIDS. Now, we talk about reducing the stigma of this disease, yet we've treated a visitor living with it as a threat. We lead the world when it comes to helping

stem the AIDS pandemic, yet we are one of only a dozen countries that still bar people from HIV from entering our own country.

If we want to be the global leader in combating HIV/AIDS, we need to act like it. And that's why on Monday my administration will publish a final rule that eliminates the travel ban effective just after the New Year. Congress and President Bush began this process last year, and they ought to be commended for it. We are finishing the job. It's a step that will encourage people to get tested and get treatment, it's a step that will keep families together, and it's a step that will save lives.

We are continuing the work of crafting a coordinated, measurable national HIV/AIDS strategy to stem and suppress this epidemic. I'm pleased to report that the Office of National AIDS Policy, led by Jeffrey Crowley, has already held 8 in a series of 14 community discussions in cities across the country. They've brought together faith-based organizations and businesses, schools and research institutions, people living with HIV and concerned

citizens, gathering ideas on how to target a national response that effectively reduces HIV infections, improves access to treatment, and eliminates health disparities. And we are encouraged by the energy, the enthusiasm, and great ideas that we've collected so far.

We can't give Ryan White back to Jeanne, back to his mom. But what we can do—what the legislation that I'm about to sign has done for nearly 20 years—is honor the courage that he and his family showed. What we can do is to take more action and educate more people. What we can do is keep fighting each and every day until we eliminate this disease from the face of the Earth.

So with that, let me sign this bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ernest Hopkins, chair of the board of directors, Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief (CAEAR) Coalition. S. 1793, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 111-87.

## The President's Weekly Address

*October 31, 2009*

Each week, I've spoken with you about the challenges we face as a nation and the path we must take to meet them. And the truth is, over the past 10 months, I've often had to report distressing news during what has been a difficult time for our country. But today I am pleased to offer some better news that while not cause for celebration is certainly reason to believe that we are moving in the right direction.

On Thursday, we received a report on our Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. This is an important measure of our economy as a whole, one that tells us how much we are producing and how much businesses and families are earning. We learned that the economy grew for the first time in more than a year and faster than at any point in the previous 2 years. So while we have a long way to go before we return to prosperity, and there will undoubtedly be ups and downs along the road, it's also true that we've come a long way. It's easy to forget

that it was only several months ago that the economy was shrinking rapidly and many economists feared another great depression.

Now, economic growth is no substitute for job growth. And we will likely see further job losses in the coming days, a fact that is both troubling for our economy and heartbreaking for the men and women who suddenly find themselves out of work. But we will not create the jobs we need unless the economy is growing; that's why this GDP report is a good sign. And we can see clearly now that the steps my administration is taking are making a difference, blunting the worst of this recession and helping to bring about its conclusion.

We've acted aggressively to jump-start credit for families and businesses, including small businesses, which have seen an increase in lending of 73 percent. We've taken steps to stem the tide of foreclosures, modifying mortgages to help hundreds of thousands of responsible homeowners keep their homes and