

talents and skills. And they're looking for folks in Washington to have a seriousness of purpose that matches the reality of their struggle.

Everywhere I've gone, every stop I've made, there are people like this, men and women who have faced misfortune, but who stand ready to build a better future: students ready to learn, workers eager to work, scientists on the brink of discovery, entrepreneurs seeking the chance to open a small business. Everywhere I go, there are once-shuttered factories just waiting to whir back to life in burgeoning industries. There is a nation ready to meet the challenges of this new age and to lead the world in this new century.

Statement on the Settlement of the *Cobell* Class-Action Lawsuit on Indian Trust Management

December 8, 2009

Today Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Attorney General Eric Holder announced that, at long last, a settlement has been reached in the Cobell class-action lawsuit. This suit was originally filed in 1996 over the United States Government's trust management and accounting of hundreds of thousands of individual American Indian trust accounts. With this announcement, we take an important step towards a sincere reconciliation between the trust beneficiaries and the Federal Government and lay the foundation for more effective management of Indian trust assets in the future. I want to applaud Secretary Salazar and Attorney General Holder for working tirelessly with the plaintiffs to help reach this settlement.

As a candidate, I heard from many in Indian Country that the *Cobell* suit remained a stain on the nation-to-nation relationship I value so

And as we look back on the progress of the past year and look forward to the work ahead, I have every confidence that we will do exactly that.

These have been a tough 2 years. And there will no doubt be difficult months ahead. But the storms of the past are receding. The skies are brightening. And the horizon is beckoning once more.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. at the Brookings Institution. In his remarks, he referred to Strobe Talbott, president, Brookings Institution, who introduced the President.

much. I pledged my commitment to resolving this issue, and I am proud that my administration has taken this step today. I came to Washington with a promise to change how our Government deals with difficult issues like this and a promise that the facts and policies, and not politics, will guide our actions and decisions.

But it is important to note that today's actions are not the final step. The District Court for the District of Columbia must formally endorse the settlement, and Congress must enact legislation to authorize implementation. I urge Congress to act swiftly to correct this longstanding injustice and to remember that no special appropriations are required. I congratulate all those in Indian Country that have waited for this news and join them in waiting for a quick conclusion to the process.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

December 9, 2009

Hello, everybody. Sorry I'm a little late. I have just concluded an informative and constructive discussion with Republican and Democratic leaders about job creation and our economic future. We spoke about the challenges facing our families, our businesses, and our country as a whole, and what we can do to over-

come them. Today's meeting built on some of the ideas that I offered in the economic speech that I gave yesterday and on some of the ideas discussed at the job forum that we held at the White House last week.

Now, looking at the situation we face today, what's clear is, is that our economy is in a very

different place than it was when I took office last year. Our economy at that time was on the brink of collapse. The credit and the housing markets were in deep trouble, and we were losing 700,000 jobs a month. And economists of every stripe were concerned that we might be slipping into a second depression.

That's not what happened. Because of the Recovery Act and a number of other measures, and because of distasteful but necessary steps to help our auto industry recover and stabilize our banks, we've pulled our economy back from the abyss. And while there's a lot of work left to do, our economy is now growing for the first time in over a year, and we just received the best jobs report in over 2 years.

Of course, it's a sign of how tough times are that the best job report in 2 years still shows a loss of 11,000 jobs. And I'm not going to rest until every American who's looking for work can find a job, until we put America back to work.

And it's no secret that there's been less than full bipartisan support for the Recovery Act and some of the steps that have broken the freefall of our economy. But my hope is that as we move forward, we can do so together, recognizing that we have a shared responsibility to meet our economic challenges on behalf of all Americans, those who elected us to make sure that we're doing the people's business.

Small businesses, for example, are the engines that drive much of the hiring in our economy. So we should be able to forge a consensus around a series of steps to help small businesses grow and hire new employees. These steps include elimination of the capital gains taxes on small-business investment along with an extension of writeoffs to encourage expansion in the coming year. And I've urged congressional leaders to create a tax incentive to create—to encourage small businesses to add and keep workers.

I've proposed making an additional investment in the Nation's infrastructure, beyond what was included in the Recovery Act, to continue modernizing our transportation and communications networks. We've already begun to do so. In the first 6 months of 2010, Recovery Act outlays on projects related to infra-

structure will actually double what was done over the previous 6 months. This is not only going to put more Americans back to work, but this is also work that America needs done and will help fortify our economy for years to come.

I've called on Congress to provide temporary incentives for consumers to buy the materials needed to retrofit their homes for greater energy efficiency. This program will spur hiring and spending, promote energy conservation, and help Americans put more money in their pockets by saving on their energy bills. I've also proposed that we extend proven initiatives that promote energy efficiency and clean energy jobs. And to help Americans weather this economic storm, I've called for an extension of emergency relief to States, seniors, and citizens who need it most.

Finally, to support these efforts, we're going to wind down the Troubled Asset Relief Program, what's known as TARP, the emergency fund created to stabilize the banking system. This program has served its original purpose, and the cost has been much lower than we expected, giving us a chance to pay down the deficit faster than we thought at the time and also allowing us to invest in job creation on Main Street rather than on Wall Street. Now, more will need to be done to put our Nation on a firm fiscal footing, and I'm looking forward to working with the group of leaders that I just met today about how we can structure a plausible scenario to get to medium- and long-term deficit reduction.

Now, it's appropriate that I met with leaders of both parties. Spurring hiring and economic growth are not Democratic or Republican issues; they are American issues that affect every single one of our constituents. Now, I am absolutely committed to working with anybody who is willing to do the job to make sure that we can rebuild our economy and make sure that Americans all across the country, regardless of political persuasion, are seeing the kinds of opportunities that we expect here in the United States of America.

I'm confident we can do so. I'm confident we can put our economic troubles behind us. But it's going to require some work and

cooperation and a seriousness of purpose here in Washington. And I hope that as we enter into the holiday season, the leaders that I just met with will feel the same way.

Thank you very much.

Remarks on Community Health Centers December 9, 2009

The President. Thank you, guys. Please, have a seat. Good afternoon, everybody.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. I am pleased that you could all join us today as we announce three new initiatives to help our community health centers provide better care to people in need all across America.

I want to thank our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, our Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, our Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, Dr. Mary Wakefield, and our Deputy Secretary of HHS, Bill Corr, for being here today and for their outstanding work to support community health centers. There they are. By the way, Regina, it's good to see you in your uniform. *[Laughter]* We had been waiting for that.

I also want to thank the many Members of Congress who are with us today both in the audience and up on the stage, particularly Bernie Sanders and Representative Jim Clyburn. We are grateful for all that you've done.

And I especially want to recognize the leaders here today from health centers across the country for what all of you are doing in your communities every day, working long hours to provide quality care at prices that people can afford, with the dignity and respect they deserve, and in a way that takes into account the challenges that they face in their lives.

For you folks, health care isn't just about diagnosing patients and treating illness, it's about caring for people and promoting wellness. It's about emphasizing education and prevention and helping people lead healthier lives so they don't get sick in the first place.

And it works. Studies show that people living near a health center are less likely to go to the emergency room and less likely to have unmet

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:26 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

critical medical needs. CHCs are proven to reduce ethnic and racial disparities in care. And the medical expenses of regular CHC patients are nearly 25 percent lower than those folks who get their care elsewhere—25 percent lower.

So you can see why, in a speech marking the first anniversary of the first community health centers in America, Senator Ted Kennedy declared: "You have not only assured the best in health care for your families and neighbors, but you've also begun a minor revolution in American medicine."

Now, unfortunately, today, nearly 45 years later, that care has yet to reach many of the folks in this country who need it most. Today, millions of Americans still have difficulty accessing primary health care, and many of them are uninsured. Many have insurance, but live in underserved areas, whether in urban or rural communities. So they don't get regular check-ups, they don't get regular—routine screenings. When they get sick or hurt, they tough it out and hope for the best, and when things get bad enough, they head to the emergency room.

So we end up treating complications, crises, and chronic conditions that could have been prevented in the first place. And the cost is measured not just in dollars spent on health care, or in lost workplace absences and lower productivity, but in the kind of raw human suffering that has no place in the United States of America in the year 2009.

No matter what party we belong to or where on the political spectrum we fall, none of us thinks this is acceptable. None of us would defend this system. And that's why we've taken up the cause of health insurance reform this year. It's why many of the folks in this room fought so hard to ensure that the Recovery Act included unprecedented investments, a total of \$2