

budgets for the Education and Homeland Security Departments combined.

We've done what some said was impossible: preventing wasteful spending on outdated weapons systems that even the Pentagon says it doesn't need. And I've insisted from the beginning that health care reform will not add one dime to our deficit. And as I just noted, not only is it not adding to our deficit, it's actually reducing it.

And finally, I've issued a challenge to every man and woman who works for the Federal Government: If you see a way that Government can do its job better, or do the same job for less money, I want to know about it. And that's why we started the SAVE Award, to draw on those who know Government best to improve how Government works. We asked Federal employees to submit reform proposals based on their experiences. And in a testament to the seriousness with which these folks are taking their jobs, we received more than 38,000 proposals in just 3 weeks.

From these submissions, four finalists were selected and put to an online vote. Nancy is here because she won. Her idea stems from her experience at the VA Medical Center where she works. She noticed that whenever patients left the hospital, leftover medications like eye drops or inhalers were just thrown away. And often, veterans would have to go right back to the pharmacy to refill what was discarded. So the VA is paying twice. It's waste, plain and simple. And thanks to Nancy and to Secretary Shinseki and the folks at Veterans Affairs, we're putting a stop to it. The change is already underway.

Of course, Nancy's proposal was just one of many great ideas that came to us. We've already begun to implement a host of suggestions made through the SAVE contest. And while promoting electronic paystubs or scheduling Social Security appointments online or

repurposing unused Government supplies may not be the most glamorous reforms in history, when taken together, these small changes add up; they add up to a transformation of how Government works.

And that's why we're going to turn the SAVE Award into an annual event. That's why we're holding a forum at the White House next month to seek more ideas from the private sector, specifically about how we can better use technology to reform our Government for the 21st century.

After years of irresponsibility, we are once again taking responsibility for every dollar we spend, the same way families do. It's true that what I've described today will not be enough to get us out of our fiscal mess by itself. We face a deficit that will take some tough decisions in the next year's budget and in years to come to get under control. But these changes will save the American people billions of dollars. And they'll help to put in place a Government that's more efficient and effective, that wastes less money on no-bid contracts, that's cutting bureaucracy and harnessing technology, that's more fiscally responsible, and that better serve the American taxpayer. That's the Government we need. That's the Government I intend to implement. That's the kind of Government that the American people deserve. And that's the kind of Government that people like Nancy are helping to build each and every day.

So, Nancy, congratulations. We're proud of you. Thank you so much. Thank you. We're very proud of your mom. [Laughter] That's great.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington December 21, 2009

The President. I think one thing that's important to remember is that even though there's a lot of fun at Christmas, you know, you

got—especially when it's snowy like this—the—so it's pretty outside—you got the Christmas tree, you got the Christmas cookies,

you've got presents. You know, I think that the most important thing is just to remember why we celebrate Christmas, which is——

Child. I know.

The President. Do you know?

Child. The birth of baby Jesus.

The President. The birth of baby Jesus, and the—and what he symbolizes for people all around the world is the possibility of peace and people treating each other with respect. And so I just hope that spirit of giving that's so important at Christmas, I hope all of you guys remember that as well. You know, it's not just about getting a gift, but it's also doing something for other people.

Child. I know.

The President. So being nice to your mom and dad and grandma and aunts and showing respect to people, that's really important too, that's part of the Christmas spirit, don't you think? Do you agree with me?

Children. Yes.

The President. You do? Do you have an interesting observation?

Child. I know why we give gifts to other people.

The President. Why is that?

Child. Because the three wise men gave gifts to baby Jesus.

The President. That's exactly right. But the three wise men—the reason——

[*At this point, a sign fell off the wall.*]

The President. ——uh-oh, I thought that was the cookies going down.

Child. Oh, no, we can't have that.

The President. We couldn't have that.

You know, the three wise men—if you think about it, here are these guys, they have all this money, they've got all this wealth and power, and yet they took a long trip to a manger just to see a little baby. And it just shows you that just because you're powerful or you're wealthy, that's not what's important. What's important is what's—the kind of spirit you have.

So I hope everybody has a spirit of kindness and thoughtfulness, and everybody is really thinking about how can they do for other people—treating them well, because that's really the spirit of Christmas.

Does everybody agree with that?

Children. Yes!

The President. I agree with that. Well, you guys all seem like really sharp, sharp young people. And I'm very proud of you. And let me just ask you one last question. Is everybody here working pretty hard in school?

Children. Yes!

The President. Okay, because the thing that I want everybody to remember—the most important message I can leave is, is that you guys are—have so much potential. One of you could end up being President some day. But it's only going to happen if you stay focused and you work hard in school. And you guys, there's nothing wrong with having fun and fooling around and playing sports and listening to rap music and all that stuff. But I want you guys to read and hit the books and do your math, because that's really what's going to determine how you do in the future. All right? That's the most important thing you can do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. at Richard England Clubhouse #14.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Community Lenders and an Exchange With Reporters

December 22, 2009

The President. All right, everybody. Well, it's good to see all of you. I just concluded a meeting with 12 regional community banks to have the same conversation that I had with some of the larger banks last week and that I've been having with CEOs and companies across the

country over the last year, and that is, how do we continue to consolidate the gains we've made during the course of this year in terms of economic recovery, but most importantly, how do we move forward over the next year so that businesses are getting the capital that they need