

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation Providing Citizenship Opportunities for Alien Minors

December 8, 2010

I congratulate the House of Representatives, Speaker Pelosi, Congressman Berman, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and other congressional leaders for taking the historic step of passing the “DREAM Act” today with a bipartisan vote. This vote is not only the right thing to do for a group of talented young people who seek to serve a country they know as their own by continuing their education or serving in the military, but it is the right thing for the United States of America. We are enriched by their talents, and the success of their efforts will contribute to our Nation’s success and security. And as the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found, the “DREAM Act” would cut the deficit by \$2.2 billion over the next 10 years. I strongly urge the U.S. Senate to also pass the “DREAM Act” so that I can sign it into law as soon as possible.

This vote is a vitally important step to doing what the American people expect their policymakers to do: work together to address the Na-

tion’s most pressing problems. The “DREAM Act” corrects one of the most egregious flaws of a badly broken immigration system. A flaw that forces children who have grown up in America, who speak English, who have excelled in our communities as academics, athletes, or volunteers to put their lives and talent on hold at a great cost to themselves and our Nation.

I also congratulate the House for moving past the tired sound bites and false debates that have pushed immigration rhetoric into the extremes for far too long. The “DREAM Act” is not amnesty, it’s about accountability and about tapping into a pool of talent we’ve already invested in. The “DREAM Act” is a piece of a larger debate that is needed to restore responsibility and accountability to our broken immigration system broadly. My administration will continue to do everything we can to move forward on immigration reform; today’s House vote is an important step in this vital effort.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the President’s Export Council

December 9, 2010

Everybody have a seat, have a seat. Well, good morning, everybody. And thank you for once again coming together to help us figure out how we’re going to sell a lot of stuff all around the world.

I want to thank Secretary Locke and members of my Cabinet and administration. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. And I want to thank Jim and Ursula, the Chair and Vice Chairs of the President’s Export Council, and all the other members here today for your extraordinary work.

Now, everyone in this room is committed to promoting a strong and growing economy, one that’s creating jobs, fostering a thriving middle class, and extending opportunity for all who are willing to work for it.

And as we meet here, there is an important debate I think most of you are aware of on Cap-

itol Hill that will determine, in part, whether our economy moves forward or backward. The bipartisan framework that we’ve forged on taxes will not only protect working Americans from seeing a major tax increase on January 1, it will provide businesses incentives to invest, grow, and hire. And every economist that I’ve talked to or that I’ve read over the last couple of days acknowledges that this agreement would boost economic growth in the coming years and has the potential to create millions of jobs. The average American family will start 2011 knowing that there will be more money to pay the bills each month, more money to pay for tuition, more money to raise their children.

But if this framework fails, the reverse is true. Americans would see it in smaller paychecks that would have the effect of fewer jobs. So as we meet here today to talk about one

important facet of our economic strategy for the future, I urge Members of Congress to move forward on this essential priority.

Now, the top priority of my administration since I took office has been to get the American people back on their feet and back on the job in the aftermath of the most devastating recession in our lifetime. That's job one. But as I said in greater detail on Monday, we've also got to ask ourselves how do we position our economy to be strong, growing, and competitive in the long run.

One strategy that will help us do both—to create good jobs that pay well today and create new markets for jobs tomorrow—is to increase our exports to the rest of the world. That's why, in my State of the Union Address, I set a goal for America: We will double our exports for goods and services over 5 years. And I re-launched this Council because, as business leaders and labor leaders, as Members of Congress, and as members of my administration, I value your advice in terms of how we best achieve that goal.

What we all agree on is that we've got to rebuild our economy on a new and stronger foundation for growth. And part of that means getting back to doing what America has always been known for doing—what our workers and our businesses have always done best—and that's making great products and selling them around the world.

The world wants products made in America. We've got workers ready to make them. And the fact is, exporting is good for our economy. The more our companies export, the more they produce. The more they produce, the more workers they hire. Every \$1 billion that we increase in exports supports more than 5,000 jobs, and companies that export often pay better wages.

So at a time when jobs are in short supply, growing our export markets is an imperative. And growing our exports today will create the jobs of tomorrow. Ninety-five percent of the world's customers and the fastest growing markets are beyond our borders. If we want to find new growth streams for our economy, we've got to compete aggressively for those customers,

because other nations are competing aggressively. And as long as I'm President of the United States, we are going to fight for every job, every industry, every market, everywhere, and we intend to win.

That's why I set this goal. We're on track to meet it. Exports are up nearly 18 percent so far over last year. Today I'd like to offer an update on some of the steps we've taken to get there, and steps we're taking based on this Council's recommendations, to keep making progress.

Earlier this year, I launched the National Export Initiative, an effort to marshal the full resources of the Federal Government behind America's businesses, large and small, in order to best help them sell their goods, services, and ideas to the rest of the world.

One of the things I pledged to do as part of this initiative was to move forward on new trade agreements with some of our key partners. And I promised to do it in a way that secures a level playing field for our companies and a fair shake for our workers without compromising our most cherished values.

That's why I am so pleased that the United States and South Korea reached agreement on a landmark trade deal last week. We expect this deal's tariff reductions alone to boost annual exports of American goods by up to \$11 billion. And all told, this agreement, including the opening of the Korean services market, will support more than 70,000 American jobs.

I hoped to finalize this agreement—I had hoped to finalize this agreement when I traveled to Korea last month, but I didn't agree to it at that time for one simple reason: It wasn't yet good enough for our workers or our economy. As much as I believe that looking out for American workers requires competing in the global marketplace, I also believe that as we compete in the global marketplace, we've got to look out for American workers. So I said let's take the time to get this right. And we did.

It is now a deal that is good for our workers, good for our businesses, good for our farmers, good for our ranchers, good for aerospace, good for electronics manufacturers. In particular, American car and truck manufacturers will have more access to Korea's markets. And here at

home, we'll encourage the development of electric cars and green technologies and continue to ensure a level playing field for our automakers.

It's also good for our friend and ally South Korea. They will grow their economy, gain greater access to our markets, and will also get American products that'll be more affordable for Korean households and businesses. And that means more choices for them and more jobs for us.

And it's good for American leadership. As I've insisted all along, it—the deal that we've struck includes strong protections for workers' rights and environmental standards, and as a consequence, I believe it's a model for future trade agreements that I will pursue.

It's an agreement supported by Members of Congress on both side of the aisle and Americans on all sides of the political spectrum, from the UAW to the Chamber of Commerce. And I look forward to working with Congress and leaders in both parties to approve it, because if there's one thing we should all agree on, it's creating jobs and opportunity for the American people.

Another thing that we said we'd do is to go to bat as a stronger advocate for our businesses abroad. This is an effort that I pledged to lead personally. And that's why, on the same trip where we were working to get the Korea deal done, I visited India to highlight the role American business played there and took the opportunity to sell our exports to one of the fastest growing markets in the world. While I was there, we reached several landmark deals, from Boeing jets and GE engines to medical and mining equipment, deals that are worth nearly \$10 billion in exports and will support more than 50,000 American jobs.

I also believe that strong economic partnerships can create prosperity at home and advance it around the world. And that's why we focused on deepening our economic cooperation with Russia on a range of fronts, from aerospace to agriculture, including restarting American poultry exports earlier this year, which was an important victory for many American farmers. I believe that Russia belongs in the WTO and that we should support all efforts to make

that happen. I think President Medvedev is doing important work trying to reform and move Russia forward on a whole host of issues, and I told him that the United States would be a partner with him in that effort. Welcoming Russia to the WTO would be good for them; it would also be good for us and good for the global economy.

Finally, we've also been working to reform our export control system with high-tech companies like some of yours in mind, so that American firms that make products with national security implications can stay competitive even as we better protect our national security interests.

When this Council met in September, some of you asked that we make it easier for businesses to participate in these reform efforts. So today I am pleased to announce that we're publishing a first set of guidelines for what products should be controlled going forward and the licensing policies that will apply to them. As an example, we've applied those policies to one category of products. In that one category, about three-quarters of products previously subjected to stricter controls will be shifted to a more flexible list, and many are expected to fall off the list altogether. And we want input from businesses, from Congress, and from our allies as we complete this reform.

Today we're also unveiling a new export control reform web page as part of the revamped export.gov. This is something that Secretary Locke mentioned in our last meeting. Typically, all businesses that export have to go through a maze of different lists, different formats, from different departments, to make sure they're not selling their products somewhere or to someone that they shouldn't be. As important as that is, the process is repetitive; it's redundant and particularly onerous for small businesses without the means to navigate it all.

So we're changing that. Effective today, businesses can, for the very first time, go to export.gov and download one consolidated list of entities that have special export requirements.

So that's a lot of work that we've been doing to double our exports, to open up new markets and level the playing field for American workers and businesses, all with the overarching purpose

of growing and strengthening the American economy.

I'm very much looking forward to the discussion we're going to be having as you guys continue your work. I'm grateful for all of you for being here, because while those around this table may not always agree on every issue, what does bind us together is that we want to see our businesses grow. We want to see our workers get hired. We want our people to succeed. We want America to compete. We want to stay on

top in the 21st century. And I'm confident we can do that with your help.

So thank you very much, everybody. And I think you guys are going to strike this podium so I can sit down and listen a little bit. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:19 a.m. in Room 430 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to W. James McNeerney, Jr., Chair, and Ursula M. Burns, Vice Chair, President's Export Council.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 9, 2010

The President. Merry Christmas, everybody!

Audience members. Merry Christmas!

The President. Happy holidays. We are just thrilled to have all of you here.

Thank you, Secretary Salazar, for the kind introduction and for all that you're doing to protect our national parks and our public lands for the future of generations. I also want to recognize Neil Mulholland and everyone at the National Park Foundation and at the National Park Service who helped put this event together.

I want to thank Pastor Darrell Morton for that wonderful invocation, and of course, thanks to Common and all of tonight's performers for joining us here as we light the National Christmas Tree for the 88th time.

This is a very proud holiday tradition. Snow or shine, in good times and in periods of hardship, folks like you have gathered with Presidents to light our national tree. Now, it hasn't always gone off without a hitch. On one occasion, two sheep left the safety of the nativity scene and wandered into rush-hour traffic. [*Laughter*] That caused some commotion. [*Laughter*]

Often, the ceremony itself has reflected the pain and sacrifice of the times. There were years during the Second World War when no lights were hung in order to save electricity. In the days following Pearl Harbor, Winston Churchill joined President Roosevelt to wish our Nation a happy Christmas even in such perilous days.

But without fail, each year, we have gathered here; each year, we've come together to celebrate a story that has endured for two millennia. It's a story that's dear to Michelle and me as Christians, but it's a message that's universal: A child was born far from home to spread a simple message of love and redemption to every human being around the world.

It's a message that says no matter who we are or where we are from, no matter the pain we endure or the wrongs we face, we are called to love one another as brothers and as sisters.

And so during a time in which we try our hardest to live with a spirit of charity and good will, we remember our brothers and sisters who have lost a job or are struggling to make ends meet. We pray for the men and women in uniform serving in Afghanistan and Iraq and in faraway places who can't be home this holiday season. And we thank their families, who will mark this Christmas with an empty seat at the dinner table.

On behalf of Malia, Sasha, Michelle, Marian—who's our grandmother-in-chief—[*laughter*—and Bo—don't forget Bo—I wish all of you a merry Christmas and a blessed holiday season.

And now I'm going to invite the entire Obama crew up here to help me light this Christmas tree.

All right, everybody, we're going to count from five: five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:18 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he