

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DNC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

April 26, 2013

President Obama: "America needs towns like West"



On Thursday, President and Mrs. Obama traveled to West, Texas where they attended a memorial service honoring the victims of last week's deadly explosion at a local fertilizer plant.

In his remarks, the President offered his prayers and for all those who were lost or injured and their families.

The President also paid tribute to the first responders and volunteers who rushed to the scene, risking their own lives trying to rescue their fellow man.

The President said:

"Today our prayers are with the families of all who we've lost -- the proud sons and daughters of West whose memories will live on in our hearts. Parents who loved their kids, and leaders who served their communities. They were young and old, from different backgrounds and different walks of life. A few were just going about their business. An awful lot ran towards the scene of disaster trying to help. One was described as the kind of guy whose phone was always ringing with folks in need of help -- help he always provided. That's just who these folks were.

"Our thoughts are with those who face a long road -- the wounded, the heartbroken, the families who lost their homes and possessions in an instant. They're going to need their friends in West, but they're also going to need their friends in Texas, and their friends all across this country. They'll still need you to answer that call. They will need those things that are lasting and true. For, as Scripture teaches us, "a friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

President Obama spoke of the unity and steadfastness the community has shown in the wake of the tragedy, saying:

"America needs towns like West. That's what makes this country great, is towns like West. 'For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us. We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.'

"You have been tested, West. You have been tried. You have gone through fire. But you are and always will be surrounded by an abundance of love. You saw it in the voices on those videos. You see it in the firefighters and first responders who are here. All across America, people are praying for you and thinking of you. And when they see the faces of those families, they understand that these are not strangers -- these are neighbors. And that's why we know that we will get through this."

Click [here](#) to read President Obama's full remarks.

Vice President Biden Honors Slain M.I.T. Officer

On Wednesday, Vice President Biden delivered remarks at the memorial service for Sean Collier – the M.I.T Police Officer Sean Collier killed by the Boston Marathon bombers while on duty last Thursday evening.

Officer Collier, 26, was expected to be sworn in as a Police Officer with the Somerville Police Department in June, fulfilling a life-long dream.

In a statement, his family said: "Our only solace is that Sean died bravely doing what he committed his life to – serving and protecting others."

Vice President Biden recounted some of the stories that have been shared in the week since Officer Collier's death. Through these stories, the Vice President said, even those of us who never had the opportunity to know Sean are inspired by his sense of duty and moved by his kind heart.



The Vice President said:

"You are an incredible family. I watched the brothers and sisters on the "Today" show on Monday. You gave me hope and brought me and millions of others to tears. But you painted a vivid picture of your brother so everyone could understand. What stuck with me the most and probably hundreds of stories that have been told and written about since Sean's death was when you were -- I believe it was at a restaurant at Papa Gino's and he turned to you, mom, and said, there's a lady crying over there. You're a nurse. Go talk to her. Go talk to her. From what I've learned since then, that's who he has been his whole life. That's why he did what he did with the students here on campus.

"That's why of all the things I've read, not knowing Sean, the one that struck home the most to me... was the student who was quoted as saying "He loved us and we loved him." It's not a surprise, James, that they may have loved him, but to love him because they knew he loved them. What a remarkable son. What a remarkable brother."

[President Obama Joins All Living Presidents at Dedication of Bush Library](#)

On Thursday, President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Dallas for the dedication of the George W. Bush Presidential Library.



The occasion also marked the first time that all the living former Presidents – Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush – were brought together since right before President Obama took office in 2009.

In his remarks, President Obama commended President George W. Bush's resolve in the wake of the attacks on 9/11, complimented his commitment to improving elementary and secondary education, and praised his dedication to immigration reform.

President Obama also spoke of the particular bond shared by former presidents and shared a story that illustrated President Bush's understanding of the challenges that all American presidents inevitably face.

The President said:

"The first thing I found in that desk the day I took office was a letter from George, and one that demonstrated his compassion and generosity. For he knew that I would come to learn what he had learned -- that being President, above all, is a humbling job. There are moments where you make mistakes. There are times where you wish you could turn back the clock. And what I know is true about President Bush, and I hope my successor will say about me, is that we love this country and we do our best."

Read President Obama's full remarks [here](#).

President Obama Addresses Planned Parenthood Conference



President Obama reaffirmed his commitment to the principal belief that has guided Planned Parenthood for nearly a century – that women should be allowed to make their own decisions about their own health – in his remarks at the organization’s national conference today.

The President recognized the countless doctors, nurses, advocates and staff, thanking them for working hard every day to ensure that Planned Parenthood continues to serve the millions of women who rely on the organization for their health services.

President Obama said:

“Somewhere there’s a woman who just received a new lease on life because of a screening that you provided that helped catch her cancer in time. Somewhere there’s a woman who’s breathing easier today because of the support and counseling she got at her local Planned Parenthood health clinic. Somewhere there’s a young woman starting a career who, because of you, is able to decide for herself when she wants to start a family.

The President addressed the political attacks on Planned Parenthood in recent years, saying that when politicians threaten to cut funding for Planned Parenthood, they’re “talking about shutting those women out at a time when they may need it most -- shutting off communities that need more health care options for women, not less.”

Even “after decades of progress,” the President said, “there’s still those who want to turn back the clock to policies more suited to the 1950s than the 21st century. And they’ve been involved in an orchestrated and historic effort to roll back basic rights when it comes to women’s health.

The President applauded Planned Parenthood’s supporters, health care professionals, and staff for their resolve in the face of such efforts, attributing it to an acute understanding of the importance of their work.

President Obama said:

“And that’s because you never forget who this is all about. This is about a woman from Chicago named Courtney who has a disease that can leave women infertile. So in college, she turned to Planned Parenthood for access to affordable contraceptive care to keep her healthy. You didn’t just help her plan for a family; you made sure she could start one. And today, she’s got two beautiful kids. That’s what Planned Parenthood is about.

“This is about a woman in Washington State named Joyce who for years could only afford health care at her local Planned Parenthood clinic. And heeding your advice, she never missed her annual exam. During one of them, your doctors helped catch an aggressive form of cervical cancer early enough to save her life. Today, she’s been cancer-free for 25 years.

“So every day, in every state, in every center that Planned Parenthood operates, there are stories like those -- lives you’ve saved, women you’ve empowered, families that you’ve strengthened. That’s why, no matter how great the challenge, no matter how fierce the opposition, if there’s one thing the past few years have shown, it’s that Planned Parenthood is not going anywhere. It’s not going anywhere today. It’s not going anywhere tomorrow.”

Watch President Obama’s remarks [here](#).

President Obama Honors 2013 Teacher of the Year

On Tuesday, President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan honored Jeff Charbonneau, the 2013 National Teacher of the Year.

President Obama told the inspiring story of how Jeff, a chemistry, physics, and engineering teacher at Zillah High School in Washington State, returned to his hometown eleven years ago determined to revamp the school's science curriculum.

The President said:

"And now, with Jeff's leadership at his high school, science enrollment is way up. Kids are graduating at college-level science -- with college-level science credits. The school expects to have to hire more teachers now to meet the demand."

The President said that Jeff's passion and commitment to his students is a quality shared by all of the other state Teachers of the Year, who were also attendance and stood behind the President at the ceremony.

President Obama said:

"I want you guys to know that the country appreciates you. The kids appreciate you. The parents appreciate you. What you do matters. It's critical to our success as a country, but most importantly, it's critical to those kids themselves. I cannot think of something more important than reaching that child who maybe came in uninspired, and suddenly, you've inspired them..."

"Educators like Jeff and everyone up here today, they represent the very best of America -- committed professionals who give themselves fully to the growth and development of our kids. And with them at the front of the classroom and leading our schools, I am absolutely confident that our children are going to be prepared to meet the tests of our time and the tests of the future."

Read the President's full remarks [here](#).



President Obama Celebrates Student Achievements at 5th Annual White House Science Fair

On Monday, President Obama celebrated the accomplishments of 100 young scientists and innovators from over 40 states at the White House Science Fair.

When President Obama launched the first-ever White House Science Fair in 2009, he said: "If you win the NCAA championship, you come to the White House. Well, if you're a young person and you've produced the best experiment or design, the best hardware or software, you ought to be recognized for that achievement, too."



Following a tour of the various exhibits, President Obama praised the students' outstanding achievements and thanked their parents, teachers, and mentors for supporting their curiosity, creativity, and imagination.

The President said:

"Of course, primarily we're here to celebrate these young scientists and visionaries who dream, and create, and innovate; who ask the question, why not? Why not try something better? Something that's faster; something that helps more people. And that drive, that refusal to give up, that focus on the future is part of what makes America great. And all of you are participants in this long line of inventors and creators that have made this the most dynamic economy and the most dynamic country on Earth..."

"We've got to do everything we can to make sure that we are giving these young people opportunity to pursue their studies and discover new ways of doing things. And we've got to make sure that we're also leaving behind a world that is safer and cleaner and healthier than the one we found. That's our obligation."

President Obama also marked the occasion by announcing several new components of his Educate to Innovate campaign – a united effort to inspire and empower young people to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) as a part of ensuring we are doing everything we can to equip the next generation of innovators.

The new steps announced included, among others, the launch of a new AmeriCorps track focused on STEM Education; the launch of *US2020* – a campaign to encourage companies to commit 20 percent of their STEM employees to 20 hours of mentoring or teaching annually by 2020; and an announcement of over 1,000 summer learning events planned as part of the upcoming Summer of Making and Connecting program supported by the MacArthur Foundation.

Click [here](#) to read more about President Obama's Educate to Innovate campaign.