

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

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Yesterday, President Obama held a year-end press conference highlighting twelve months of progress. In the President's own words, "This has been the most productive post-election period we've had in decades, and it comes on the heels of the most productive two years we've had in generations." To hear more of what the President had to say and to see the whole press conference for yourself, please visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2010/12/22/presidential-press-conference-a-historic-congressional-session>.

This week, President Obama signed the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.' Also this week, the Senate ratified the new START treaty, a critical arms control agreement that will increase America's national security. In addition, the President signed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and vowed to continue the fight for the DREAM Act.

What's Happening?

Repealing DADT: On Wednesday, the President signed into law legislation repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." In doing so, he put an end to that outdated and discriminatory policy, enabling individuals to serve openly in the military regardless of their sexual orientation. In advance of signing the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the President said:

"No longer will our country be denied the service of thousands of patriotic Americans who were forced to leave the military -- regardless of their skills, no matter their bravery or their zeal, no matter their years of exemplary performance -- because they happen to be gay. No longer will tens of thousands of Americans in uniform be asked to live a lie, or look over their shoulder, in order to serve the country that they love."



START: Yesterday, the Senate ratified the new START treaty in a bipartisan vote. The new START treaty is an arms control agreement that is critical to America's national security and that will strengthen our relationship with Russia, an important ally. Following that ratification vote, DNC Chairman Tim Kaine said:

"I applaud the Senate for its bipartisan vote to ratify the new START treaty. As President Obama has said, that ratification is 'fundamental' to America's national security, and the vast majority of foreign policy experts on both sides of the aisle agree that it will help to make America safer and will strengthen our country's ties with Russia. The unflinching efforts of President Obama and Senate leaders to ratify the New START Treaty has made our nation stronger and more secure. Together, they proved that America's safety is a bipartisan issue, and one on which our leaders can work together to achieve progress."



Child Abuse and Prevention: On Monday, President Obama signed the reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which gives states the resources and tools needed to address neglect and abuse, including by funding shelters and service programs for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

In 2008, more than 700,000 children were the victims of abuse or neglect. This law will help to protect children like them all across the United States by addressing the tragic violence that still occurs all too often.

Fighting for a DREAM: Last weekend, Republicans in the Senate once again prevented the passage of the DREAM Act, which would provide a path to citizenship for young people who were brought to the United States as

undocumented immigrants by their parents. Despite Republicans' continued opposition to this legislation, President Obama vowed to continue fighting for it. Following Republicans' obstructionist vote, the President said:

"In an incredibly disappointing vote...a minority of Senators prevented the Senate from doing what most Americans understand is best for the country. As I said last week, when the House passed the DREAM Act, it is not only the right thing to do for talented young people who seek to serve a country they know as their own, it is the right thing for the United States of America. Our nation is enriched by their talents and would benefit from the success of their efforts. The DREAM Act is important to our economic competitiveness, military readiness, and law enforcement efforts..."

"It is disappointing that common sense did not prevail today. But my administration will not give up on the DREAM Act, or on the important business of fixing our broken immigration system. The American people deserve a serious debate on immigration, and it's time to take the polarizing rhetoric off our national stage...Moving forward, my administration will continue to do everything we can to fix our nation's broken immigration system so that we can provide lasting and dedicated resources for our border security while at the same time restoring responsibility and accountability to the system at every level."

Organizing for America

One for the History Books: On Wednesday, President Obama signed the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' into law, ending a years-long fight to end that outdated and discriminatory policy. In an email to OFA supporters, President Obama said:

"This victory belongs to you. Without your commitment, the promise I made as a candidate would have remained just that.

"Instead, you helped prove again that no one should underestimate this movement. Every phone call to a senator on the fence, every letter to the editor in a local paper, and every message in a congressional inbox makes it clear to those who would stand in the way of justice: We will not quit.

"This victory also belongs to Senator Harry Reid, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and our many allies in Congress who refused to let politics get in the way of what was right.

"Like you, they never gave up, and I want them to know how grateful we are for that commitment."

To join President Obama in showing your gratitude to the lawmakers who made the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' possible, please visit <http://my.barackobama.com/Repealed>.

Key Issues in the News and Background

Talking Points: Repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

- The outdated 17 year old law and longstanding injustice known as 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' has been ended, thanks to the hard work of President Obama and Congressional leaders. The repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' will increase our national security and uphold the ideals that America's service members risk their lives defending.
- The repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is the right thing to do for our military, and it's the right thing to do for America. Never again will patriotic American service members be forced to live a lie or leave the service because of their sexual orientation.
- As our country undertakes the repeal process outlined in the repeal legislation, it's important to recall that the old 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy will remain in effect until 60 days after President Obama, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certify that our nation's military readiness will not be affected by the implementation of repeal. But President Obama and every one of the service chiefs has committed to implementing repeal as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- It's natural that there will be some anxiety regarding the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.' But our service members and military leaders are both professional and patriotic, and President Obama believes that we can

transition away from 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' in a manner that increases our military readiness and America's national security.

- The sexual orientation of America's service members is of no relation to the level of honor, integrity, and courage they bring to their work. So President Obama hopes that those service members who were discharged under 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' will reenlist once repeal has been implemented.
- This law has a clear message: if Americans want to enlist in the military to defend our country, then we want them to be able to serve, and we will welcome them into the ranks of our military services.
- America welcomes the service of every patriot. Our nation is grounded on the belief that all men and women are created equal, and we are upholding that ideal with the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'

Talking Points: New START Ratification

- President Obama is grateful that the Senate has approved the new START treaty in a bipartisan vote. That treaty will strengthen America's national security, and it is an important item on President Obama's foreign policy agenda. The vote to ratify START shows that Democrats and Republicans are able to work together on national security issues.
- During the seven months since President Obama submitted the START treaty to the Senate, Senators gave it careful consideration. They held 18 hearings, had scores of briefings, and entered almost 1,000 questions and answers into the record. After such a thorough vetting, it became clear to many people – including every living former Secretary of State and an incredible number of foreign policy experts – that the new START treaty will make our country safer and more secure.
- New START is the most important arms control treaty in almost two decades. It responsibly reduces the number of nuclear weapons and launchers in the United States and Russian arsenals by 30%, while maintaining America's nuclear deterrent.
- It establishes an effective verification regime for tracking Russia's strategic nuclear weapons, one that will put U.S. inspectors on the ground. That is critically important as we have had no inspectors on the ground since the old treaty expired a year ago.
- The new START treaty is also critical to America's relations with Russia. Russia is a key ally in our efforts to put strong sanctions on Iran for its nuclear program, to supply our service members in Afghanistan, to secure vulnerable nuclear material around the globe, and to increase European security.
- START is in keeping with a long tradition of bipartisan cooperation on these issues. Its bipartisan ratification – and the support it received from our military leadership, senior statesmen and women from both sides of the aisle, and American allies – demonstrates the President's leadership.
- Ratification of the new START treaty demonstrates American leadership on non-proliferation issues, reinforces America's relationship with a critical ally, and makes America safer.

Talking Points: Post-Election Accomplishments

- This has been the most productive post-election period America has seen in decades, and it has been a fitting capstone for two of the most productive years in American history.
- President Obama and Congressional leaders heard voters' message in November. They joined together and took vital steps to boost economic recovery and increase America's national security, making progress on a number of important issues.
- The Senate ratified the new START treaty – the most important arms control agreement in almost two decades – in a bipartisan vote. In so doing, they demonstrated America's leadership on non-proliferation issues, reinforced America's relationship with a key ally, and made America safer.

- President Obama and Congressional leaders joined together to pass a package of middle-class tax cuts and unemployment insurance that will create jobs, support businesses, and boost growth. Although not everyone was happy with every element of that package, the bipartisan support it received illustrates that on the whole, it is a good deal for America. And economists from both sides of the aisle would agree.
- They brought an end to the longstanding injustice created by 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.' Ending 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' was the right thing to do for America's military and for America as a whole. Never again will patriotic American service members be forced to live a lie or leave the military as a result of their sexual orientation. America upholds the ideal that all men and women are created equal, and the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' firmly establishes that ideal in the law.
- They passed a bipartisan food safety bill, undertaking the biggest upgrade of America's food safety standards since the 1930s.
- And they passed the 9/11 health bill that will cover the health care costs of the first responders who ran into the World Trade Center to help and inhaled toxic air during the rescue effort.
- While President Obama and Congressional leaders made significant progress, it's true they didn't accomplish everything they would have liked to have done. President Obama is disappointed that Congress didn't pass the DREAM Act, which would have allowed children brought to the United States as undocumented immigrants by their parents to obtain legal status by serving in the military or earning an education and contributing their talents to America.
- And it's regrettable that Congress couldn't agree on a budget that would fund America's government for the long term. President Obama expects a robust debate on this issue when Congress returns to Washington. Our leaders need to answer the important question of how to cut spending while still making the investments our country needs – in education, R&D, innovation, and other things that are essential to growing our economy, creating jobs, and competing with countries around the world.
- Despite those setbacks, the past several weeks have shown that Washington is not doomed to perpetual gridlock. Our leaders have shown that they have the capacity to make progress together by doing what's best for America.
- President Obama understands that there are going to be tough policy fights in the future, but he hopes that the spirit of the common purpose leaders have shown during the post-election period will carry over into next year. And if it does, that will continue to lift up the middle class and strengthen the economy.

Talking Points: U.S. Census Report on Reapportionment

- The U.S. Census data released this week is not the electoral crisis for Democrats that Republicans have been trying to make it out to be.
- We knew all along the areas where the American population is growing – and Democratic communities and constituencies are a large part of that population growth in states like Arizona, Florida, Nevada, and Washington.
- The new seats in those states will be competitive for Democrats. We're going to be on offense, not defense.
- As President Obama's victory showed in 2008, Democrats can compete in states all across the country. In fact, we were competitive in many places once believed to be lost causes for Democrats.
- Democratic candidates see opportunities in states all across the country – and we will fight to protect those opportunities by ensuring that every American has the opportunity to cast a vote and that no voters are disenfranchised during the redistricting process.

- While Republicans obsess over these numbers, we'll continue fighting for America's middle class families and working to restore the American Dream.