

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

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In Oklahoma, President Obama Offers Condolences of a Nation



On Sunday, President Obama traveled to Oklahoma where he paid tribute to the victims and all those affected by the recent tornado that caused severe damage, devastation, and heartbreak.

The President visited Plaza Towers Elementary School where he offered condolences on behalf of all Americans and reassured the community of his promise to help Moore rebuild.

President Obama said that Moore, like Joplin and New Jersey before it, will rebuild – and the nation is standing by to help.

President Obama said:

"When we say that we've got your back, I promise you, we keep our word. If you talk to folks in Alabama who have been affected over the last couple of years; you talk to the folks at Joplin, who I know have actually sent volunteers down here to Moore; if you talk to folks in New Jersey and New York, they'll tell you that when we say we're going to be there until you completely rebuild, we mean it."

President Obama also paid a visit to Moore Fire Department Station #1, where he met with first responders. The President offered his gratitude and admiration for the first responders who worked around the clock throughout the disaster. The fire station continues to serve as a command center, at first for search and rescue, and now for survivor services.

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

President Obama Delivers Memorial Day Remarks at Arlington National Cemetery

On Monday, President Obama commemorated Memorial Day by laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and delivering remarks at Arlington National Cemetery.

The President thanked members of the armed forces and veterans for their service to this country, and honored our fallen heroes who lie at rest in Arlington.

President Obama said:

"It is here, on this hallowed ground, where we choose to build a monument to a constant thread in the American character -- the truth that our nation endures because it has always been home to men and women who are willing to give their all, and lay down their very lives, to preserve and protect this land that we love.



"That character -- that selflessness -- beats in the hearts of the very first patriots who died for a democracy they had never known and would never see. It lived on in the men and women who fought to hold our union together, and in those who fought to defend it abroad -- from the beaches of Europe to the mountains and jungles of Asia. This year, as we mark the 60th anniversary of the end of fighting in Korea, we offer a special salute to all those who served and gave their lives in the Korean War. And over the last decade, we've seen the character of our country again -- in the nearly 7,000 Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice on battlefields and city streets half a world away."

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

DNC Chair Commemorates Memorial Day

DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz released the following statement in honor of Memorial Day:

"This Memorial Day, we are reminded once again of the great commitment and sacrifice of all those who've given their lives in service to our country. Since our nation was founded, brave Americans have answered the call to serve, doing so with honor and pride. We owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to those who have devoted their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our way of life and ensure we live in a free and prosperous America.

"On Memorial Day, while we honor those who have died in service, we are also reminded of the families who mourn for loved ones lost while serving in our Armed Forces. We must remain committed to these husbands and wives and sons and daughters. While our gratitude will never replace the people we have lost, we must make sure that we as a nation show them the respect and give them the support they deserve."

President Obama: "The Jersey Shore is back in business"

On Tuesday, President Obama visited the Jersey Shore where locals are readying their communities and businesses for the 2013 summer season.

The President saw the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy firsthand last October when he last visited New Jersey. During Tuesday's visit, President Obama talked to affected families and business owners who have all played a part in the rebuilding effort and had an opportunity to see the tremendous progress that has been made over the past several months.

President Obama said:



"Now, we all understand there's still a lot of work to be done. There are homes to rebuild. There are businesses to reopen. There are landmarks and beaches and boardwalks that aren't all the way back yet. But thanks to the hard work of an awful lot of people, we've got wonderful shops and restaurants and arcades that are opening their doors. And I saw what thousands of Americans saw over Memorial Day Weekend: You are stronger than the storm. After all you've dealt with, after all you've been through, the Jersey Shore is back and it is open for business, and they want all Americans to know that they're ready to welcome you here.

"If anybody wondered whether the Shore could ever be all right again, you got your answer this weekend. From Sea Bright to Bay Head, from Belmar to Seaside Heights, folks were hanging out on balconies and beaches. Shows were sold out at the Stone Pony. Kids were eating ice cream and going on rides, going and eating some more ice cream. Guys were trying to win those big stuffed animals to impress a special girl."

In the months since Hurricane Sandy hit, President Obama and his administration have coordinated with state and local officials to help the recovery process, providing aid to families and governments across the region. President Obama promised that help will continue until the work is done, saying: "We're going to keep doing what it takes to rebuild all the way and make it better than it was before, make it stronger than it was before, make it more resilient than it was before."

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

Vice President Biden, Dr. Jill Biden Visit Brazil, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago

This week, Vice President and Dr. Jill Biden traveled to Brazil, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago. In each country, the Vice President met with leaders to discuss a wide array of bilateral and regional issues.

In Brazil, the Vice President had the opportunity to meet with President Rousseff and Vice President Temer. The leaders discussed ways through which we can amplify our economic and commercial partnership and expand our engagement on the broad array of bilateral, regional, and global issues that connect our two nations.

Vice President Biden said:

"In the U.S. the discussion is no longer what it was when I was first elected as a young man: What could we do for the Americas? That's long since gone. The issue now is: What can we do together? What can we do together?"

"And President Obama and I believe that the times present an incredible opportunity for a new era of relations between the United States and the Americas. We've never had so many capable partners. And American attitudes have changed as well. But none – no partner is more significant in this endeavor than Brazil."

In Colombia, the Vice President joined President Santos for a bilateral meeting where the two leaders discussed a variety of issues ranging from how we can continue to build upon security relations to focusing on ways to further the prosperity of our two countries. The Vice President noted that United States exports to Colombia are up 20 percent since our free trade agreement went into effect a little over a year ago.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Vice President met with Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar as well as leaders of other Caribbean countries. The trip offered an important chance to discuss our collective efforts to promote economic growth and development, access to energy and improved citizen security.

President Obama: "Higher education cannot be a luxury for a privileged few"

This morning, President Obama urged Congress to take action to prevent federal student loan rates from doubling on July 1.

Speaking in the Rose Garden surrounded by students, the President called on America's young people to once again make their voices heard on the issue of college affordability.

President Obama said:

"Last year, you convinced 186 Republicans in the House and 24 Republicans in the Senate to work with Democrats to keep student loan rates low. You made something bipartisan happen in this town that is -- that's a

powerful thing. You guys were able to get Democrats and Republicans to vote for something that was important. So this year, if it looks like your representatives have changed their minds, you're going to have to call them up again or email them again or Tweet them again and ask them what happened, what changed?"

The President emphasized that increasing access to college doesn't just benefit young people—it's crucial for the nation as a whole.

The President said:

"Higher education cannot be a luxury for a privileged few," he said. "It is an economic necessity that every family should be able to afford, every young person with dreams and ambition should be able to access...Now is the time to reaffirm our commitment to you and the generation that's coming behind you, and that if we work together to generate more jobs and educate more kids and open up new opportunities for everybody who's willing to work and willing to push through those doors of opportunity, America can't be stopped."

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



Celebrating Progress at the DNC's Annual LGBT Leadership Gala

In a post on our blog, DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz recounts this year's DNC LGBT Leadership Gala:

"Wednesday night, I attended the DNC's annual LGBT Leadership Gala — and wow was it a great night!

"Not only did we have our fabulous First Lady, Jason Collins, Sara Bareilles, and Andy Cohen in attendance, we had hundreds of Democrats fired up and ready to fight for equality.

"There is no gay agenda or straight agenda. As Democrats, our only agenda is full equality under the law for every American. Because this issue isn't about politics, it's about people's rights.

"For so many Americans, when the President signed the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, it was personal. When he put in place hospital visitation rights for LGBT couples, it meant the world to some couples. When his administration established and developed the first comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Strategy, it was life-changing. And when his administration filed a brief with the Supreme Court urging them to strike down Proposition 8, he sent the message that we as Americans will not tolerate inequality.

"Of course there is more to do. But by coming together at events like last night's and supporting the President and Democrats in Congress, we can do it.

"It is an undeniable fact that after years of dogged determination by LGBT leaders, activists and grassroots supporters, the tide is turning in our favor. But we can't turn back for a second.

"We need to support candidates who are working toward real equality.

"Please join us and fight for equal rights for every American."

Please see below a new DNC video, which was shown for the first time at the DNC LGBT Gala earlier this week.

2013 DNC LGBT Gala Video – Celebrating Progress:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW2uumM2UVA&feature=youtu.be>

President Obama Celebrates AAPI Heritage Month

On Wednesday, President Obama spoke to more than 200 members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community at a White House celebration of AAPI Heritage Month.

In the audience were national, state, and local community leaders, elected officials, leaders of philanthropic, youth and arts organizations, and members of the Obama Administration, including Sri Srinivasan, who was recently confirmed unanimously by the Senate to become the first South Asian American federal appeals court judge.



The President spoke about the myriad contributions of generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, who, as he said, “helped build this country, and helped to defend this country, and to make America what it is today.”

President Obama said:

“We value these voices because from the very beginning, ours has been a nation of immigrants; a nation challenged and shaped and pushed ever forward by diverse perspectives and fresh thinking. And in order to keep our edge and stay ahead in the global race, we need to figure out a way to fix our broken immigration system—to welcome that infusion of newness, while still maintaining the enduring strength of our laws. And the service and the leadership of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have proved that point time and again.”

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

First Lady Welcomes Student Helpers to White House Kitchen Garden Summer Harvest



On Tuesday, a group of student helpers joined First Lady Michelle Obama for the summer White House kitchen garden harvest. The First Lady invited children from two New Jersey communities that were affected by Hurricane Sandy. In addition, all of the children who helped plant the garden in April were invited back so they could see the results of their work.

After the First Lady and the children were done harvesting, they were able to try some of the vegetables they picked on a grilled garden pizza.

Watch a video of The First Lady’s remarks [here](#).