

# THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

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This week, President Obama spoke out on the situation in Libya and showed his support for the resolution passed by the United Nations Security Council Thursday night to impose a no-fly zone over the country. It will be a multilateral and focused mission. Also this week, President Obama reaffirmed America's support for the people of Japan in the wake of the devastating earthquake and tsunami last week. On Monday, the President visited Kenmore Middle School in Virginia as part of an ongoing effort to shed light on America's education system and emphasize the changes needed to make America competitive in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. On Thursday, the President welcomed Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny to the White House in honor of St. Patrick's Day. In addition, President Obama penned an op-ed in the *Arizona Daily Star* calling for a civil national debate about reforming our nation's gun laws. Throughout the week, the Administration observed *Sunshine Week*, a national initiative to celebrate and focus on government transparency and open government.

**Statement on Libya:** On Friday, President Obama spoke about the ongoing events in Libya and his support for the United Nations' resolution to impose a no-fly zone over the country and a focused mission. Stressing the international community would use all necessary measures to protect the rights of people in Libya, the President said:

"Instead of respecting the rights of his own people, Qaddafi chose the path of brutal suppression. Innocent civilians were beaten, imprisoned, and in some cases killed. Peaceful protests were forcefully put down. Hospitals were attacked and patients disappeared. A campaign of intimidation and repression began.

"In the face of this injustice, the United States and the international community moved swiftly. Sanctions were put in place by the United States and our allies and partners. The U.N. Security Council imposed further sanctions, an arms embargo, and the specter of international accountability for Qaddafi and those around him. Humanitarian assistance was positioned on Libya's borders, and those displaced by the violence received our help. Ample warning was given that Qaddafi needed to stop his campaign of repression, or be held accountable. The Arab League and the European Union joined us in calling for an end to violence.

"The United States of America will not stand idly by in the face of actions that undermine global peace and security. So I have taken this decision with the confidence that action is necessary, and that we will not be acting alone. Our goal is focused, our cause is just, and our coalition is strong."

**The Ongoing Situation in Japan:** On Thursday, President Obama spoke at the White House about the tragic events in Japan. He made it clear that the American government is helping in any way it can. In his remarks, the President said:

"We've seen an earthquake and tsunami render unimaginable - an unimaginable toll of death and destruction on one of our closest friends and allies in the world. And we've seen this powerful natural disaster cause even more catastrophe through its impact on nuclear reactors that bring peaceful energy to the people of Japan...



"[T]he Japanese people are not alone in this time of great trial and sorrow. Across the Pacific, they will find a hand of support extended from the United States as they get back on their feet. After all, we have an alliance that was forged more than a half century ago, and strengthened by shared interests and democratic values. Our people share ties of family, ties of culture, and ties of commerce. Our troops have served to protect Japan's shores, and our citizens have found opportunity and friendship in Japan's cities and towns.

"Above all, I am confident that Japan will recover and rebuild because of the strength and spirit of the Japanese people. In the coming days, we will continue to do everything we can to ensure the safety of American citizens and the security of our sources of energy. And we will stand with the people of Japan as they contain this crisis, recover from this hardship, and rebuild their great nation."

**Helping Every Child Get Ahead:** On Monday, President Obama visited Kenmore Middle School in Virginia as part of an ongoing effort to shed light on America's education system and emphasize the changes needed to make America competitive in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. During his visit, the President spoke about how No Child Left Behind could best be reformed to help us win the future by leading the world in graduation rates and career-readiness. In his remarks, the President said:

"Last week we got a reminder of why it's so critical that we reform this law. According to new estimates, under the system No Child Left Behind put in place, more than 80 percent of our schools may be labeled as failing. And our impulse is to either be outraged that the numbers are so high, or skeptical that they're even true. And let's face it, skepticism is somewhat justified. We know that four out of five schools in this country aren't failing. So what we're doing to measure success and failure is out of line.



"We need to make sure some of our best teachers are teaching in some of our worst schools. We need to reward schools that are doing the difficult work of turning themselves around. We're going to have to take a series of steps across a broad range of measures to not only target our most troubled schools, but also raise expectations for all our schools.

"Every day in this country, teachers are doing a heroic job for their kids every day. They're taking on the problems that follow students into class, come in early to re-write lessons, spending hours after school tutoring students. I know; my sister is a teacher. In South Korea, teachers are known as 'nation builders,' and I think it's time we treated our teachers with the same level of respect right here in the United States of America. But if we're serious about treating teachers that way, if we're serious about educating all our kids with an excellent teacher, then we're going to have to fix No Child Left Behind."

**Meeting with Prime Minister Kenny:** On Thursday, President Obama continued a tradition of welcoming Irish Prime Ministers to the White House to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in a meeting with Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny. The two leaders talked about our countries' strong bilateral relationship. At a press conference following their meeting, the President said:

"We...have the strongest possible relationship with Ireland. The warmth, the affection, the familial and person-to-person contacts between our two countries extends far beyond any dry policy issues. There is just an incredible bond between our two countries.



"Ireland obviously plays an important role in the world. In addition, [they] actually have trainers in Afghanistan that have provided us great assistance. And I expressed my appreciation for those sacrifices. We've worked together on issues like international food security, and we will continue to work on those issues as well.

"Overall, the state of the relationship between our two countries is extraordinarily strong. This is a wonderful tradition each St. Patrick's Day for me to be able to once again reaffirm the great warmth and affection that we have towards the people of Ireland."

**Op-Ed on Gun Reforms:** This week, the President penned an op-ed in the *Arizona Daily Star* calling for a civil national debate about reforming our nation's gun laws. In particular, he noted that most gun owners act responsibly

and follow proper safety guidelines, but stated that we need to do more as a country to keep guns away from those we know to be dangerous. In the op-ed, the President said:

"The fact is, almost all gun owners in America are highly responsible. They're our friends and neighbors. They buy their guns legally and use them safely, whether for hunting or target shooting, collection or protection. And that's something that gun-safety advocates need to accept. Likewise, advocates for gun owners should accept the awful reality that gun violence affects Americans everywhere, whether on the streets of Chicago or at a supermarket in Tucson.

"First, we should begin by enforcing laws that are already on the books. Second, we should in fact reward the states that provide the best data - and therefore do the most to protect our citizens. Third, we should make the system faster and nimbler. We should provide an instant, accurate, comprehensive and consistent system for background checks to sellers who want to do the right thing, and make sure that criminals can't escape it.

"We owe the victims of the tragedy in Tucson and the countless unheralded tragedies each year nothing less than our best efforts - to seek consensus, to prevent future bloodshed, to forge a nation worthy of our children's futures."

**Government Transparency and Open Government:** This week, the Obama Administration participated in a national initiative to celebrate and focus on government transparency and open government. Called *Sunshine Week*, the effort highlighted the Administration's commitment to open government. For more information on how a transparent government fosters good government, click [HERE](#).

### **Key Issues in the News and Background**

#### **Talking Points: Winning the Future Means Reforming Our Education System to Keep America Competitive**

- If America is to follow through on President Obama's goal to win the future, we must make reforms to make us more competitive.
- The responsibility of ensuring our children get the best possible education and achieve the ability to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy falls on all Americans, not just parents.
- This means to win the future, we must out-educate the rest of the world. Not only must we leave no child behind, we must help every student get ahead and lead the way. The President proposed that we do that by implementing reforms that include:
  - Flexibility that promotes shared responsibility and college and career readiness and an accountability system that rewards achievement.
  - Support for state and local reforms and innovation that empowers teachers and principals.
  - Driving new resources to persistently low-performing schools and new efforts to ensure a great teacher in every classroom and a great principal in each school.
- The need for reform has never been greater with American students trailing our global competitors in reading, math and science.
- There is no better economic policy to win the future than out-educating other nations by investing in our children's future.

#### **Talking Points: Working Together for a Commonsense Budget; Strengthening Global Partnerships; Supporting Japan and Ensuring Nuclear Safety in the U.S.**

- President Obama has been clear that when it comes to finding common ground on a commonsense budget, funding the government two or three weeks at a time is not a responsible answer.

- Our leaders have to come together to find a common ground budget solution that reduces spending without slashing investments in things like education that will support growth and secure America's future.
- Reforming America's education system to enable our kids to win in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy isn't a partisan issue – it's an economic issue.
- We all have to take responsibility for giving our kids the best possible education. And our investments in education have to support reform and innovation at the state and local levels.
- At the same time, we live in a world that is more connected and competitive than at any point in history, and we have to seize new opportunities to jumpstart growth and support job creation here at home.
- That's why President Obama is traveling to Latin America – to strengthen America's international partnerships, which are not only critical to our country's economic growth but also to our nation's ability to out-compete the world and win the future.
- Every \$1 billion America exports supports more than 5,000 American jobs. That's why, last year, President Obama set a goal to double American exports by 2014.
- In part as a result of America's trade agreements with Latin American countries, we export three times as much to that region as we do to China. U.S. exports to Latin America are increasing faster than U.S. exports to any other part of the world, and before long those exports will support more than 2 million U.S. jobs.
- While Japan continues to deal with the unthinkable aftereffects of an earthquake, tsunami, and damaged nuclear reactors, the United States will continue to provide that country with resources and assistance.
- To guarantee the safety and effectiveness of America's nuclear facilities, President Obama has asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to apply lessons from Japan's tragedy and guarantee that the U.S. is consistently upgrading how we deal with nuclear safety here at home.