

[Home](#) • [Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, 5/5/10](#)

**The White House**

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 05, 2010

**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, 5/5/10**

**James S. Brady Press Briefing Room**

See below for answers to questions (marked with an asterisk) posed in the briefing that required follow up.

\*No. The new security protocols that superseded the emergency measures put in place after Christmas are in place because they are stronger and more effective than requiring additional screening for everyone from certain countries. The new measures apply to every individual traveling to the United States, from every country, not just people from certain countries. That original emergency measures were a useful short-term fix, but the threats we face are evolving, and because the new protocols are intelligence and threat-driven, they are flexible and can evolve in real time in a way that ensures we're putting into secondary screening individuals most likely to pose a threat to the United States.

\*\*While the FBI and other law enforcement agencies already receive notification when a person on a terror watch-list seeks to buy a gun and are committed to vigorously investigating such cases, many people are legitimately concerned that existing law still allows some people on watch-lists to buy guns. The Justice Department is reviewing its options for addressing this issue and for working with Congress to resolve it.

\*\*\*I'm not going to get into any detail about a pending criminal case. I can tell you that, in general, in national security cases the President and Brennan routinely receive briefings on pertinent information to keep fully abreast of developments and ensure inter-agency cooperation and follow-up action as appropriate. This is done through established mechanisms and in a way that ensures the integrity of the judicial and criminal process.

12:43 P.M. EDT

MR. GIBBS: Good afternoon. Take us away.

Q I have a question on the Times Square case. The requirement now that airlines check the no-fly list within two hours of an update instead of 24 hours -- is that being done because of the Times Square case and the fact that the suspect actually did get on an airplane?

MR. GIBBS: It's being done because a review of the situation finds that an airline is required every 24 hours to check the no-fly list. The suspect's name was entered a little after noon I believe on Monday; therefore, though on the no-fly list the airline didn't have to check necessarily at that point, the new rules require that that happen at a two-hour interval if airlines are notified that somebody has been added as a risk to the no-fly list.

I will say, again, as we said yesterday, the reason there are redundancies in the system is to allow for -- is to ensure that there are many mechanisms that would allow you to prevent somebody from flying -- which is what happened in this case. The CBP takes a locked manifest that's required to be filed 30 minutes before a flight with people that are on the plane -- that was checked against that list and the individual was removed from the plane.

Q Are there consequences for an airline that doesn't keep someone who is on a no-fly list off an airplane?

MR. GIBBS: I would point you to DHS on that. I don't know the specifics on that.

Q Robert, two questions, one on the Supreme Court and one on the oil spill. On the Supreme Court, can you tell us how the meeting went this morning with Senators Kyl and Hatch?

MR. GIBBS: I don't have a readout on the meeting. I know that the meetings were a result of conversations that the President had on the phone over the past several weeks with both senators. I have no doubt that the Supreme Court came up and was part of that discussion. I also would assume that other issues were covered in each one of those meetings.

Search WhiteHouse.gov

Search



**BLOG POSTS ON THIS ISSUE**

May 24, 2010 3:22 PM EDT

**[Donuts, Health Insurance, and Big Businesses](#)**

Looking at the role of employers in health care under the Affordable Care Act.

May 24, 2010 3:05 PM EDT

**[Auto Lender Lobbyists' Last Stand in the Senate](#)**

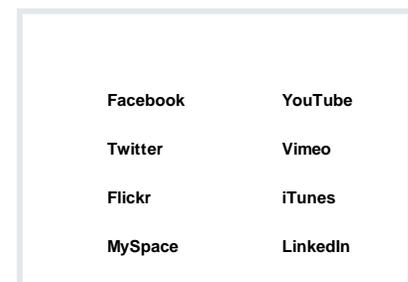
As auto-lending lobbyists make one last push to get the Senate to vote in favor of carving them out of Wall Street Reform, a reminder of the reasons not to heed them.

May 24, 2010 2:03 PM EDT

**[Adaptation Summit to Address Impacts of Climate Change, May 25-27](#)**

Addressing the nation from the Rose Garden last Friday, President Obama reminded us that the threats and impacts of climate change are both real and imminent. "We know that climate change poses a threat to our way of life," the President said. "In fact we're already seeing some of the profound and costly impacts."

**[VIEW ALL RELATED BLOG POSTS](#)**



Q Can you confirm that the list has been narrowed, and if so, to how many?

MR. GIBBS: I'm not going to get into characterizing where we are in the process, except to say that the President is in the midst of reviewing a number of very impressive candidates to pick one and announce that in due course.

Q And on the oil spill, Senator Reid has said he would support a cap for liability of \$10 billion. Is that a number that the White House would support, as well?

MR. GIBBS: I think \$10 billion was in the legislation that Senator Menendez and others introduced on Monday. After I got the question here about the \$75 million cap for -- obviously the three exceptions that we talked about, willful misconduct, gross negligence and not paying attention to -- or in violation of federal regulations that removes that cap -- OMB was working on -- in the process of working with the Hill on legislation to lift that cap.

I have not gotten from them a number whether it would be \$10 billion or something in that neighborhood. We would be in favor of significantly -- lifting that cap, a cap put in place in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 so at least 20 years old.

Q So you don't have a specific number?

MR. GIBBS: I don't have a specific number. I would reiterate, Jeff, that as the President said, BP is going to get a bill for the recovery, the cleanup and the damages cost.

Yes, sir.

Q The vice chair of the 9/11 Commission, Lee Hamilton, told ABC News yesterday that there was -- one of the -- among their recommendations was that the U.S. government crack down on the Border and Customs when it comes to people coming into this country and leaving this country. And he said the first part of that has largely been done, but the last part of it has not.

MR. GIBBS: When people leave?

Q Yes. I mean, we don't -- nobody has to show papers as they leave the country, and it's different in a lot of other Western countries. Other than this new TSA regulation when it comes to airlines checking their manifest and checking updates on the no-fly list, is the administration considering looking at this as a weakness?

MR. GIBBS: Let me check with -- obviously a couple of people that we have here worked on the 9/11 Commission and with Lee Hamilton, somebody the President is fond and familiar with. Let me check on what notion of what he's proposed and talked about we might also be looking at.

Q And do you have any response to reports that this individual Shahzad -- Faisal Shahzad, the Joint Terrorism Task Force did know about him, had been alerted about him years before? Is there any new information you have about --

MR. GIBBS: Not that I'm aware of, no. Not that I'm aware of. I have not seen that report. Let me take a look at it and see where the best place is --

Q Any new information from Pakistan you can tell us about, Pakistani government?

MR. GIBBS: Not that I want to get into.

Q Just a follow-up on Shahzad. There was a Pakistani Taliban spokesman who spoke on CNN earlier today, Azam Tariq, who said that Shahzad is not a part of their organization, that there is not link. Is there any reason to believe that that is true, or that he does not have these kind of international terrorist links?

MR. GIBBS: Well, let me just say this. We are in the midst of an ongoing investigation. Obviously, a big part of that ongoing investigation is to evaluate where he was and what he was doing during his time in Pakistan. Beyond that, I don't want to get into a lot of specifics on that at this point.

Q Does that have any credibility at all? Or is at least the Justice Department looking into it?

MR. GIBBS: The Justice Department is actively looking at, as well as others, looking at, as I said, the time he spent in Pakistan. But I don't want to get into -- I don't want to get into specifics.

Q And there's a police source that tells CNN that Shahzad has a brother that's in Canada by the name of Amir Shahzad, an engineer. Is that someone who the Justice Department or the administration is looking at?

MR. GIBBS: Let me point you over to Justice on -- or FBI specifically on that and whether or not they would even in all honesty discuss that publicly.

Yes.

Q Robert, can you shed -- on the oil spill, can you shed any light on why BP was exempted from the environmental impact analysis?

MR. GIBBS: Well, there are a series of reviews that have to -- you have to go through in order to get drilling permits, the process by which was referenced in that article as part of the review that Secretary Salazar is undergoing.

Q And on the Times Square incident, as I understand it, when Shahzad returned from Pakistan in February, he was screened under the policy then in existence for people coming from certain countries to be screened, and that information turned out to be valuable. If that policy had not been in place, and it is now not in place, then perhaps you wouldn't have gotten this information.

MR. GIBBS: I'm confused on your timeline here.

Q The policy was then in place that people coming from certain countries, including Pakistan, automatically were subjected to screening --

Q The 14 countries.

MR. GIBBS: Oh, I see. Well, let me check with NSC on that. I'm sorry, I was confused on your --

Q He came from one of the 14 countries that automatically -- people were automatically subjected to additional screening, and some information was obtained that was valuable in this investigation. In light of that, has any consideration been given to returning to that policy?

MR. GIBBS: Let me check with NSC on that, and Brennan specifically.\*

Q And one other -- can you shed any light on why -- on how he slipped away from FBI surveillance? Has that been --

MR. GIBBS: Again, for specifics on FBI stuff, I would point you over to FBI.

Q On Supreme Court, do you expect there will be more interviews?

MR. GIBBS: I don't want to get into that. I think the process is ongoing.

Q Why not? People are asking why not.

MR. GIBBS: I just -- the President is in the process of making a decision, and we'll let you know the outcome of that in due time.

Q When he does these interviews, are they one-on-one?

MR. GIBBS: Yes, usually. Well, I would say there's a one-on-one component, and then the Vice President has been involved separately, as are staff working on the process.

Q And just to let us into the process a little bit --

MR. GIBBS: I just gave you more than I probably meant to. (Laughter.)

Q Yes, I'm following up on a roll, here. What is the President trying to learn from these nominees? Is it about legal topics, or is it like a get-to-know-you?

MR. GIBBS: I'm not going to get much further than what I just talked about.

Q Okay. Then last thing, yesterday we asked a lot of questions about the no-fly list, and it seemed as though you were saying that although there may have been a problem with the carrier, that essentially the system had functioned properly. Now we hear about the new TSA changes. I mean, is that more or less an acknowledgement that the system didn't work perfectly?

MR. GIBBS: Well, again, Savannah, the description that I gave you yesterday and the description which was a description of the events prevented the individual from flying. The system is structured, again, so that in the event -- look, we have had -- I forget the exact facts, but we had -- you had names -- in the Christmas bombing you had names that were misspelled. You build in redundancy to a security system to ensure that you don't have to have a silver bullet strategy.

So the system is set up so that a series of checks are provided that prevented this person from flying. That having been said, the President will always look at in things that -- in any type of situation on a whole host of issues

on what can be improved --

Q Did he specifically express concern about that issue, how did this guy get on?

MR. GIBBS: Again, the administration acted to ensure that if a 24-hour period wasn't a timely enough process for ticket purchase, that that be expedited -- updated in order to provide -- I want to be careful to use "expedited" because I'm going to use it in a second -- that the list be refreshed for those that are put on in an expedited basis.

But again, the no-fly list in many cases prevents you from purchasing a ticket. But there are -- again, there's another check through Customs and Border Protection in order to ensure that we're checking the manifest both coming and going of flights.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Does the administration view this incident as at all a consequence of its stepped-up aggressive activity in Pakistan?

MR. GIBBS: Well, look, I think that -- I touched on this a little bit yesterday -- I think that since 9/11 our country has been under somewhat constant threat of terrorist activity. I think many of you have covered and written about an increase in our tempo not just in Southeast Asia but in Africa and around the world. As a result of that increased tempo, there has been a degradation in the command and control -- the upper command and control structure of al Qaeda, which I think has lessened their ability to plan and execute attacks of a spectacular nature like September 11. That has led them to smaller, less sophisticated attacks using less capability.

I think that is a function of part of that degradation in the senior al Qaeda leadership. I think that's what's caused -- that's what's caused, again, some of these attacks to be done on a smaller scale.

Q In terms of motives, do you think that this policy is at all fomenting a sense of radicalism among some people who may not otherwise have been interested in this activity?

MR. GIBBS: I don't -- I wouldn't want to generalize in the sense of necessarily, based on the pending investigation, attributing that to this individual without something more concrete. Again, I touched on yesterday there are those that seek to do us harm that are upset about the increased -- our increased presence in Afghanistan. So I think there could be a whole host of those -- a whole host of those types of purported explanations.

Q And finally, just to follow up on Savannah's question about the Supreme Court, I guess I don't understand why you're reluctant to just tell us what the President is hoping to achieve, what the general topics are that he --

MR. GIBBS: He's hoping to achieve in the interviews the selection of the best Supreme Court justice.

Q Why wouldn't you want to tell us a little bit more about his thought process as he goes about that very important task?

MR. GIBBS: We'll explain that.

Q In the past you've been a little more open about this. Have you been chastised somewhere along the way for speaking out?

MR. GIBBS: I'm no longer -- no, I just -- Chip, the truth is each day we -- as I said here yesterday, I'm not going to get into when or where or if we're not going to do this today. I said that's probably only going to cut down marginally on the number of times I get asked on e-mail whether we're doing it that day. Sure enough, it happened this morning. I get it. I just am not going to get a whole lot further.

Q Is he close to a decision?

MR. GIBBS: Yes.

Q Hmm.

MR. GIBBS: All right. I don't know if those little morsels help or just lead you to many more questions that I'm just not going to answer.

Q They do. They actually do.

Q Don't you think like every hour he's closer to a decision? (Laughter.)

Q Every minute.

Q What did Jake say?

MR. GIBBS: Jake --

Q Just chronologically.

MR. GIBBS: Jake likes my tie. (Laughter.)

Go ahead.

Q After the Christmas Day incident, the President used the words "systemic failure." Would you put this suspect's ability to plan a bomb and almost get away from the country in the same category as a systemic failure?

MR. GIBBS: No. Again, I think it's important to understand -- and I would point you to what Commissioner Kelly said yesterday -- the time elapsed from what happened -- the attempt in Times Square to having this terrorist in custody was done over an extraordinarily rapid time period. I think the seamlessness with which federal, state and local authorities worked together, as Commissioner Kelly said, is something that we have, in all of these investigations over -- I think this is true over many administrations -- you strive for. So I think in many ways, Peter, we want to celebrate the success of, rightly so, of what law enforcement was able to do.

That having been said, as I said here yesterday, the President uses any opportunity to evaluate whether we're doing -- whether what we're doing is as effective as it can be, and we'll change whatever needs to be changed.

Q Well, if it wasn't as grave, say, as a systemic failure, would you concede then there were some failures that allowed both the planning of the bomb and his ability to re-enter the U.S. and plant this bomb and almost get away -- there were a number of failures? What I'm getting at is, is the President going to --

MR. GIBBS: Well, I guess I would just ask you to be more specific about each one of your -- I don't want to try to parse what you're saying, but I don't --

Q Okay, the guy left the United States. He came back from Pakistan, and he was interviewed when he came back, because that policy was allowed.

MR. GIBBS: Right.

Q They had certain details about him. He was able to drive into Times Square, plant this bomb --

MR. GIBBS: I guess I'm not entirely sure what would -- I'm not the police commissioner for New York. I'm not the mayor of New York. I honestly don't know what would prevent somebody from driving into Times Square. I don't --

Q Well, drive into Times Square, fine. But to -- this guy had a background.

MR. GIBBS: But I think, Peter, you're intimating that somehow this guy was in a whole lot of databases prior to coming back that would lead you to believe that he was likely to crudely assemble something like this. And I'm just not sure the proof would bear that out.

Q Is the President going to order the same scale of a review that he ordered after the --

MR. GIBBS: Well, again, there was a -- the President had a regularly scheduled terrorism threat briefing that he has on a weekly basis. That was yesterday. They discussed this in that meeting. It took place while we were -- while I was out here briefing, so I was not in attendance.

Suffice to say, as I said just a few minutes ago and yesterday, the President will ask that all aspects of and steps be reviewed to ensure that we're as effective as we possibly can, even as we -- even as we're thankful that this individual in a very short period of time was arrested and is now being questioned.

Q I think what I'm getting at, Robert, is, is it going to be the same sort of date-certain, deadline review that --

MR. GIBBS: Not that I'm aware of. I had not heard the President or John say that, no.

Q Has the White House seen the language of the Dodd-Shelby amendment that's going to end "too big to fail"?

MR. GIBBS: I think we have -- I think either we have seen or are in the process of reviewing some of that. Obviously what we have been able to look at appears to preserve one of the President's core principles, and that is that never again should the taxpayers of this country be on the hook for the reckless irresponsibility of big banks or Wall Street.

Q So are you endorsing it?

MR. GIBBS: Well, again, we're continuing to look at it to ensure -- to evaluate all of it. Again, I think one of the big things in it appears to be the dropping of the fund that, as you all know, was not in our original proposal.

Q And will the administration seek legislation that would allow the government to block firearm sales to people that are on the terror watch list?\*

MR. GIBBS: I saw Mayor Bloomberg testify to that, and I've asked for guidance if we've taken a position on that bill or not.

Q Can you get back to us on that, Robert?

MR. GIBBS: Yes.

Q Thanks.

MR. GIBBS: Yes, sir.

Q Robert, does the White House believe it was a mistake for this categorical exemption to be granted to BP for Deepwater Horizon?

MR. GIBBS: That's part of the investigation. I don't know the answer.

Q Okay. So that's something that you're looking into presently?

MR. GIBBS: I would say -- as the President asked Secretary Salazar to undertake a 30-day review of what happened, that would certainly be part of the process under which he would evaluate it.

Q Ed Markey said yesterday -- I'm quoting him here directly -- "I'm of the opinion that boosterism breeds complacency and complacency breeds disaster. That, in my opinion, is what happened." Do you have any reaction to that? And he's saying there was something complacent about the federal regulators, meaning Minerals Management Service, dealing with this particular granting of the exemption.

MR. GIBBS: I'll be honest with you, Major, I think it would be premature to know -- I'm unaware that we know exactly what happened, and I wouldn't want to comment on that until we had a sense of exactly what happened.

Q -- happened?

MR. GIBBS: Again, I don't know that it's the -- I mean, again, you heard Secretary Hayes and others say that these -- that there were individual inspections of blowout preventers and rigs very recently. So I think that -- I think I'd wait until we had something more concrete from Secretary Salazar as to making a determination on that.

Suffice to say, though, that would certainly be part of, as I said, his review.

Q Some have noted that while senator and while running for President, Senator Obama received \$77,000 in contributions from BP. Taking note of that --

MR. GIBBS: From employees.

Q From employees, and also the BP PAC.

MR. GIBBS: The President --

Q Not -- as a senator, he received PAC contributions; obviously not as a candidate. To any who might see that as a part of this equation, you would say what?

MR. GIBBS: I'm sorry?

Q Receiving money and a regulatory decision at the Interior Department during his presidency.

MR. GIBBS: I would say that's silly and ridiculous.

Q Is Mayor Bloomberg coming over here, or Commissioner Kelly, since they're in town, to update the President on anything?

MR. GIBBS: Not that I'm aware of. Not that I'm -- I mean, obviously Commissioner Kelly was with the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI yesterday. But I am unaware that he's coming over here.

Q Reaction to Obey not seeking reelection?

MR. GIBBS: I just saw that before I came out, but I haven't had a chance to look through it.

Scott.

Q To follow on Savannah's question, yesterday you said there obviously is a carrier element in all this. It sounds like you're saying there probably isn't, right? They were not under an obligation, under the old TSA rules, to check the no-fly list?

MR. GIBBS: Well, what we want to do is prevent -- you add a name onto the list in an expedited -- in a way in which you've got somebody who is of great interest and could possibly pop up someplace like this trying to leave. What we want to do is ensure that there was a mechanism in place that requires that that list be continually changed -- again, the requirement that an airline do it every 24 hours -- they could do it more frequently, but they have to do it at least that frequently.

And it seemed common sense to the President and the administration to simply put in place the requirement that that be done every two hours if somebody is added to that list.

Q That sounds, though, like they complied with the old rules?

MR. GIBBS: I assume they'll go back and look through that.

Q Robert, this was supposed to be sort of a jobs theme week at one point, where you had the Business Council speech, go to New Jersey today, jobs numbers come out Friday. And as has happened before, external events interfere and then you have all these other things that are on your plate -- the "must pass" and the "would like to pass" legislation, when it's health care and now it's financial regulation, and SCOTUS nomination. Is the President frustrated that he isn't able to convey a sense that it's jobs, jobs, jobs here at the administration?

Q Well, let me give you two answers. First and foremost, I don't believe in any way shape or form that the President doesn't believe that financial reform has a lot to do with strengthening the economy and jobs. As a result of reckless decisions that Wall Street and big banks made, we lost 8.5 million of them. So I don't think that -- again, I wouldn't divorce those two issues.

Secondly, look, the nature of the presidency and the nature of being the leader of a country as big as the United States means that a lot of things can happen at the same time. I could not necessarily have predicted all of what the President is dealing with over the past four or five days, necessarily. But you always, in the back of your mind, know that that's a possibility.

That's not to say, though, that the President -- even as he works on the oil spill or on terrorism -- isn't making, as I said earlier, progress on selecting somebody for the Supreme Court, or speaking to the Business Council about strengthening our regulatory structure in order to strengthen our foundation for a stronger economy.

Q Do you think Americans associate financial regulation with job creation?

MR. GIBBS: I think they understand that because of the reckless decisions made by some big banks on Wall Street, that this economy got screwed up to the point where many of them lost their jobs. I think they can -- I think they definitely see that. I think they understand that the economic situation that they're dealing with -- whether it is with credit card debt, or whether their housing prices went down because their neighbor got a loan that they didn't fully understand all of the components of -- I think that very much impacts their personal economic situation to the point where -- I guess I don't think that it's all quite as segmented as many might think it is.

Q If I could just close on this?

MR. GIBBS: Yes.

Q I mean the House a long time ago passed its \$150 billion jobs bill.

MR. GIBBS: Right.

Q And so in the Senate there's now a welter of bills in different pieces to be smaller. And the upshot is nothing is really happening. What is the administration doing to sort of shake something out?

MR. GIBBS: Well, look, obviously financial reform is on the floor at the moment. We've made progress on individual things like the retrofitting and the Home Star legislation that we think will have a positive benefit, and we'll get a sense of where we stand on Friday with the jobs market.

Mark.

Q Robert, immigration reform -- is the President going to talk about that in any specificity tonight?

MR. GIBBS: He will. He will.

Q And is he going to take the opportunity to clear up what -- to set the record straight on what he said on Air

Force One, which has been interpreted as saying it ain't going to happen this year?

MR. GIBBS: You know, and having looked at it and having talked to him about that, I don't -- I think the President said that immigration is a very hard issue that Congress might not finish this year. I happen to believe that -- well, I don't think there's anybody that would disagree with that. I mean, it's a -- it is a big and complicated issue. We've seen that in the past, it takes Democrats and Republicans, even in the best of circumstances, to get this done.

The President has met with Senator Schumer and Graham, who were working on a bipartisan proposal. They asked him to do specific things to move immigration reform forward, which he's done. So I think he will discuss the need to continue to make progress on that even, as Jackie said, in a very busy legislative time.

Q Is he going to use the words "this year"?

MR. GIBBS: I think he will -- well, let me -- I'll give you a little preview once I get back and read over the direct remarks.

Q Does the President -- well, the suspect in the Times Square incident, they said yesterday, was talking, was being cooperative. Does the summary of what he has told interrogators come to the President or John Brenner?

MR. GIBBS: I think John likely gets all of that information. I'll double-check.

Q Is that appropriate for the investigative material from this suspect to be shared?

MR. GIBBS: Let me check with John and see. Obviously, the President gets from a whole host of entities in the daily briefing each day an update of where we are. Whether or not we get into the specifics of -- I will -- let me ask, John. I don't know exactly. He gets a -- there's a lot of stuff in that office, I know that.\*\*\*

Q David Obey's decision not to seek reelection, is that another sign that it's going to be a really bad year for incumbents?

MR. GIBBS: I simply saw the alert that he's not running. I have not looked at what the reasoning is, what his personal reasoning is for not seeking reelection. I said this a long, long time ago I think to a question that Chuck had asked, which is I think people make decisions about whether to run or not to run for a whole host of reasons. I don't doubt that the political environment is part of that reason, but I don't think that I would in any way say that that is the only reason. Again, there are a whole host of family and personal reasons that I -- in having dealt with candidates trying to make decisions about running for races that you certainly shift through.

Goyal.

Q Thanks, Robert. Two quick questions. One, as far as bomber is concerned, is there a message to be learned, or wakeup call, or you think the President -- time has come for the President to visit a local mosque? Because I have been talking to many Pakistanis here in the Springfield area. What they are saying is that because of this and many incidents where Pakistani nationals are being subjected to this issue, and they're afraid and scared of being targeted because many Pakistanis are good Pakistanis. You think the President should visit a local mosque?

MR. GIBBS: I can certainly talk to scheduling and see if that's something that's been discussed. I have not heard that.

Q And second, as far as BP oil spill is concerned, was there any -- from the company or from the U.S. outside help or outside expert --

MR. GIBBS: I think the State Department has fielded individual countries who have offered assistance in some way, shape or form, and are processing that through and getting that information to those at DHS and at the National Incident Command to ensure that any resources that can be helpful are used.

Peter.

Q Robert, just following up on immigration, some of the advocates would like to see kind of a health care-style summit meeting at the White House with proponents and opponents of immigration to sort of work it through. Is the White House open to that kind of summit meeting on the issue?

MR. GIBBS: Well, look, I don't know that I've heard that directly here. I would say, again, Peter, this is not an issue, as the President has seen in working on this issue in the Senate or as President, that is going to pass with the support of only one political party. And I don't know the degree to which there are, at least in the Senate, a tremendous number of, right now, Republican sponsors for that legislation. This isn't -- this is not going to pass only with one party's votes.

So the President was asked by those on a bipartisan basis working on this issue to call five Republicans to seek their help, and I think that has moved -- partly moved the process along.

Q Has the White House had any success in bringing any Republicans onboard? And does this issue -- does that effort continue even as we speak, or --

MR. GIBBS: Absolutely. Obviously people are involved here, and those that the President reached out to, many of them said that they would begin to get involved in and look at the process of what is happening up on Capitol Hill.

Yes, sir.

Q Robert, a question on "don't ask, don't tell." Just need some clarification on the Gates letter and the White House statement issued last week. Gates said in the letter that he strongly opposed any legislative action this year, and the White House \* delaying implementation until after the DOD study. Does this mean the President is ruling out endorsement of repeal this year as part of the Defense authorization?

MR. GIBBS: Let me get some guidance on that. I don't know the answer to that off the top of my head.

Q Can I follow on that, Robert?

MR. GIBBS: Sure.

Q Is the President potentially open to a scenario where Congress votes on repeal this year but delays implementation of repeal until the Defense Department study comes out? In other words, deferring to the Department of Defense timeline on implementation of a repeal?

MR. GIBBS: I have not heard that, but I will get an update on whether that's something that we have heard from the Hill or others around town about. I don't know the answer to that.

Q Has the President spoken to Secretary Gates recently about "don't ask, don't tell"?

MR. GIBBS: Not that I'm aware of.

April.

Q Robert, on several topics really fast. Immigration -- some are saying that -- on the Hill, Democrats on the Hill are saying, realistically, it's an issue that will have to be taken up in a second term if this President does have a second term. What is the realistic timeline to pick up on immigration?

MR. GIBBS: The President has begun work on it this year. April, I don't -- I think as a result of a lot of things, not the least of which is the law in Arizona, I don't think this is -- you're talking about not working on this -- you're talking about not making progress on this until 2013. I don't -- I have not heard that as anything that's been discussed in here. Who's saying that in Capitol Hill?

Q Some high-ranking Democrats. They said it Saturday night, matter of fact. (Laughter.)

MR. GIBBS: I'm wondering whether to probe on that, and I've decided that -- (laughter.) All right, I'm going to put it -- I'm putting it down. I'm slowly walking away. (Laughter.)

Q Wait, wait, wait.

MR. GIBBS: I'm going to let you go and ask another question.

Q No, but that was -- no, it was a -- they seriously said it. But moving on -- (laughter) --

MR. GIBBS: I love that you just had to get your last word in that I didn't probe you on the fact that at some after-party --

Q No, it was not an after-party, not an after-party. It was at the -- anyway, moving on, moving on. (Laughter.)

MR. GIBBS: Come on, even the look on your face, you knew when you had said that you had sort of got caught, didn't you? Go ahead. I'm going to let you move on. All right.

Q All right. When I asked you --

MR. GIBBS: As much fun as I was having. Go ahead.

Q And I wasn't going to fall into it. (Laughter.) Anyway, when I asked you was he -- the President, closer to making a decision, you said yes. That leads me to believe that maybe he is whittling down his list. Am I correct in assuming that?

MR. GIBBS: Look, again, I'm just not going to get -- I'm not going to move the public process that much more forward, except to say what I've said here in terms of I do think he's getting closer, yes.

Q All right, and on HBCUs, this weekend begins the weekend where the President and the First Lady give commencement addresses, and then the rest of the -- a large portion of the administration will be delivering commencement addresses to many of the 105 HBCUs. Why now this plethora of administration officials going to HBCUs to deliver commencement addresses versus last year when the President and Mrs. Obama did not deliver any? And there was a concern within the HBCU community that many of the young HBCU students got out and voted for this President, and it was just nothing last year. And now it's an overwhelming show at commencement season.

MR. GIBBS: I'm not entirely sure that -- I don't have a list of all the commencements that administration officials did last year. Suffice to say, April, the President is not going to be, and the First Lady, aren't going to be able to do every college or university every year. We select a small number for the President and the First Lady each year in order for him to talk about a whole host of different topics, and I know he's looking -- I know both of them are looking forward to this weekend.

Glen.

Q One on immigration, one on BP. House Republican conference chairman, Mike Pence, today said that the people of the Gulf of Mexico "deserve better" than the response to the oil spill, and sort of characterized the administration's positioning of equipment and vessels there as being slow. Do you have a response to that?

MR. GIBBS: Well, I think it is as badly informed -- it sounds as badly informed as I think it is. Glen, there was an explosion on the night of April 20th that was responded to by the Coast Guard, looking for those that had been injured and those that were missing. The morning after the explosion, Secretary Salazar deployed Deputy Secretary Hayes to the region to assist the coordination and response and provide hourly updates to Secretary Salazar about what was happening.

On the 22nd when the rig sank, the National Response Team was activated, and later that day, the President convened a meeting in the Oval Office with all of those involved. There's an 18-page document on our website about all that was done. I'd be -- what exactly in that response did Mr. Pence find lacking?

Q Essentially he was just talking -- I think it was just generally sort of the positioning of vessels to deal with the spill, as opposed to the search and rescue.

MR. GIBBS: Well, when the first thing happens when you find who is on the rig and you try to get them to medical safety -- get them some medical care and find those that are missing. So is that the -- that's his whole thing? Interesting -- okay.

Q Immigration -- quick immigration question. The Phoenix Suns -- I don't know if you're aware -- have decided to use "Los Suns" on their jersey. What do you think of that? And do you think you're going to see more expressions of that?

MR. GIBBS: I think somebody at a higher pay level will probably talk about that a little later on today.

Q Thank you.

Q Who is that?

MR. GIBBS: Who is that? (Laughter.) Bo. (Laughter.) Bye, guys.

Q No, no, no, wait one more question --

MR. GIBBS: The President is speaking in two minutes, Sam, I know you don't want to miss a word.

END

1:28 P.M. EDT

## Home

### The White House Blog

### Photos & Videos

Photo Galleries

Video

Live Streams

Podcasts

### Issues

Civil Rights

Defense

Disabilities

Economy

Education

Energy & Environment

Ethics

Family

Fiscal Responsibility

Foreign Policy

Health Care

Homeland Security

Immigration

Poverty

Rural

Seniors & Social Security

Service

Taxes

Technology

Urban Policy

Veterans

Women

Additional Issues

### Our Government

The Executive Branch

The Legislative Branch

The Judicial Branch

The Constitution

Federal Agencies & Commissions

Elections & Voting

State & Local Government

Resources

## Briefing Room

Your Weekly Address

Speeches & Remarks

Press Briefings

Statements & Releases

Presidential Actions

Featured Legislation

Nominations & Appointments

Disclosures

### President's Commission

### The Administration

President Barack Obama

Vice President Joe Biden

First Lady Michelle Obama

Dr. Jill Biden

The Cabinet

White House Staff

Executive Office of the President

Other Advisory Boards

### About the White House

History

Presidents

First Ladies

The Oval Office

The Vice President's Residence & Office

Eisenhower Executive Office Building

Camp David

Air Force One

White House Fellows

White House Internships

White House 101

Tours & Events

WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV

En español | Accessibility | Copyright Information | Privacy Policy | Contact USA.gov | Subscribe to RSS Feeds | Apply for a Job