The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Meeting with the Senate Republican Conference

The President had a good exchange with the Senate Republican Conference today about priorities for the balance of the year.

He asked for their cooperation in finishing work on measures to help create jobs and improve our economy, including one to help make loans available to small businesses; in ratifying the START treaty that is central to our long-term security and efforts at nuclear non-proliferation; and in confirming Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court in a timely manner, so she can take her seat when the court reconvenes after summer.

The President also urged the conference to work with him to address two major, unresolved issues: comprehensive immigration reform and energy legislation.

On immigration, the President noted that many in the conference have supported efforts before to fix a broken system and impose accountability at our borders, accountability for employers who undercut the law by hiring undocumented workers; and for the workers themselves, who are here illegally and must take responsibility. And he urged them to work with him across party lines to make progress on this issue.

On energy, the President told the conference that the gulf oil disaster should heighten our sense of urgency to hasten the development of new, clean energy sources that will promote energy independence and good-paying American jobs. And he asked that they work with him on the promising proposals currently before Congress.

Obviously, there were continued differences on some of these issues. But, the President believes that direct dialogue is better than posturing, and he was pleased to have the opportunity to share views with the conference.

He will continue to take every opportunity to work constructively with any member of Congress, of either party, to move America forward.

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