



Ministerial Statement

By

The Premier of Bermuda

Friday, 13th February 2014

Washington D.C. Meetings at Capitol Hill, February 2015

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's relationship with the United States spans four centuries and represents a unique bond between our respective jurisdictions of mutual benefit and ongoing assistance.

It is with the importance of this relationship in mind that, on behalf of the Government of Bermuda, I attended a series of meetings last week in Washington DC. **Mr. Speaker,** I was accompanied by the Honourable Member the Minister of Economic Development, the Deputy Head of the Civil Service, Mrs. Cherie Whitter and Press Secretary, Ms. Nea Talbot.

Mr. Speaker, with the sitting of this new Congress and the shift in the Legislative Branch's balance of power, an important introductory meeting was conducted with Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who is the Senate Majority Leader. Our delegation provided the Majority Leader with key information on current Bermuda issues, including tax matters, border control and trade.

Mr. Speaker, we conducted twelve (12) meetings on Capitol Hill and renewed friendships with distinguished legislators on both sides of the aisle. Honourable Members will no doubt recall the strong Bermuda connection enjoyed by Congressman G.K. Butterfield of North Carolina, Congressman Jim Clyburn of South Carolina as well as Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey. All these gentlemen confirmed their continuing support for Bermuda and Honourable Members may know that Congressman Butterfield is now the Chairman of the important Congressional Black Caucus.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the nature of the US legislative system dictates that even members in the minority Party enjoy considerable influence and respect in the discharge of their congressional duties. One such member is former Speaker of the House, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi of California with whom we met for an extended period.

Mr. Speaker, the Congresswoman was well briefed on Bermuda and was keen to have her understanding of Bermuda's position enhanced on a variety of issues. This was an important discussion and I am confident that Bermuda has gained a friend in the former Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that on both sides of the Atlantic there continues to be a need for Bermuda to promote an awareness of who we are, what we do and the importance of our jurisdiction to the critical arena of insurance, reinsurance and tourism.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will also have noted that I was able to attend the National Prayer Breakfast, which began with a pre-meeting of leaders of

government and discussed matters of mutual interest with those Congressional leaders who were also present.

Mr. Speaker, the actual Breakfast was attended by close to 4,000 guests and included leaders from several countries and leaders of various denominations who brought prayers and addresses to inspire and cause reflection.

Against the background of international conflicts founded in religious differences, the President of the United States reminded all assembled that religious persecution and the commission of atrocities in the name of religion is not unique to anyone faith. President Obama provided a message of peace, tolerance and unity against all forms of intolerance. His message was amplified by a final address and prayer by Ambassador Andrew Young, who reflected on the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma and the progress that had been made in race relations since freedom fighters and civil rights activists were forced to pursue their rights through acts of civil, non-violent disobedience.

Mr. Speaker, this visit to Washington DC confirmed that Bermuda remains a strong ally of the United States and Congressional leaders opened their doors to hear our message. It is significant that Bermuda's position is well received and that key decision makers are equipped with the information required to make informed decisions on matters that affect our economy.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that President Obama signaled in his State of the Union address and in subsequent comments, his intention to take action on tax issues that may affect Bermuda. I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that we met with Mark Mazur, Assistant Secretary for Tax

Policy of the Treasury Department. Our exchange was designed to gain insight into how the Administration intends to advance this part of its agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this Government and its representative office in Washington will continue to analyze legislative and regulatory actions on US tax proposals that affect Bermuda and ensure that we pursue a strategy that cements our ability to grow our economy and provide for our people here at home.

Mr. Speaker, the relationship is strong and this Government is determined to preserve it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.