Thank you all. Welcome to the White House. Thank you for coming this afternoon. It’s a pleasure to be able to introduce you, soon, to the National Thanksgiving Turkey. His name is Marshmallow. The alternative turkey’s name is Yam. He’s around here somewhere. He’s not going to be in this room. He’s in a pickup truck hanging out by the South Lawn.

This is what we call—the White House is called the people’s house, and we’re going to call Marshmallow and Yam the people’s turkeys. They made it here through a democratic process. There was a nationwide election on the White House website. In the end, the voters made the choice, and it was a close election. You might say it was neck and neck.

I’m going to grant a pardon this afternoon, and the pardon I grant comes with a new measure of responsibility and fame for Marshmallow and Yam. In the past years, the turkeys I spared went on to lead lives of leisure at Frying Pan Park in the state of Virginia. This year is going to be a little different. Marshmallow and Yam were a little skeptical about going to a place called “Frying Pan Park.” I don’t blame them. So I’m proud to announce that Marshmallow and Yam will serve as honorary grand marshals at Disneyland’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. And they’ll go on to spend the rest of their natural lives at Disneyland.

The granting of the turkey pardon is not a responsibility that I take lightly, and I want to thank all of those who helped plan today’s event. I appreciate the efforts of those of you from the National Turkey Federation, especially Chairman Pete Rothfork and President Alice Johnson. Welcome. Glad you all are here. I want to thank James and Vicki Trites from Trites Farm in Henning, Minnesota. Where are they, the Trites? There they are, right there. Welcome. Thanks for coming. I know that Marshmallow and Yam are going

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to feel pretty good strutting around sunny California, remembering the cold days of Minnesota. Glad you all are here.

We’ve also got some other special guests in the audience who exemplify the spirit of Thanksgiving. And those are the students from Clarksville Elementary School, from Clarksville, Maryland. Anybody here from Clarksville Elementary? Welcome. We’re glad you’re here. Thanks for coming. These students raised more than $17,000 for the Red Cross fund to benefit Hurricane Katrina victims. Thanks a lot for your hard work in helping somebody else.

They’re here with the assistant principal, Amy Green. I suspect some teachers and parents are here with them. Thank you all for teaching. Thanks for being good parents. Their compassion and dedication show the good heart of our country. And I’m proud you all are here at the White House.

Thanksgiving is a holiday rooted in the American spirit of gratitude and sharing. We see this spirit in America today. When the communities along the Gulf Coast were devastated by Hurricane Katrina, Americans came together to provide help for their neighbors in need. It was a remarkable outpouring of compassion and generosity. That outpouring of compassion demonstrated once again that the great strength of our country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens.

We also give thanks on Thanksgiving for our many blessings, and we thank those who are far away from home who protect our freedoms. It’s through the courage and skill of our Armed Forces that we’re safe as a nation, and we’re very proud of their service. We think of our military families who will have an empty seat at the table this Thanksgiving. The American people are thankful for the sacrifice of the American military families, as well. America’s men and women in uniform and their families have our gratitude – not only on Thanksgiving, but on every day.

Our guest of honor seems about ready to come on in and say hello. So without further ado, I grant Marshmallow and Yam a presidential pardon. In the meantime, may God bless you all and your families during this Thanksgiving season.
66th Annual National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation
Barack Obama, 2013

In this Thanksgiving speech, President Barack Obama delivers his own rendition of the whimsical traditional turkey pardon.

Good afternoon, everybody, and happy Thanksgiving.

The office of the presidency—the most powerful position in the world—brings with it many awesome and solemn responsibilities. This is not one of them. But the White House Turkey Pardon is a great tradition. And I know Malia loves it—as does Sasha.

Generally speaking, Thanksgiving is a bad day to be a turkey. Especially at a house with two dogs. So I salute our two guests of honor—Caramel and Popcorn—for their bravery. They came all the way from outside Badger, Minnesota to be with us. They, like my Chief of Staff, are Vikings fans. I’m not sure that they know—[turkeys gobble]—uh-oh. See. I’m not sure they know that that my Bears are heading to Minnesota on Sunday, but in the spirit of Thanksgiving, I’m going to give them a break.

We are also excited to have students from Badger High School here. Where are you guys? There they are, right there. And finally, let me say thank you to John Burkel, chairman of the National Turkey Federation. Give him a big round of applause.

Now, 80 turkeys on John’s farm competed for the chance to make it to the White House, and stay off the Thanksgiving table. It was, quite literally, the hunger games. and then, after weeks of vocal practice and prepping for the cameras, the two tributes, Caramel and Popcorn went head-to-head together for America’s vote as top gobbler.

The competition was stiff, but we can officially declare that Popcorn is the winner, proving that even a turkey with a funny name can find a place in politics. As for Caramel, he’s sticking around, and he’s already busy raising money for his next campaign.

On a more serious note, later today, Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and I will bring a couple less fortunate turkeys to a great organization that works to help out our neighbors here in D.C. who need it most. And I want to thank Jaindl’s Turkey Farm in Orefield, Pennsylvania, for donating those dressed birds for the fifth year in a row. This is a reminder that this is a season to not only be thankful for the incredible blessings that we have, but also to remember the neediest and generously serve those who are not as fortunate.

This is a quintessentially American holiday, and during this time we give thanks to our friends and our family, for citizens who show compassion to those in need, and for neighbors who help strangers they’ve never met. We give thanks for the blessings of freedom and opportunity that previous generations worked so hard to secure ... And we give thanks for the service and sacrifice of our brave men and women in uniform who serve our nation around the world.

For those of you who are watching, you keep us safe. You make us proud, and you remind us of our own obligations to build on the work of our predecessors and leave something better for our own kids.

So on behalf of the Obama family, I want to wish everybody a very happy Thanksgiving. Tomorrow, as we gather with our own friends and family, we’ll count ourselves lucky that there’s more to be thankful for than we can ever say, and more to be hopeful for than we can ever imagine.

And now, before these turkeys get away—with the power vested in me, I want to grant Popcorn a full reprieve. Come on. Popcorn, you have a full reprieve from cranberry sauce and stuffing. We wish you well. And we’re going to give Caramel a break as well.

All right? Congratulations, everybody. Happy Thanksgiving, everybody. See you, Popcorn. Get out of the rain.