



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 12, 2010

I am pleased to join all those celebrating the 50th anniversary of the development of the world's first working laser.

The story of the development of the laser is a quintessentially American one, of intensely creative theoretical work, followed by innovative engineering, and a spectacular diversity of applications that have brought economic benefits unimagined at the start of the process. Only 50 years ago, lasers were labeled “a solution in search of a problem,” with no practical application envisioned outside basic scientific research. Today, lasers have revolutionized the way we live—from watching our favorite movies on DVD players to surfing the web to scanning barcodes at the grocery store.

I commend the many American scientists and engineers whose ingenuity and contributions to laser science and technology have helped make the laser one of the most important and versatile inventions of the 20th century. Such achievements inspire the next generation of students and tinkerers to pursue careers as scientists and engineers, and to keep the pipeline of American innovation flowing well into the future.

On behalf of our Nation, I celebrate with you this important technological milestone. I look forward with real excitement to further advances in this field and new applications as yet undreamed of today.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Barack' followed by a stylized flourish.