

Obama gets 2,000 trick-or-treaters

WASHINGTON — US President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama on Saturday doled out presidential M&Ms and dried fruit mixes to more than 2,000 trick-or-treaters, marking their Halloween at a White House event partly aimed at honoring military families.

Dressed as superheroes, pirates, fairies and skeletons, the kids came in with their parents from Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC, and lined up

on the orange-lit White House driveway.

Standing outside the White House front door, the Obamas smiled, chatted and passed out cellophane goody bags that were also filled with a sweet dough butter cookie made by White House pastry chef Bill Yosses. Kids also received a National Park Foundation Ranger activity book.

Mrs. Obama wore furry cat ears and a leopard-patterned

top. Obama said the kids looked adorable, as well as his wife, "a very nice looking Catwoman."

A big, stuffed, black spider dangled in a web of string from the top of the portico, and pumpkins had sprouted up around the columns.

Meanwhile, an odd cast of figures wandered around the North Lawn, including skeletons playing musical instruments, walking trees and "Star Wars" characters. The night's arrangements took a month or two to prepare, the White House said.

The loot handed out was just part of the treat for the visiting kids, who were chosen with help from the Education Department.

"He touched my hand," said a beaming Tiera Thomas, 11, of Washington, D.C., after she picked up her candy from President Obama.

The Obamas spent about a half hour passing out candy to trick-or-treaters, ages 6 to 14.

Then they headed inside to the East Room, where the first couple attended a reception for military families and for the moms and dads who work at the White House, along with their kids.

Obama thanked the military

members and their families. "We are so grateful to you," he said. "Especially now, a lot of the times, you guys are separated. It's tough. The spouses who are at home are serving just as much as folks who are deployed. So we are just so thrilled that you guys could be here."

The president, dressed in casual clothes, was one of the few not in costume. Even Obama's press secretary, Robert Gibbs, was dressed as Darth Vader, the "Star Wars" villain.

It was also the first White House Halloween for the Obamas' daughters, 8-year-old Sasha and 11-year-old Malia.

But the White House would not say what Sasha and Malia were wearing, even though hundreds of other children their ages were in costume in full view of the media. The White House referred back to the first lady's comment to Jay Leno, that finding out what Sasha and Malia were wearing would require "security clearance."

Over the years, the winter holidays have been the ones to get the full treatment at the White House, with Christmas trees and tinsel all around.

The Obamas are not the first, though, to show Halloween



US President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama hand out candy to trick-or-treaters at the North Portico of the White House as they celebrate Halloween in Washington.

AP Photo

spirit.

President George H.W. Bush and first lady Barbara Bush hosted 500 children on Halloween in 1989, loading them up with fun loot but also teaching them about the dangers of drugs. The kids came decked out in costumes; some Secret Service agents came dressed as clowns.

In the Clintons' first year in the White House, the Great Pumpkin returned. A huge orange jack-o'-lantern was formed around the front entrance to the White House, with the front door to the mansion serving as the middle tooth. The first couple's daughter, Chelsea, was 13 at the time and the house was stuffed with pumpkins. (AP)

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Utility companies are role models for diverse...

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Bautista made the statement during an open hearing held by the California Public Utilities Commission in Downtown Los Angeles last November 2.

The CPUC regulates privately owned electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water, railroad, rail transit, and passenger transportation companies.

In its seventh year, the purpose of the hearing is to hold

major companies like Southern California Gas Company and San Diego Gas & Electric, Verizon, Sprint, AT&T, and Southern California Edison to be more accountable when it comes to hiring minorities, governance, procurement with minority companies, philanthropy and customer service and marketing.

The public hearing examines the diversity programs of those companies and encourages

them to makes changes.

"The goal is to diversify the corporate boardroom," wrote Jose Perez, Chairman of the California Utilities Diversity Council in its annual report. "Our goal is to pursue a policy that promotes a strategically business friendly approach that results in more inclusiveness in opportunities afforded by the industry."

Historically, Caucasian males have predominantly dominated the gas and energy industry, according to Bautista.

In 1988, the CPUC established General Order 156 (GO-156) for governing the development of utilities' Women and Minority Business Enterprises (WMBE) Program and later amended it to include Service Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBEs). The purpose is to create business opportunities for Diverse Suppliers, who felt left out by the

"old boys network."

Since the establishment of GO 156, minority hiring and supplier diversity have gone up steadily but there's more work to do.

"We don't need a handout or special treatment," testified AJ Wilson, Vice Chairman of SDVOB/ DVBE Elite to the panel. "We just want an equal playing field."

Cable companies are only regulated 10 percent by the CUPC so it does not abide by the GO 156 order.

Bautista said it's time for cable companies to be held accountable for their diversity programs.

"It's the right thing to do this is what California is all about," she said. "When there is 1.2 million Filipinos in the area and these companies don't even advertise with ethnic media to me that's a sin. It's the right thing to do. It's a no-brainer." ■

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