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Remarks at Manor New Technology High School in Manor, Texas
May 9, 2013

Hello, Texas. Well, howdy, Manor. Go Titans! Now, I hear that there's a rule that anyone who gives a presentation in front of the class has to dress up, so I made sure to wear a tie. [*Laughter*] I didn't want to lose points.

I want to thank Tevyn for the very generous introduction. Give Tevyn a big round of applause. I want to thank Principal Zipkes for his great work. I want to thank Dylan and Jahman for showing me around. Great job.

We've got a number of other luminaries here today. First of all, we've got Acting Secretaries of Commerce and Labor, Becky Blank and Seth Harris. There they are right there. Becky is going to be leaving us to become the president of the University of Wisconsin—Madison. So the—if you all are interested in cold weather, you can apply. [*Laughter*] You've got the hookup right here. And she's going to do a great job.

We've got Congressman Lloyd Doggett, who's here. We've got Mayor Jeff Turner, who's here. And it is Teacher Appreciation Week. So all the teachers, raise your hands. Everybody give them a big round of applause. We appreciate you. Teachers work hard every single day, and they don't do it for the money. They do it because of the love of learning and the love of their students. And so we could not be prouder of them, and we are grateful to all of them. And I want to thank all of you for a Texas-sized welcome.

Now, those of you who have seats, feel free to sit down. Those of you who don't, you're out of luck. [*Laughter*] So you got to keep standing.

The—so this is the first stop that I'm making on a tour of the Austin area today. And I chose Austin, partly because I just love Austin, but also because there are some terrific things going on in this area, in communities like Manor. And there are terrific things going on in communities all across the country that are good models for all of America to follow.

You might not know this, because if you listen to all the doom and gloom in Washington, in politics, and you're watching cable TV sometimes, you might get kind of thinking, nothing is going right. But the truth is, there's a lot of reasons for us to feel optimistic about where we're headed as a country, especially after all the tough times that we've been through over the last several years. And that should encourage us to roll up our sleeves and work even harder and work together to take on the challenges that are still holding back parts of our economy.

Now, in a little over 3 years, our businesses have now created more than 6.5 million new jobs. And while our unemployment rate is still too high, it's actually the lowest that it's been since 2008. But that's not good enough. Now we've got to create even more good, middle class jobs, and we've got to do it faster so that by the time you guys graduate from college the job market is strong.

Corporate profits have skyrocketed to alltime highs. But that's not good enough. We've got to make sure that middle class wages and incomes are also going up, because most families haven't seen their take-home pay rise for years now. Our housing market is healing, but that's not good enough. We still need to help a lot more families stay in their homes or refinance to take advantage of historically low interest rates.

Our deficits are falling at the fastest rate in years. But now we've got to budget in a smarter way so it doesn't hurt middle class families or prevent us from making the critical investments that we need for your future.

So a lot of sectors of our economy are doing better. The American auto industry is thriving. American energy is booming. American ingenuity in our tech sector continues to be the best in the world and has the potential to change almost everything that we do. And thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, we've cleared away the rubble of the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes.

So we're poised for progress. All across America, Americans are working harder and they're living up to their responsibilities, both to themselves and to one another and to their communities, every single day. Part of our challenge, though, is you've got to try to see the same kind of seriousness of purpose in your leaders. From Washington to Wall Street, all of us have to commit ourselves to doing better than we're doing now.

And all of us have to rally around the single greatest challenge that we face as a country right now, and that's reigniting the true engine of economic growth: a rising, thriving middle class, where if you work hard—no matter what you look like, where you come from—you can succeed. That's what we're fighting for.

Now, there are three things that we've got to focus on to create more jobs and opportunity for the middle class. First of all, we've got to make America a magnet for good jobs. Second, we've got to help people earn the education and develop the skills they need to do those jobs. And number three, we've got to make sure that people who are working hard are able to achieve a decent living. All right? That's what we've got to focus on.

And I've sent Congress proposals on a whole range of ideas that will help in these three areas: creating jobs, helping families stay in their homes, lifting wages, helping more young people get a good education and afford college. But some of them have been blocked in Congress for frankly political reasons. And I'm going to keep on trying. I'm a very—I'm an optimistic guy, so I'm just going to keep on talking to Members of Congress, because I believe that America does best when we work together. I believe that.

Every once in a while, I'm going to need your help to lean on your elected representatives and say, hey, let's do something about this; even if don't like it politically, if it's a good idea, let's go ahead and support it. So sometimes, I'm going to need constituents to pressure their Members of Congress to do the right thing.

But where I can, I'm just going to go ahead and take action on my own, including some executive actions that I'm taking today that I'm convinced will spur innovation and help businesses create more jobs, because we know what's possible when Americans—whether they're Republicans or Democrats or Independents—are working together and when parents and teachers and business owners and local leaders come together.

And that's what we're seeing here in Austin. We're seeing people working together, not because of politics, not because of some selfish reason, but because folks here understand that when we're all working together, everybody does better, everybody succeeds.

So over the last 3 years in the Austin area, businesses have created 85,000 new jobs. And companies like Apple and Visa are getting ready to open new offices. General Motors is already hiring at its new innovation center. According to one report, the tech sector now drives more

than one-quarter of Austin's economy. And all of this has helped to make Austin one of the fastest growing cities in America.

So folks around here are doing something right, and I think the rest of the country can learn from what you're doing because I've always believed that the best ideas usually don't start in Washington, they trickle up to Washington. So I've come to listen and learn and highlight some of the good work that's being done.

This afternoon I'm going to go visit a local factory where workers are building the equipment that makes cutting-edge microchips. All those smartphones and iPads and—that you guys are using, a lot of this stuff is made there. I'm going to have lunch with some local families to talk about what they're facing, the challenges that they're facing, and figure out how we can make sure that people's hard work pays off.

But as you can see, my first stop was Manor New Tech. [*Applause*] That's my first stop. And the reason is because our economy can't succeed unless our young people have the skills that they need to succeed. And that's what's happening here, right at Manor New Tech. There's a reason why teachers and principals from all over the country are coming down to see what you're up to. Because every day, this school is proving that every child has the potential to learn the real-world skills they need to succeed in college and beyond.

And you all are doing it together. At Manor, a history teacher might get together with a math teacher and develop a project about the impact of castles on world history and the engineering behind building castles. Or a group of students might be in charge of putting together a multimedia presentation about the moral dilemmas in literature as applied to World War II. Internships help students get even more hands-on experience. And while most high school students in America give a handful of speeches by the time they graduate, a student at this school might give as many as 200. Now, that's a lot of speeches. I can relate. [*Laughter*]

And I just had a chance to see some of the incredible work that some of the young people here are doing: folks who used mathematical equations to build musical instruments, and tests on bungee jumping with rubber bands and weights, and robots that were being built, and all kinds of great stuff. And you're doing things a little differently around here than a lot of high schools, and it's working. [*Applause*] It's working.

And by the way, the majority of students at Manor don't come from wealth or privilege. Some folks here might have come from some pretty tough backgrounds. And yet the vast majority of students here stay in school, they graduate. Your test scores in most subjects have been higher than the State average. Almost every member of the recent graduating class went on to college, and about 60 percent of them were the first in their families to do so. You should be proud of that.

And you can see it when I was talking to some of your classmates on the projects they were working on. There were a couple of your classmates who were studying how earthworms regenerate when they're injured. I saw solar cars. Your championship regional "TEXplosion" robotics team competed in the world championships a couple of weeks ago. And this program has only been around for 5 years.

So this is an impressive group. And the teachers here, you can tell, are passionate about what they do and couldn't be more impressive, although, some of them look like they were in high school. [*Laughter*] There were a couple of them I met, I said, are you sure you're a teacher? [*Laughter*] No, not you. You look like you're—[*laughter*]—I'm teasing. You really are a student. I know. [*Laughter*]

But it's important to remember that, every year, schools like Manor New Tech hold blind lotteries to determine who gets in, because there just aren't enough spots for all the students who want to go to a school like this one. There are too many kids in America who are not getting the same kinds of opportunities through no fault of their own, and we can do better than that. [*Applause*] We can do better than that.

Every young person in America deserves a world-class education. We've got an obligation to give it to them. And, by the way, that helps the whole economy. Every business in America, we want to draw from the world's highest skilled and most educated workforce. We can make that happen. But we're going to have to put our shoulder against the wheel and work a little harder than we're doing right now as a nation.

So number one, we've got to start educating our kids at the earliest possible age. And that means giving every child in America access to high-quality, public preschool, something that I'm pushing for.

Every dollar that we put into early childhood education can save $7 down the road because it boosts graduation rates, reduces things like teen pregnancy and violent crime, helps young people succeed not just in high school, but beyond. So let's make that happen. Let's make every child's early success a recipe for long-term success. We can do that.

We've also got to make sure that we help more students at more schools get the kinds of skills they're getting here at Manor Tech to compete in a high-tech economy. So that's why we're working to recruit and train 100,000 new teachers in science and technology, engineering and math; helping our most talented teachers serve as mentors for their colleagues so that they can help to push the great stuff that's going on here out to other schools throughout the State and throughout the country.

We've also got to start rethinking and redesigning America's high schools. That's part of what's happening here is, there's innovation going on that equip graduates for the demands of a high-tech economy. There's a lot of hands-on learning here. People aren't just sitting at a desk reading all the time. Reading is important. I'm a big reader. But part of what makes this place special is, is that there's all this integration of various subjects and actual projects and young people doing and not just sitting there listening, so we've got to reward schools like this one that focus on the fields of the future—schools that focus on the fields of the future, use technology effectively to help students learn, and are also developing partnerships with local colleges and businesses so that a diploma here leads directly to a good job.

And finally, we know that even with better high schools, if you want a good job and work your way into the middle class, most young people are going to need some higher education. Unfortunately, in recent years, college costs have skyrocketed, and that's left too many students and their families saddled with a mountain of debt. So we've worked to make college more affordable for millions of students already and families through tax credits and grants, more access to student loans that go farther than before. We've reformed the student loan process by putting students ahead of big banks, providing options to make it easier for young people to repay these loans.

But even if we do all that, if the price of higher education keeps going up, then eventually, there's not going to be enough money to help young people. So we've got to figure out how to reduce college costs. And that's why my administration has released what we're calling a college scorecard that gives parents and students the clear, concise information that you'll need to find a school that best fits your needs, but also gives you the best value. Gives you the best

value. It's like a consumer report for colleges, because you don't want a lemon, and you don't want too much debt.

And going forward, colleges that don't do enough to keep costs down, I think, should get less taxpayer support. We want to support the schools that are doing a great job giving good value to students. That's what we want. And young people and families, you shouldn't have to subsidize skyrocketing costs if the colleges aren't trying hard enough to keep costs down and provide a high-quality education.

So I could not be prouder of what's happening here at Manor. That's why I wanted to come. Last month, students in a digital media class made a YouTube video describing why this school was so special. Some students talked about how they're looking forward to being the first in their family to go to college. Others talked about learning new skills, taking on more responsibility. And one sophomore summed it up nicely when she said: "This school is a lot more than just a school. It's a family. And it's filled with people that are going to care about you and are going to help you."

Well, Manor, that's what every school should be. That's what our country should be: caring for each other, helping each another, being invested in each other's success. We're not just a collection of individuals, we're one American family. And if we follow Manor's example, if we give every child the chance to climb new ladders of opportunity, if we equip every American with the skills and education they need to succeed in the jobs of the future, if we make sure that hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded, and if we fight to keep America a place where you can make it if you try, then you're not just going to be the ones who prosper, we'll all prosper. And together, we'll write the next great chapter in America's history.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:38 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Tevyn Washington, Jahman B. Harden, Dylan Randolph, Mason Tyler-Nyman, D'Angelo Miller, Charisma Vanderpuye, Gabriela Guadarrama, Alexis Rubio, Jorge Flores, Epiphany B. Harden, students, and Steven M. Zipkes, principal, Manor New Technology High School.

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