

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

The President's Weekly Address

August 31, 2013

Hi, everybody. This Labor Day weekend, as we gather with family and friends, we'll also come together as a nation to honor some of our own: the working men and women of America who, across the generations, built this country up and helped make us who we are today.

On Monday, we'll celebrate that proud history. We'll pay tribute to the values working Americans embody: hard work, responsibility, sacrifice, looking out for one another. And we also need to recommit ourselves to their cause; to securing for them a better bargain so that everyone who works hard in America has a chance to get ahead.

You see, over the past 4½ years, we've fought our way back from the worst recession of our lifetimes. And thanks to the grit and resilience of the American people, we've begun to lay a foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth. But as any working family will tell you, we're not yet where we need to be.

For over a decade, working Americans have seen their wages and incomes stagnate, even as corporate profits soar and the pay of a fortunate few explodes. For even longer than that, inequality has steadily risen; the journey of upward mobility has become harder. And in too many communities across this country, the shadow of poverty continues to cast a pall over our fellow citizens.

Reversing that trend needs to be Washington's highest priority. And it sure is mine. That's why, over the past month, I've traveled all across America, laying out my ideas for how we can build on the cornerstones of what it means to be middle class: a good job that pays a good wage; a good education; a home of your own; health care when you get sick; a secure retirement even if you're not rich; and more chances for folks to earn their way into the middle class as long as they're willing to work for it.

The truth is, it's not going to be easy to reverse the forces that have conspired for decades against working Americans. But if we take a few bold steps, and if Washington is able to come together with common purpose and common resolve, we'll get there. Our economy will keep getting stronger, and more Americans will be able to join the ranks of the middle class.

So this Labor Day, while you're out there grilling in the backyard or taking the final trip for the summer, I hope you'll also take a moment to reflect on the many contributions of our working men and women. For generations, it was the great American middle class that made our economy the envy of the world. And as long as I'm President, I'm going to keep fighting to make sure that happens again.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:05 p.m. on August 30 in the East Room at the White House for broadcast on August 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 31.

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