

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Democratic Governors

February 21, 2014

Well, it is wonderful to have America's Governors in town, and Michelle and I look forward to hosting with their spouses our annual Governors' reception here and dinner. And it's always a great opportunity to exchange ideas and hear what's happening at the local level.

Today we did bring our Democratic Governors to the White House to spend some time talking about a couple of issues that are of critical importance to our constituencies and, I think, to the country. And one of those is the issue of the minimum wage and what we can do to give America a raise.

Many of the Governors in this room are pushing to raise their State minimum wages to benefit more working families and help to grow their economies. Governors Abercrombie, Governor Inslee, Governor Malloy, Governor O'Malley, Governor Patrick, Governor Quinn all focused on this in their State of the State addresses.

And in my State of the Union Address, obviously, I promised that I would do what I could as the head of the executive branch of the Federal Government and have already signed an Executive order saying that if you want to do business with the Federal Government as a Federal contractor, then you need to be paying your employees \$10.10 an hour. We don't want somebody who is washing dishes for our troops or helping in some ways to care for them to be living in poverty when they're working full time.

And what we've discovered in looking at this issue is, is that increasingly, businesses recognize that raising wages for their employees is a smart business decision because they end up having lower turnover rates, higher productivity, higher morale, folks stay longer and are more focused on the job rather than having to worry about whether or not they can pay their bills at the end of the month.

And this is not just good policy, it also happens to be good politics. Because the truth of the matter is, the overwhelming majority of Americans think that raising the minimum wage is a good idea. That is true for Independents, that is true for Democrats, and it's true for Republicans. So in fact, where we've seen some of these issues going to referendum, for example, in New Jersey, even though the Republican Governor opposed it, it passed by 60 percent.

And the reason that this is important is not because everybody is going to be benefiting from a hike in the minimum wage. The truth is, is that most working Americans make more than the minimum wage already. But people, I think, instinctually understand that part of what this country should be about is if you're working hard and taking responsibility, that you can get ahead and that you can look after your family. And raising the minimum wage will help up to 16 million Americans, and that's a big deal. And that could give a boost to our economy as a whole.

So I'm going to continue to press Congress to pass a Federal minimum wage bill that goes up to \$10.10 an hour, being sponsored currently by Senators Harkin and Representatives Miller. I'm going to be seeking Republicans who are game to work with us and prepared to work with us on this issue. As I said at the State of the Union, it's not something that requires a big bureaucracy, and it doesn't require a lot of Federal spending. All it requires is for us to stake out a claim on behalf of American workers that's consistent with our values as a nation.

And I'm going to be interested in hearing of the efforts of the Governors in this room to see what they can do to make sure that America gets a raise.

So I appreciate their presence. We've got a lot of other issues on the plate, but I wanted to highlight that one because I think it's something that is on a lot of people's minds: How can we boost people's incomes and wages if they're working hard so they can get ahead?

Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Christopher J. Christie of New Jersey; and Rep. George Miller III. He also referred to Executive Order 13568.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic Governors Association :: Meeting

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abercrombie, Neil; Christie, Christopher J.; Harkin, Thomas R.; Inslee, Jay R.; Malloy, Dannel P.; Miller, George, III; Obama, Michelle; O'Malley, Martin J.; Patrick, Deval L.; Quinn, Patrick J., III.

Subjects: Connecticut : Governor; Democratic Party: Democratic Governors Association; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Government organization and employees : Federal Government contracting policies, reform; Governors Association, National; Hawaii : Governor; Illinois : Governor; Labor issues : Minimum wage; Maryland : Governor; Massachusetts : Governor; New Jersey : Governor; Washington : Governor.

DCPD Number: DCPD201400108.