

The President's Weekly Address

June 28, 2014

Hi, everybody. This week, I spent a couple of days in Minneapolis, talking with people about their lives: their concerns, their successes, and their hopes for the future.

I went because of a letter I received from a working mother named Rebekah, who shared with me the hardships her young family had faced since the financial crisis. She and her husband Ben were just newlyweds expecting their first child Jack when the housing crash dried up his contracting business. He took what jobs he could, and Rebekah took out student loans and retrained for a new career. They sacrificed for their kids and for each other. And 5 years later, they've paid off their debt, bought their first home, and had their second son Henry.

In her letter to me, she wrote, "We are a strong, tight-knit family who has made it through some very, very hard times." And in many ways, that's America's story these past 5 years. We are a strong, tight-knit family that's made it through some very tough times. Today, over the past 51 months, our businesses have created 9.4 million new jobs. By measure after measure, our economy is doing better than it was 5 years ago.

But as Rebekah also wrote in her letter, there are still too many middle class families like hers who do everything right—who work hard and who sacrifice—but can't seem to get ahead. It feels like the odds are stacked against them. And with just a small change in our priorities, we could fix that.

The problem is, Republicans in Congress keep blocking or voting down almost every serious idea to strengthen the middle class. This year alone, they've said no to raising the minimum wage, no to fair pay, no to student loan reform, no to extending unemployment insurance. And rather than invest in education that helps working families get ahead, they actually voted to give another massive tax cut to the wealthiest Americans.

This obstruction keeps the system rigged for those at the top and rigged against the middle class. And as long as they insist on doing it, I'm going to keep taking actions on my own, like the actions I've already taken to attract new jobs, lift workers' wages, and help students pay off their loans. I intend to do my job. And if it makes Republicans in Congress mad that I'm trying to help people out, then I welcome them to join me so we can do it together.

The point is, we could do so much more as a country—as a strong, tight-knit family—if Republicans in Congress were less interested in stacking the deck for those at the top—or obstructing me—and more interested in growing the economy for everybody.

So rather than more tax breaks for millionaires, let's give more tax breaks to help working families pay for childcare or college. Rather than protecting tax loopholes that let big corporations set up tax shelters overseas, let's put people to work rebuilding roads and bridges right here in America. Rather than stack the deck in favor of those who've already succeeded, let's realize that we are stronger as a nation when we offer a fair shot to every American.

I'm going to spend some time talking about these very choices in the weeks ahead. That's because we know from our history that our economy does not grow from the top down, it grows from the middle out. We do better when the middle class does better. That's the American way. That's what I believe in. And that's what I'll keep fighting for.

Have a great Fourth of July, everybody. And good luck to Team U.S.A. down in Brazil.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:25 p.m. on June 27 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on June 28. In the address, the President referred to St. Anthony, MN, resident Rebekah Erler, her husband Ben Erler, and their sons Jack and Henry. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 26.

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