

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

The President's Weekly Address

October 15, 2016

Hi, everybody. On Thursday, I traveled to Pittsburgh for the White House Frontiers Conference, where some of America's leading minds came together to talk about how we can empower our people through science to lead our communities, our country, and our world into tomorrow.

Plus, we had some fun. I had a chance to fly a space flight simulator where I docked a capsule on the International Space Station. I met a young man who'd been paralyzed for more than a decade, but thanks to breakthrough brain implants, today, he can not only move a prosthetic arm, but actually feel with the fingers.

It's awe-inspiring stuff. And it shows how investing in science and technology spurs our country towards new jobs and new industries, new discoveries that improve and save lives. That's always been our country's story, from a Founding Father with an idea to fly a kite in a thunderstorm, to the women who solved the equations to take us into space, to the engineers who brought us the Internet. Innovation is in our DNA. And today, we need it more than ever to solve the challenges we face. Only through science can we cure diseases and save the only planet we've got and ensure that America keeps its competitive advantages as the world's most innovative economy.

And that's why it's so backward when some folks choose to stick their heads in the sand about basic scientific facts. It's not just that they're saying that climate change is a hoax or trotting out a snowball on the Senate floor. It's that they're also doing everything they can to gut funding for research and development, the kinds of investments that brought us breakthroughs like GPS and MRIs and put Siri on our smartphones.

That's not who we are. Remember, 60 years ago, when the Russians beat us into space, we didn't deny *Sputnik* was up there. We didn't haggle over the facts or shrink our R&D budget. No, we built a space program almost overnight and beat them to the Moon. And then, we kept going, becoming the first country to take an up-close look at every planet in the solar system too. That's who we are.

And that's why, in my first Inaugural Address, I vowed to return science to its rightful place. It's why in our first few months, we made the largest single investment in basic research in our history. And it's why, over the last 8 years, we've modernized the Government's approach to innovation for the 21st century. We've jumpstarted a clean energy revolution and unleashed the potential of precision medicine. We've partnered with the private sector and academia and launched moonshots for cancer, brain research, and solar energy. We've harnessed big data to foster social innovation and invested in STEM education and computer science so that every young person—no matter where they come from or what they look like—can reach their potential and help us win the future.

That's what this is about: making sure that America is the nation that leads the world into the next frontier. And that's why I've been so committed to science and innovation, because I'll always believe that with the right investments and the brilliance and ingenuity of the American people, there's nothing we cannot do.

Thanks, everybody. And have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:05 a.m. on October 13 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on October 15. In the address, the President referred to Dunbar, PA, resident Nathan Copeland, a patient at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Pittsburgh, PA; and Christine Darden, Margery Hannah, and Katherine G. Johnson, mathematicians and former employees, NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, VA. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 14, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 15. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Copeland, Nathan; Darden, Christine; Hannah, Margery; Johnson, Katherine G.

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