

makes all of us more whole, it makes our Union more perfect, it makes the United States of America strong.

Every morning, I walk along the Colonnade that connects this house to the Oval Office. And there's something you might not notice unless you're really paying attention—and I'll be honest, when I take that walk, I usually have a lot on my mind—[laughter]—but there's a gentle slope at the end of that Colonnade, a ramp that was installed during a renovation of the West Wing 75 years ago, making it much easier for one of my predecessors to get to work.

Back then, fear and prejudice towards Americans with disabilities was the norm, but most Americans didn't even know that President Roosevelt had a disability. That means that what most Americans also didn't know was that President Roosevelt's disability made absolutely no difference to his ability to renew our confidence or rescue our economy and mobilize our greatest generation to save our way of life.

Let me correct that: I actually think it did make a difference in a positive way. What he told us was that "further progress must, of necessity, depend on a deeper understanding on the part of every man and woman in the United States." I believe we're getting there. And to-

day, because more than one in five Americans live with a disability, and chances are, the rest of us love somebody with one, we remember our obligation to ensuring their every chance to pursue the American Dream. We celebrate the courage and commitment of those who brought us to this point. And we recommit ourselves to building a world free of unnecessary barriers and full of that deeper understanding.

So thank you all, for being here. Let's sign this bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the proclamation.*]

*The President.* There you go. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Thomas A. Harkin; former Sen. Robert J. Dole; former Attorney General Richard L. Thornburgh; former Rep. Anthony L. Coelho; and Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations. The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## The President's Weekly Address

### *July 25, 2009*

I recently heard from a small-business owner from New Jersey who wrote that he employs eight people and provides health insurance for all of them. But his policy goes up at least 20 percent each year, and today, it costs almost \$1,400 per family per month—his highest business expense beside his employees' salaries. He's already had to let two of them go, and he may be forced to eliminate health insurance altogether. He wrote, simply: "I am not looking for free health care. I would just like to get my premiums reduced enough to be able to afford it."

Day after day, I hear from people just like him: workers worried they may lose their coverage if they become too sick or lose their job or change jobs; families who fear they may not be able to get insurance, or change insurance, if

someone in their family has a preexisting condition; and small-business owners trying to make a living and do right by the people they employ.

These are the mom and pop stores and restaurants, beauty shops and construction companies that support families and sustain communities. They're the tiny startups with big ideas, hoping to become the next Google or Apple or HP. And, as shown in a new report released today by the White House Council of Economic Advisers, right now they are getting crushed by skyrocketing health care costs.

Because they lack the bargaining power that large businesses have and faced higher administrative costs per person, small businesses pay up to 18 percent more for the very same health insurance plans, costs that eat into their profits and get passed on to their employees.

As a result, small businesses are much less likely to offer health insurance. Those that do tend to have less generous plans. In a recent survey, one-third of small businesses reported cutting benefits. Many have dropped coverage altogether, and many have shed jobs or shut their doors entirely. This is unsustainable, it's unacceptable, and it's going to change when I sign health insurance reform into law.

Under the reform plans in Congress, small businesses will be able to purchase health insurance through an insurance exchange, a marketplace where they can compare the price, quality, and services of a wide variety of plans, many of which will provide better coverage at lower costs than the plans they have now. They can then pick the one that works best for them and their employees.

Small businesses that choose to insure their employees will also receive a tax credit to help them pay for it. If a small business chooses not to provide coverage, its employees can purchase high-quality, affordable coverage through the insurance exchange on their own. Low-income workers, folks who are more likely to be working at small businesses, will qualify for a subsidy to help them cover the costs.

And no matter how you get your insurance, insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. They won't be able to drop your coverage if you get too sick or lose your job or change jobs, and we'll limit the amount your insurance company can force you to pay out of your own pocket.

To view the new report and learn more about how health insurance reform will help small businesses, go to [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov) and send us your questions and comments. We'll answer as many of them as we can later this week.

Over the past few months, I've been pushing hard to make sure we finally address the need for health insurance reform, which has been deferred year after year, decade after decade. And today, after a lot of hard work in

Congress, we are closer than ever before to finally passing reform that will reduce costs, expand coverage, and provide more choices for our families and businesses.

It's taken months to reach this point, and once this legislation passes, we'll need to move thoughtfully and deliberately to implement these reforms over a period of several years. That's why I feel such a sense of urgency about moving this process forward.

Now, I know there are those who are urging us to delay reform. And some of them have actually admitted that this is a tactic designed to stop any reform at all. Some have even suggested that, regardless of its merits, health care reform should be stopped as a way to inflict political damage on my administration. I'll leave it to them to explain that to the American people.

What I'm concerned about is the damage that's being done right now to the health of our families, the success of our businesses, and the long-term fiscal stability of our government. I'm concerned about hard-working folks who want nothing more than the security that comes with knowing they can get the care they need, when they need it. I'm concerned about the small-business owners who are asking for nothing more than a chance to seize their piece of the American Dream. I'm concerned about our children and our grandchildren who will be saddled with deficits that will continue piling up year after year unless we pass reform.

This debate is not a political game for these Americans, and they cannot afford to keep waiting for reform. We owe it to them to finally get it done, and to get it done this year. Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:20 p.m. on July 24 in Room 236 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building for broadcast on July 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 25.

## Remarks at the United States-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue *July 27, 2009*

Thank you. Good morning. It is a great honor to welcome you to the first meeting of the Strategic Economic Dialogue between the United States and China. This is an essential step in advancing a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship between our countries. I'm pleased that President Hu shares my commitment to a sustained dialogue to enhance our shared interests.

President Hu and I both felt that it was important to get our relationship off to a good start. Of course, as a new President and also as a basketball fan, I have learned from the words of Yao Ming, who said, "No matter whether you are new or an old team member, you need time to adjust to one another." Well, through the constructive meetings that we've already had, and through this dialogue, I'm confident that we will meet Yao's standard.

I want to acknowledge the remarkable American and Chinese leaders who will cochair this effort. Hillary Clinton and Tim Geithner are two of my closest advisers, and they have both obtained extraordinary experience working with China. And I know that they will have extremely capable and committed Chinese counterparts in State Councilor Dai and Vice Premier Wang. Thank you very much for being here.

I'm also looking forward to the confirmation of an outstanding U.S. Ambassador to China, Governor Jon Huntsman, who is here today. Jon has deep experience living and working in Asia, and unlike me, he speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese. He also happens to be a Republican who cochaired Senator McCain's campaign. And I think that demonstrates Jon's commitment to serving his country and the broad, bipartisan support for positive and productive relations between the United States and China. So thank you, Jon, for your willingness to serve.

Today we meet in a building that speaks to the history of the last century. It houses a national memorial to President Woodrow Wilson, a man who held office when the 20th century was still young and America's leadership in the world was emerging. It is named for Ronald Reagan, a man who came of age during two

World Wars and whose Presidency helped usher in a new era of history. And it holds a piece of the Berlin Wall, a decades-long symbol of division that was finally torn down, unleashing a rising tide of globalization that continues to shape our world.

One hundred years ago, in the early days of the 20th century, it was clear that there were momentous choices to be made, choices about the borders of nations and the rights of human beings. But in Woodrow Wilson's day, no one could have foreseen the arc of history that led to a wall coming down in Berlin, nor could they have imagined the conflict and upheaval that characterized the years in between. For people everywhere, from Boston to Beijing, the 20th century was a time of great progress, but that progress also came with a great price.

Today, we look out on the horizon of a new century. And as we launch this dialogue, it's important for us to reflect upon the questions that will shape the 21st century. Will growth be stalled by events like our current financial crisis, or will we cooperate to create balanced and sustainable growth, lifting more people out of poverty and creating a broader prosperity around the world? Will the need for energy breed competition and climate change, or will we build partnerships to produce clean power and to protect our planet? Will nuclear weapons spread unchecked, or will we forge a new consensus to use this power for only peaceful purposes? Will extremists be able to stir conflict and division, or will we unite on behalf of our shared security? Will nations and peoples define themselves solely by their differences, or can we find common ground necessary to meet our common challenges and to respect the dignity of every human being?

We can't predict with certainty what the future will bring, but we can be certain about the issues that will define our times. And we also know this: The relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century, which makes it as important as any bilateral relationship in the world. That really must