

Allentown. But we have over 1,400 employers. Only 1,100 of them are large employers. The majority are small businesses.

And there's a number of small businesses in the area that are actually growing the economy. One of them is the Terra Group, and I want to say thank you on behalf of them. They started a product that was a small water filtration—portable water filtration system, and the Marines have just bought that for our troops in Afghanistan. [Applause] And they're expanding—you could clap on that, that was—[laughter]. They're actually expanding to hire another 40 jobs because of that.

The President. That's great.

Mayor Pawlowski. And so I want to thank you. We look forward to having you tomorrow, and we look forward to having you around the city of Allentown and talking to many of the businesses that are doing some great things in rebuilding this economy.

The President. And if there are any CEOs here who are looking to locate—[laughter]—I'm sure Mayor Bing, Mayor Pawlowski, Mayor Cownie of Des Moines, they're all interested in talking to you. [Laughter] And they have literature, I'm sure. [Laughter] So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:57 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Douglas Holtz-Eakin,

president, DHE Consulting, LLC; Lawrence Mishel, president, Economic Policy Institute; Alan S. Blinder, Gordon S. Rentschler Memorial Professor of Economics, Princeton University; Joseph E. Stiglitz, professor of economics, Columbia University; Angie Selden, chief executive officer, Arise Virtual Solutions, Inc.; James P. Hoffa, general president, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Robert A. Iger, president and chief executive officer, The Walt Disney Company; Randall L. Stephenson, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, AT&T, Inc.; Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers; David Barber, executive vice president, Barber Foods; Noel Cuellar, president, Primera Plastics, Inc.; Rhonda Perry, member, National Family Farm Coalition; Robert Kuttner, cofounder and coeditor, American Prospect magazine; Thomas L. Friedman, columnist, New York Times; Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke; Fred P. Lampropoulos, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, Merit Medical Systems; William Aossey, Jr., president, MIDAMAR; former Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska; and Mayor David Bing of Detroit, MI. A participant referred to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grants (CD-BG) program and the Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree December 3, 2009

Thank you. Merry Christmas, happy holidays, Washington, DC. I want to, first of all, thank Secretary Salazar for not only the kind introduction but the extraordinary work he is doing in preserving the incredible bounty and natural resources of this country.

I want to thank all those involved in helping to organize this great event. Thank you to Randy Jackson and all the performers putting on an incredible show. I told Sasha just—we're not on "American Idol"—[laughter]—no singing. [Laughter]

I also want to thank Neil Mulholland, Jon Jarvis, and Peggy O'Dell from the National Park Service for being with us and all the Park Service employees who've worked so hard to put this event together. Give them a big round of applause. And I want to thank my outstanding Vice President and his gorgeous granddaughters—Joe Biden. Stand up, Joe.

In 1923, the Washington, DC, public schools wrote a letter to the White House asking if they could put up a Christmas tree on the South Lawn. And First Lady Grace Coolidge said they could use the Ellipse. [Laughter] And in the

eight decades since, in times of war and peace, hardship and joy, Americans from every corner of this Nation have gathered here to share in the holiday spirit.

Tonight we celebrate a story that is as beautiful as it is simple. The story of a child born far from home to parents guided only by faith, but who would ultimately spread a message that has endured for more than 2,000 years, that no matter who we are or where we are from, we are each called to love one another as brother and sister.

While this story may be a Christian one, its lesson is universal. It speaks to the hope we share as a people, and it represents a tradition that we celebrate as a country, a tradition that has come to represent more than any one holiday or religion, but a season of brotherhood and generosity to our fellow citizens.

It's that spirit of unity that we must remember as we light the National Christmas Tree, a tree that will shine its light far beyond our city and our shores to every American around the world. And that's why tonight our thoughts and prayers are with the men and women who will be spending this holiday far away from home, the mothers and fathers, the sons and daughters of our military who risk their lives every day to keep us safe. We will be thinking

of you and praying for you during this holiday season.

And let's also remember our neighbors who are struggling here at home, those who've lost a job or a home, a friend or a loved one, because even though it's easy to focus on receiving at this time of year, it's often in the simple act of giving that we find the greatest happiness.

So on behalf of Michelle and Malia and Sasha and my mother-in-law Mama Robinson, I want to wish all of you a very merry Christmas. May you go out with joy and be led forth in peace.

And now to the serious business of pressing the button and lighting this beautiful tree. So, guys, come up here. I need some assistance. I'm technologically challenged, and some—I might not get this right. So we're going to do a countdown, starting from five. Everybody got to help me out here. Five, four, three, two, one—ho! It worked!

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Randy Jackson; Neil J. Mulholland, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Jonathan B. Jarvis, Director, and Peggy O'Dell, National Capital Region Director, National Park Service.

Remarks at Lehigh Carbon Community College and a Question-and-Answer Session in Allentown, Pennsylvania December 4, 2009

The President. Please, have a seat. Thank you. It is great to see you all. It's good to be back in Pennsylvania. Good to be back in Allentown and Lehigh Valley. This is—lot of wonderful faces here.

There are a couple of people I want to acknowledge. First of all, the great Governor of the great State of Pennsylvania, please give it up for Ed Rendell. We've got an outstanding congressional delegation that's here: Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz is here; Congressman Chris Carney is here; and Congressman Paul Kanjorski is here.

We also have Keith McCall, speaker of the Pennsylvania State House. We've got Ed Pawlowski, mayor of Allentown, but maybe the next Member of Congress. We've got John Callahan, mayor of Bethlehem. I just want to clarify here: Ed's not running; John's running. *[Laughter]* I got those reversed. So don't vote for Ed, because he's—*[laughter]*—I mean, vote for him for mayor. *[Laughter]* John's going to be outstanding—and Don Cunningham, Lehigh county executive.

So it's been about a year and a half since I last visited Allentown and Bethlehem, and I was running for office. And while it was a