

The same is true when it comes to reforming our education system. The same is true when it comes to trying to make our health care system more affordable. The same is true when it comes to energy. Each of these things are hard. Some of them have some costs on the front end, and working stuff through Congress is more than a notion. *[Laughter]* But by taking these steps we'll help foster the kind of broadly shared growth that will serve us in the years and the decades to come.

That's how we'll create the conditions for businesses to expand and hire. That's how we'll truly grow our middle class again. That's how

we'll not only rebuild our economy, but we'll rebuild it stronger than it was before this crisis.

I am confident that we can do it. Savannah Tech is leading the way, a whole bunch of folks in this room are leading the way, and I just hope that Washington stands alongside you in making sure that we've got the kind of energy future that we need.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m.

Remarks Following a Tour of Meddin Studios and an Exchange With Reporters in Savannah March 2, 2010

Q. Mr. President, what has impressed you about Meddin Studios? What do you see here that—

The President. Well, look, the—if you think about the two businesses we just visited, on the one hand you've got old-line manufacturing at a steel company that is in its third generation, but they've been able to adapt to a tough manufacturing environment and succeed, mainly around customer service, being able to turn around orders very quickly, specialized orders.

These guys here at Meddin, I think, are doing a similar concept, which is that whatever the customer needs in terms of film production, digital production, sound, you name it, they've got it all under one roof. And what it means is that anybody who comes here is going to be able to, from soup to nuts, do what they need to do very effectively.

The main reason that we wanted to highlight what they're doing is they took advantage of an

SBA loan to get this thing started. And I was just finding out how that experience was. I'm sort of doing a customer satisfaction survey here—*[laughter]*—with our SBA loans, and it sounds like it really was helpful in terms of making sure that these guys could get started with the business idea that they had, and it doesn't sound like, without it, they would have been able to get moving as quickly as they did.

So it's a testimony, I think, to the good work that the SBA is doing. It's an example of the kinds of additional capital we want to get out to small businesses and medium-sized businesses as part of the jobs package that hopefully will be working its way through Congress in the next several weeks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:46 p.m. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation Temporarily Extending Unemployment Insurance and Other Programs March 2, 2010

During these difficult economic times, supporting American workers, their families, and our small businesses must be everyone's focus.

The bill passed tonight by the Senate will extend access to health care benefits for workers who have lost their jobs, help small businesses

get loans so they can grow and hire, and extend unemployment insurance benefits for millions of Americans who are looking for work. I'm grateful to the Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle who worked to

end this roadblock to relief for America's working families.

NOTE: H.R. 4691, approved March 2, was assigned Public Law No. 111-144.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Health Care Reform March 2, 2010

Dear _____:

Thank you again for the time, energy, and preparation you invested in last Thursday's bipartisan meeting on health insurance reform. I have always believed that our legislative process works best when both sides can discuss our differences and common goals openly and honestly, and I'm very pleased that our meeting at Blair House offered the American people and their elected representatives a rare opportunity to explore different health reform proposals in extraordinary depth.

The meeting was a good opportunity to move past the usual rhetoric and sound-bites that have come to characterize this debate and identify areas on which we agree and disagree. And one point on which everyone expressed agreement was that the cost of health care is a large and growing problem that, left untended, threatens families, businesses and the solvency of our government itself.

I also left convinced that the Republican and Democratic approaches to health care have more in common than most people think.

For example, we agree on the need to reform our insurance markets. We agree on the idea of allowing small businesses and individuals who lack insurance to join together to increase their purchasing power so they can enjoy greater choices and lower prices. And we agree on the dire need to wring out waste, fraud and abuse and get control of skyrocketing health care costs.

But there were also important areas of disagreement. There was a fundamental disagreement about what role the oversight of the health insurance industry should play in reform. I believe we must insist on some common-sense rules of the road to hold insurance companies accountable for the decisions they

make to raise premiums and deny coverage. I don't believe we can afford to leave life-and-death decisions about health care for America's families to the discretion of insurance company executives alone.

No matter how we move forward, there are at least four policy priorities identified by Republican Members at the meeting that I am exploring. I said throughout this process that I'd continue to draw on the best ideas from both parties, and I'm open to these proposals in that spirit:

1. Although the proposal I released last week included a comprehensive set of initiatives to combat fraud, waste, and abuse, Senator Coburn had an interesting suggestion that we engage medical professionals to conduct random undercover investigations of health care providers that receive reimbursements from Medicare, Medicaid, and other Federal programs.
2. My proposal also included a provision from the Senate health reform bill that authorizes funding to states for demonstrations of alternatives to resolving medical malpractice disputes, including health courts. Last Thursday, we discussed the provision in the bills cosponsored by Senators Coburn and Burr and Representatives Ryan and Nunes (S. 1099) that provides a similar program of grants to states for demonstration projects. Senator Enzi offered a similar proposal in a health insurance reform bill he sponsored in the last Congress. As we discussed, my Administration is already moving forward in funding demonstration projects through the Department of Health and Human Services, and Secre-