

July 30 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2010

for them, for their families, and for their loved ones.

I want to be perfectly clear: Sarah, Shane, and Josh have never worked for the United States Government. They are simply openminded and adventurous young people who represent the best of America and of the human spirit. They are teachers, artists, and advocates for social and environmental justice. They have never had any quarrel with the Government of Iran, and have great respect for the Iranian people.

I call on the Iranian Government to immediately release Sarah, Shane, and Josh. Their unjust detention has nothing to do with the issues that continue to divide the United States and the international community from the Iranian Government. This is a humanitarian imperative, as these three young people are innocent of any crime. As a signatory to multiple conventions on human rights, the Government of Iran should act in line with the principles of justice and allow Sarah, Shane, and Josh to be reunited with their families. This call has been echoed by people in many countries, and is shared by all who respect human freedom and decency.

I want to particularly acknowledge the suffering and advocacy of Sarah, Shane, and Josh's families. Earlier this week, I spoke with the

mothers of these three young people, who have worked tirelessly for the release of their children. The Iranian Government's gesture of allowing these mothers to visit their children was welcome, but I cannot imagine how painful it was for these three courageous women to return home without their children. I told these three mothers that Sarah, Shane, and Josh are in my thoughts and prayers, and that the U.S. Government would continue to do all that it could to secure their release.

I also spoke earlier this week with the wife of Robert Levinson, who went missing in Iran over 3 years ago. We continue to have no information about his welfare and reiterate our call for the Government of Iran to provide any information that it has about his whereabouts. It is time to facilitate Robert Levinson's return to the family and friends who have suffered so greatly in his absence. We continue to have him in our thoughts and prayers and to do all that we can to reunite him with his family.

Each of these cases reminds us of the dignity that is shared by all human beings and the necessity of justice. All Americans stand together in support of our citizens who are suffering through unjust detention abroad, and we will not rest until they are home.

The President's Weekly Address

July 31, 2010

Hello everybody. I'm speaking to you from the GM auto plant here in Detroit, Michigan, where a hopeful story is unfolding in a place that's been one of the hardest hit in America.

In the 12 months before I took office, American auto companies lost hundreds of thousands of jobs. Sales plunged 40 percent. Liquidation was a very real possibility. Years of papering over tough problems and a failing to adapt to changing times, combined with a vicious economic crisis, brought an industry that's been the symbol of our manufacturing might for a century to the brink of collapse.

We didn't have many good options. On the one hand, we could have continued the practice of handing out billions of taxpayer dollars to the

auto industry with no real strings attached. On the other hand, we could have walked away and allowed two major auto companies to go out of business, which could have wiped out 1 million American jobs.

I refused to let that happen. So we came up with a third way. We said to the auto companies, if you're willing to make the hard decisions necessary to adapt and compete in the 21st century, we'll make a one-time investment in your future.

Of course, if some folks had their way, none of this would be happening at all. This plant might not exist because there were leaders of the "just say no" crowd in Washington who argued that standing by the auto industry would

guarantee failure. One called it “the worst investment you could possibly make.” They said we should just walk away and let these jobs go.

Today, the men and women in this plant are proving these cynics wrong. Since GM and Chrysler emerged from bankruptcy, our auto industry has added 55,000 jobs, the strongest period of job growth in more than 10 years. For the first time since 2004, all three American automakers are operating at a profit. Sales have begun to rebound. And plants like this that wouldn’t have existed if all of us didn’t act are now operating at maximum capacity.

What’s more, thanks to our investments, a lot of these auto companies are reinventing themselves to meet the demands of a new age. At this plant, they’re hard at work building the high-quality, fuel-efficient cars of tomorrow, cars like the plug-in hybrid Chevy Volt that can run 40 miles before taking a sip of gasoline. Throughout Michigan, an advanced battery industry is taking root that will power clean electric cars, an industry that produced only 2 percent of the world’s advanced batteries last year, but will now be able to produce as much as 40 percent in a little over 5 years. That’s real progress.

There’s no doubt we have a long way to go and a lot of work to do before folks here and across America can feel whole again. But what’s important is that we’re finally beginning to see some of the tough decisions we made pay off. And if we had listened to the cynics and the naysayers, if we had simply done what the politics of the moment required, none of this progress would have happened.

Still, even as these icons of American industry are being reborn, we also need to stand shoulder to shoulder with America’s small-business men and women, particularly since they’re the ones who create most of the new jobs in this country.

As we work to rebuild our economy, I can’t imagine anything more common sense than giving additional tax breaks and badly needed lending assistance to America’s small-business owners so they can grow and hire. That’s what we’re trying to do with the “Small Business Jobs Act,” a bill that has been praised as being good

for small businesses by groups like the Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Independent Business. It’s a bill that includes provision after provision authored by both Democrats and Republicans. But yesterday the Republican leaders in the Senate once again used parliamentary procedures to block it. Understand, a majority of Senators support the plan. It’s just that the Republican leaders in the Senate won’t even allow it to come up for a vote.

That isn’t right. And I’m calling on the Republican leaders in the Senate to stop holding America’s small businesses hostage to politics and allow an up-or-down vote on this small-business jobs bill.

At a time when America is just starting to move forward again, we can’t afford the do-nothing policies and partisan maneuvering that will only take us backward. I won’t sit here and pretend everything’s wonderful. I know that times are tough. But what I also know is that we’ve made it through tough times before. And we’ll make it through again. The men and women hard at work in this auto plant makes me absolutely confident of that.

So to all the naysayers out there, I say this: Don’t ever bet against the American people, don’t bet against the American worker, because we don’t take the easy way out. That’s not how we deal with challenge. That’s not how we built this country into the greatest economic power the world has ever known. We did it by summoning the courage to persevere and adapt and push this country forward, inch by inch. That’s the spirit I see in this plant today, and as long as I have the privilege of being your President, I will keep fighting alongside you until we reach a better day.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:20 p.m. on July 30 at the General Motors Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center in Hamtramck, MI. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 31.

Remarks to the Disabled American Veterans National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia
August 2, 2010

The President. Thank you. Everyone, please have a seat. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Audience member. Happy birthday! [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. It is——

Audience member. Happy birthday!

The President. Thank you. It is a great honor and—it is true, I will be 49 this week. [*Laughter*] I have a lot more gray hair than I did last year. [*Laughter*]

It is an extraordinary honor to be here. Thank you, Commander Barrera, for your kind introduction and for your lifetime of service in the Marines in Vietnam——

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. ——but also as a tireless advocate for your fellow disabled veterans. We are grateful to you. Thank you for everything that you've done.

I want to thank your great leadership team for welcoming me today: Chairman Ray Dempsey—[*applause*]—absolutely; incoming Commander Wally Tyson; National Adjutant Art Wilson; Judy Hezlep of the DAV Auxiliary; and your outstanding executive director in Washington, Dave Gorman.

And I am pleased to be joined by a decorated Vietnam veteran, wounded warrior, and a lifetime member of the DAV, my outstanding Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Ric Shinseki.

Disabled American Veterans, I valued your advice and counsel when I was a Senator and when I cosponsored the post-9/11 GI bill. You were one of the first veterans' organizations that I called upon when I began my Presidential campaign. And as President, it's been my pleasure to welcome you to the White House to make sure America is serving our veterans as well as you've served us and, most recently, to sign advanced appropriations into law so that veterans health care will never again be held hostage to the budget battles and the political games in Washington.

Now, there's another visit I won't forget. I was in the Oval Office expecting a visit from the DAV, and in comes Bobby carrying a baseball bat. [*Laughter*] Now, it's not every day that somebody gets past the Secret Service carrying a baseball bat. [*Laughter*] You may have heard about this. It turns out it was a genuine Louisville Slugger, a thank you for going to bat for our veterans on advanced appropriations.

So I'm grateful for that symbol of our partnership, and I'm proud of the progress we've achieved together. But as one of your outstanding DAV members from Illinois just reminded me, this is a promise I made during the campaign. It was a promise made, and it was a promise kept. And I intend to keep on keeping my promises to the veterans of America.

In the life of our Nation, not every generation has been summoned to defend our country in its hour of need. But every generation to answer that call has done so with honor and with courage.

Among you are members of that generation that saved the world from fascism. I was honored to stand with our World War II vets at Normandy last year for the anniversary of D-day. And this year, as we mark the 65th anniversary of our victory in that war, we once again salute our veterans of the Second World War.

Others among you faced a brutal foe on a cold Korean Peninsula. This year, as we mark the 60th anniversary of that conflict, I will be proud to travel to the Republic of Korea in November to pay tribute to our veterans of the Korean war.

Many of you served in the jungles of Vietnam. You also served with honor, exemplary dedication, and courage, but were often shunned when you came home. That was a national disgrace and it must never happen again. And that's why we're making sure our veterans from today's wars are shown the respect and the dignity they deserve.

And whether you served in the Gulf to free a captive Kuwait or fought in the streets of Moga-