

[*There was a break while the President moved to another classroom.*]

The President. Well, hello, everybody!

Students. Hello!

The President. So I just wanted to come by and wish everybody a wonderful holiday, merry Christmas, happy New Year, happy Hanukkah, happy, happy all, everything.

And now, I thought this was the last day of school. I just found out you guys are actually in until Wednesday.

But I did just want to come by to say how proud I am of all of you. This is just a wonderful school. The staff, the teachers do such a great job. And you guys, the students, are doing a great job. And I just left a children's book that I wrote called "Of Thee I Sing," so I left that as a Christmas present. I had a chance to read "The

Night Before Christmas." So—but I suspect everybody here has read it.

Students. We saw you.

The President. Oh, you were watching. Well, that's amazing. Well, then all I want to do is come in here and say, guys, I'm proud of you. I hope you guys have a wonderful holiday. And keep working hard, keep paying attention, because your teachers know more than you do. At least for now. But if they do a really good job, then at some point you'll know more than them. All right?

But we couldn't be prouder. So from Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and from Bo, we want to wish you guys a wonderful holiday. All right? Bye-bye, everybody. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:14 a.m.

Remarks on Signing the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010

December 17, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat.

Good afternoon, everybody. Before I get started, I just want to acknowledge some of the extraordinary people who did some extraordinary work in a very short period of time. And I'm going to start with somebody who has been a champion for the middle class, but has also been just an extraordinary partner on every important initiative in this administration, my friend Joe Biden, the Vice President.

I want to acknowledge and thank Senator Mitch McConnell and the rest of the Republican leadership in the Senate, Dave Camp, Republican over in the House, for their willingness, as Joe indicated, to do what was right for the country, even though it caused occasional political discomfort. I especially want to thank the folks who are here—Dick Durbin, Max Baucus, Danny Davis, Allyson Schwartz, Rob Andrews—part of a broader team that worked very diligently both in the House and the Senate on the Democratic side to make this happen.

And we've got a bunch of other Members of Congress who are here, as well as activists and

economists and business leaders and people who generally recognize that at this critical juncture, we've got to think about what's best to grow the economy and what's best to put people back to work.

We are here with some good news for the American people this holiday season. By a wide bipartisan margin, both Houses of Congress have now passed a package of tax relief that will protect the middle class, that will grow our economy, and will create jobs for the American people. Not only do I want to thank all the leaders here today, but I want to thank mayors and Governors from across the country who couldn't be here today and all who worked together to get this done.

First and foremost, the legislation I'm about to sign is a substantial victory for middle class families across the country. They're the ones hit hardest by the recession we've endured. They're the ones who need relief right now. And that's what is at the heart of this bill.

This bipartisan effort was prompted by the fact that tax rates for every American were poised to automatically increase on January 1. If

that had come to pass, the average middle class family would have had to pay an extra \$3,000 in taxes next year. That wouldn't have just been a blow to them, it would have been a blow to our economy, just as we're climbing out of a devastating recession.

I refused to let that happen. And because we acted, it's not going to. In fact, not only will middle class Americans avoid a tax increase, but tens of millions of Americans will start the new year off right by opening their first paycheck to see that it's actually larger than the one they get right now. Over the course of 2011, 155 million workers will receive tax relief from the new payroll tax cut included in this bill, about \$1,000 for the average family.

This is real money that's going to make a real difference in people's lives. And I would not have signed this bill if it didn't include other extensions of relief that were also set to expire, relief that's going to help families cover the bills, parents raise their children, students pay for college, and business owners to take the reins of the recovery and propel this economy forward.

As soon as I sign this legislation, 2 million Americans looking for work who lost their jobs through no fault of their own can know with certainty that they won't lose their emergency unemployment insurance at the end of this month. Over the past few weeks, 600,000 Americans have been cut off from that lifeline. But with my signature, States can move quickly to reinstate their benefits. And we expect that in almost all States, they'll get them in time for Christmas.

Eight million college students who otherwise would have faced a tuition hike as soon as next semester will instead continue to have access to a \$2,500 tax credit to afford their studies. Twelve million families with 24 million children will benefit from extensions of the earned-income tax credit and the child tax credit. And when combined with the payroll tax cut, 2 million American families who otherwise would have lived in poverty next year will instead be lifted out of it. And millions of entrepreneurs who have been waiting to invest in their businesses will receive new tax incentives to help them expand, buy

new equipment, or make upgrades, freeing up other money to hire new workers.

Putting more money in the pockets of families most likely to spend it, helping businesses invest and grow, that's how we're going to spark demand, spur hiring, and strengthen our economy in the new year.

Now, candidly speaking, there are some elements of this legislation that I don't like. There are some elements that members of my party don't like. There are some elements that Republicans here today don't like. That's the nature of compromise: yielding on something each of us cares about to move forward on what all of us care about. And right now what all of us care about is growing the American economy and creating jobs for the American people. Taken as a whole, that's what this package of tax relief is going to do. It's a good deal for the American people. This is progress, and that's what they sent us here to achieve.

There will be moments, I am certain, over the next couple of years in which the holiday spirit won't be as abundant as it is today. [Laughter] Moreover, we've got to make some difficult choices ahead when it comes to tackling the deficit. In some ways, this was easier than some of the tougher choices we're going to have to make next year. There will be times when we won't agree, and we'll have to work through those times together. But the fact is, I don't believe that either party has cornered the market on good ideas. And I want to draw on the best thinking from both sides.

So wherever we can, whenever we can, it makes sense for our country's success and our children's future to work with people in both parties who are willing to come to the table for the hard work of moving our economy and our country forward. What happened with this economic package was a good example of that. A bipartisan group made up of Senators Baucus and Kyl and Representatives Van Hollen and Camp sat down with Secretary Geithner, who is here today, and Director Jack Lew of the Office of Management and Budget to begin negotiations in good faith. Leaders like Nancy Pelosi, John Boehner, Harry Reid, and Mitch, other

Members who are here together worked to bring this bill across the finish line.

And the final product proves when we can put aside the partisanship and the political games, when we can put aside what's good for some of us in favor of what's good for all of us, we can get a lot done. And if we can keep doing it, if we can keep that spirit, I'm hopeful that we won't just reinvigorate this economy and restore the American Dream for all who work for it. I'm also hopeful that we might refresh the American people's faith in the capability of their leaders to govern in challenging times, belief in the capacity of their institutions in this town to deliver in a rapidly changing world, and most of all, confidence that our best days as a nation are still ahead of us.

The President's Weekly Address *December 18, 2010*

This week, Congress passed—and I signed into law—an essential economic package that will help grow our economy, spur businesses, and jump-start job creation.

Instead of a New Year's Day tax hike on the vast majority of Americans, 2 million Americans who've lost their jobs through no fault of their own will now know with certainty that they won't lose their emergency unemployment insurance at the end of the month. Eight million college students who'd otherwise face a tuition hike next semester will continue having access to the American opportunity tax credit. Twelve million families with 24 million children will benefit from extensions of the earned-income tax credit and child tax credit. And millions of entrepreneurs who've been waiting to invest in their businesses will receive new tax incentives to help them expand, buy new equipment, or make upgrades, freeing up money to hire new workers.

This package, which is so important for our economy at this pivotal time, was the product of hard negotiations. And like any negotiations, there was give and take on both sides. But I'm heartened by our ability to come together to do what's best for middle class fam-

ilies across this country and for our economy as a whole.

So to all of you who worked so diligently on this issue, thank you very much. To those on my staff who were working night and day and on the Senate and House staffs in both parties who were working so hard, we're very grateful to you. And with that, let me sign this bill to make sure that people are seeing a bigger paycheck come January.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. H.R. 4853, approved December 17, was assigned Public Law No. 111-312. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Before going away for the holiday break, I'm hopeful we can also come together on another urgent national priority, and that is the new START Treaty that will reduce the world's nuclear arsenals and make America more secure.

Twenty-five years ago, the Soviet Union and United States each had about 25,000 nuclear weapons. In the decades since, that number has been reduced by over 70 percent, and we've had onsite inspections of Russian nuclear facilities. That progress would not have been possible without strategic arms control treaties.

During the past year, however, our old treaty with Russia expired, and without a new one, we won't be able to verify Russia's nuclear arsenal, which would undercut President Reagan's call to trust, but verify, when it comes to nuclear weapons.

Without a new treaty, we'll risk turning back the progress we've made in our relationship with Russia, which is essential to enforce strong sanctions against Iran, secure vulnerable nuclear materials from terrorists, and resupply our troops in Afghanistan. And we'll risk undermining American leadership not only on nuclear