

help us ensure that the America that we pass on to our kids and our grandkids is better than the one that we inherited.

And that I think is the biggest challenge. And over the next year we are going to be wrestling with what are two fundamentally different visions of where we need to take the country and where we need to take our politics. And I'm confident that the American people prefer our vision. But we're going to have to communicate that effectively, and to do that, I'm going to need you.

So I just—as I was thinking about riding over here, I was thinking about a group of veterans that I met with today. We made a big announcement about initiatives that are going to help veterans get hired. The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is actually higher than the general population, and that's something that I intend to fix. But it reminded me of something that Michelle and I have both experienced.

The biggest honor of my job is serving as Commander in Chief. And I get the chance to interact a lot with people who are based all around the world; Michelle interacts with military families here, throughout the country. The kind of sacrifices they're making on behalf of their country, the kind of commitment and discipline and putting country ahead of self-interest, is unbelievable.

Remarks at the Yeadon Regional Head Start Center in Yeadon, Pennsylvania November 8, 2011

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. It is great to be in Yeadon, great to be in the Philly area. I was told not to mention football at all. [Laughter] So I'm not going to say anything about football while I'm here, because I know this is a sensitive subject. [Laughter] This is why I have Secret Service along. [Laughter]

Now, I want to start by acknowledging some of the folks who are with me here today. First of all, I want to thank one of our finest public servants in this country, and she's just a great friend, but somebody who cares passionately about the health and the welfare of our kids

And for that same spirit to be captured and to be channeled and to be the animating spirit of Washington, that should be our goal. Because if we do that, there's no problem we can't solve. There's no challenge we can't meet. I am absolutely convinced of that.

And so I've said before that this campaign probably won't be as sexy as the first one. It'll be tight. It'll be tough. But I also want to remind people who were on the first campaign, there's been a lot of revisionist history that says how perfect that first one was. [Laughter] It didn't feel like that when we were in the middle of it. [Laughter] And that's part of our democracy. It's always a little messy, and it's always tough. But it's also worth it when it's done right.

And if you're willing to join me on this journey, I think at the end of the day you'll see that we're actually able to deliver the kind of change that you can believe in.

So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:15 p.m. at the residence of Dwight and Antoinette Bush. In his remarks, he referred to Senior Adviser to the President Valerie B. Jarrett. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

and our families, Kathleen Sebelius, our Secretary of Health and Human Services. I want to acknowledge the mayor of Yeadon; Dolores Jones-Butler is in the house. Two of my favorite Members of Congress, Chaka Fattah and Bob Brady; and one of my favorite former Members of Congress, who I think is going to be doing big things here in Pennsylvania, is here as well. I guess I can't call you Congressman, huh? [Laughter] That's all right? The—Congressman Murphy.

I had a chance to say hello to Mayor Nutter when I landed in Philly. He couldn't be with us this morning. I guess there are a few things

going on here today. [Laughter] But I wished him well. He's a great partner of ours.

And I also want to say thank you to Miss Pleasantte, Dr. O'Shea, all the staff and the teachers who are here. They are just doing a great job.

I had a chance to visit one of the classrooms here. And I have to say, it got me a little choked up, because—Patrick, you need to remember this. Patrick's got small kids. And they are just so huggable at this age. [Laughter] And now—they're still huggable, but they're a little—they're 5'9" and 5 feet. [Laughter] But obviously, you got a lot to handle when you're here.

And the teachers, the staff who are here, they wouldn't be doing this for the money. They're doing it out of love of children. All of you do it because you know that when it comes to learning and when it comes to growing, this is an absolutely critical period in a child's life. We know that 3- and 4-year-olds who go to high-quality preschools, including our best Head Start programs, are less likely to repeat a grade, they're less likely to need special education, they're more likely to graduate from high school than the peers who did not get these services. And so this makes early education one of our best investments in America's future—one of the best.

Right out of the gate, it helps prepare our kids for a competition that's never been tougher, a competition for good, middle class, well-paying jobs. And we're competing now with countries like China and South Korea and Europe, all of which are serious about educating their children. So at a time when a company is able to move anywhere they want in the world and a lot of times will make the decision based on where they can find the most highly skilled workforce, it is absolutely imperative that we make sure that the United States is the place where we've got the best trained, best educated young people. That is a priority.

And this is not, and should not be, a Democratic priority or a Republican priority. This is an American priority. It's an economic imperative. Our future depends on it. And people understand this outside of Washington, which is

why we've been able to work with Democratic and Republican Governors on our efforts to strengthen education from cradle to career, not only with more money—money is important—but also with reforms that challenge schools to develop higher standards and the best practices for teaching and for learning.

Now, unfortunately, in Congress right now, it's a different story. The Republicans in Washington have been trying to gut our investments in education. Earlier this year, nearly every Republican in the House voted for a budget that would have cut hundreds of thousands of children from Head Start. They've tried to cut Pell grants for college students. They just voted against a jobs bill that would have put 400,000 teachers back in the classroom.

Their argument is that we don't have the money. And what I've said is we can make these investments in our children without adding to the deficit simply by asking people who make more than a million dollars a year to pay a little more in taxes, not right now, but starting in 2013. It's the right thing to do for our kids. It's the right thing to do for our country. But so far, they've said no.

It's not just on issues, by the way, that cost money. So far, Congress has failed to move on fixing No Child Left Behind, despite the fact that we've shown them bipartisan reforms that are working in States right now, reforms that are praised not only by Democrats, but also by Republicans. So after trying for months to work with Congress on education, we decided to take matters into our own hands, because our future is at stake, our children deserve action, and we can't wait for Congress any longer.

We can't wait to make sure that our schools give every child the chance to compete with young people from around the world. So in September, I announced that if States exceed the high standards set by No Child Left Behind, then they've got the flexibility to build on the reforms that they've already made. We can't wait to help more young people get to college. So 2 weeks ago, I announced changes that will lower student loan payments by hundreds of dollars a month for around 1.6 million Americans.

We can't wait to give more of our youngest children the same basic opportunities we want all children to have, that we want for our children. And that's why today I'm announcing a new rule that will improve the quality of Head Start programs around the country.

Now, I firmly believe that Head Start is an outstanding program and a critical investment. The children who have the chance to go to the best Head Start programs have an experience that can literally change their lives for years to come. We're making today's announcement because we believe that every child in Head Start deserves that same chance.

Now, under the old rules governing Head Start, there just wasn't enough accountability. If a program wasn't providing kids with quality services, there was no incentive to improve. Under the new rule, programs are going to be regularly evaluated against a set of clear, high standards. If a program meets these standards—and we believe the majority of Head Start programs will—then their grants will be renewed. But if a program isn't giving children the support they need to be ready for school, if classrooms are unsafe, if finances aren't in order, if kids aren't learning what they need to learn, then other organizations will be able to compete for that grant. We're not just going to put money into programs that don't work. We will take money and put them into programs that do.

If a group's going to do a better job in the—for the community, then they need that support. If a group would do a better job serving the kids in our communities, then they're going to have that chance.

Now, this is the first time in history that Head Start programs will be truly held accountable for performance in the classroom, and we know that raising the bar isn't always an easy thing to do. But it's the right thing to do. Children in Head Start deserve the best services we have to offer, and we know that Head Start programs can meet this challenge.

So because of this rule and the other executive actions that we've taken to improve our education system, more children will have the chance to study hard, do well in school, graduate on time, go to college without crushing

debt. More Americans will grow up to be scientists and innovators and engineers and entrepreneurs. More businesses will be able to find skilled workers.

Of course, there's no substitute for Congress doing its job. And I have to say, these two Congressmen are doing their job. But they need some help. Congress still needs to fix No Child Left Behind. Congress still needs to put teachers back in the classroom where they belong.

So Congress still needs to act. But if Congress continues to stand only for dysfunction and delay, then I'm going to move ahead without them. I have told—[*applause*—I've told my administration, I want you to keep on looking for actions that we can take without Congress, steps that can save consumers money, make Government more efficient and responsive, help heal the economy, improve our education system, improve our health care system. We want to work with Congress, but we're not going to wait.

I think this is the right thing to do not just as a President, but I think this is the right thing to do as a parent. Because I know there are some things I cannot guarantee my kids. But I can make sure—I can do my best to make certain that they get a chance to succeed or fail on their own merits, just like I did. I can do everything in my power to ensure that their children grow up in a country where anything is possible, as long as you're willing to work for it.

That's what my mom and my grandparents wanted for me. It's what I want for my children. It's the promise that every generation has made to those who came after.

We can't be the first generation of Americans to break that promise. So we've got to prove that we are tougher than the times that we live in and that we're bigger than the politics of the moment. We've got to meet the challenges today by preparing our children for the challenges tomorrow.

That's what's being done at this wonderful facility. We want to replicate these all across the country. We are proud of what you are doing. You've got a President who's got your back.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to former Rep. Patrick J. Murphy; Mayor Michael A. Nutter of Philadelphia, PA; and Pleasantte Kinsler-Johnson,

assistant education coordinator over curriculum, and Lawrence J. O'Shea, executive director, Delaware County Intermediate Unit of Pennsylvania.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order To Cut Waste and Promote Efficient Spending Across the Federal Government *November 9, 2011*

Well, from the day I took office, one of the commitments that I made to the American people was that we would do a better job here in Washington in rooting out wasteful spending. At a time when families have had to cut back, have had to make some tough decisions about getting rid of things that they don't need in order to make the investments that they do, we thought that it was entirely appropriate for our governments and our agencies to try to root out waste, large and small, in a systematic way.

Obviously, this is even more important given the deficits that we've inherited and that have grown as a consequence of this recession. This makes these efforts even more imperative.

Now, this does mean making some tough choices. It means cutting some programs that I think are worthy, but we may not be able to afford right now. A lot of the action is in Congress and legislative and budget. I know the joint committee on trying to reduce our deficits are engaged in a very difficult conversation right now, and we want to encourage them to complete their work. But in the meantime, we don't need to wait for Congress in order to do something about wasteful spending that's out there.

Cutting waste, making Government more efficient, is something that leaders in both parties have worked on, from Senator Tom Coburn, a Republican, to Democrat Claire McCaskill. We haven't seen as much action out of Congress as we'd like, and that's why we launched on our own initiative the campaign to cut waste—not just to cut spending, but to make Government work better for the American people.

For example, we've identified thousands of Government buildings that we don't need. Some have sat empty for years. So we're getting rid of those properties, and that's going to save the American people billions of dollars.

As part of this campaign, I've also asked Federal employees to do their part and share their ideas on making Government more efficient and more effective. And two of them are here today, so I want to introduce them.

Roger Rhoads works at the Department of Commerce. Raise your hand, Roger. There's Roger. He found a way to save the Department almost \$2 million a year on its cell phone bills. And I'm sure that there probably is some consumers out there that would like to talk to him and find out what they can save on their cell phone bills.

Celeste Steele is here. Celeste, raise your hand. Celeste works at the Department of Homeland Security, and she's helping save taxpayers tens of millions of dollars by changing the way the Department buys goods and services.

So we've received nearly 20,000 suggestions from Federal employees. I just completed a videoconference with the 4 finalists of our annual SAVE Award, 20,000 submissions of ideas from Federal employees about how we can reduce waste, eliminate duplication, redundancy, paperwork. And these four finalists have some terrific ideas: putting books that have been ordered every year online instead of continuing to incur the shipping costs, to having a tool library over at NASA so that instead of buying very specialized tools over and over again for different projects, we actually keep an inventory of those tools.