

created by extending the payroll tax cut and extending unemployment insurance.

Get it done. And if not, maybe we'll have a white Christmas here in Washington. And I look forward to spending a lot of time with you guys—[*laughter*—between now and the new year.

All right? Thank you, guys.

Remarks at a Hanukkah Reception December 8, 2011

The President. Well, good evening, everybody. Welcome to the White House. Thank you all for joining us tonight to celebrate Hanukkah, even if we're doing it a little bit early. [*Laughter*]

I want to start by recognizing a few folks who are here. The Ambassador to the United States from Israel, Michael Oren, is in the house.

We are honored to be joined by one of the Justices of the Supreme Court, Ruth—Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is here. We are thrilled to see her. She's one of my favorites. I got to—[*laughter*—so I've got a soft spot for Justice Ginsburg.

And we've got more than a few Members of Congress here and members of my administration in the house, including our new Director of Jewish Outreach, Jarrod Bernstein is here. Where's Jarrod? Hey, Jarrod.

I also want to thank the West Point Jewish Chapel Cadet Choir, the Voice of Tradition, for their wonderful performance, but more importantly, for their extraordinary service to our country.

And I want to thank all the rabbis and lay leaders who have come far and wide to be here with us today.

Now, as I said, we're jumping the gun just a little bit. The way I see it, we're just extending the holiday spirit. We're stretching it out. [*Laughter*] But we do have to be careful that your kids don't start thinking Hanukkah lasts 20 nights instead of 8. [*Laughter*] That will cause some problems.

This Hanukkah season we remember a story so powerful that we all know it by heart, even us gentiles. It's a story of right over might, of faith over doubt, of a band of believers who rose up and freed their people and discovered

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA (Ret.), Director, Central Intelligence Agency; President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Mario Monti of Italy.

that the oil left in their desecrated temple, which should have lasted only 1 night, ended up lasting 8.

It's a timeless story. And for 2,000 years, it has given hope to Jews everywhere who are struggling. And today, it reminds us that miracles come in all shapes and sizes. Because to most people, the miracle of Hanukkah would have looked like nothing more than a simple flame, but the believers in the temple knew it was something else. They knew it was something special.

This year, we have to recognize the miracles in our own lives. Let's honor the sacrifices our ancestors made so that we might be here today. Let's think about those who are spending this holiday far away from home, including members of our military who guard our freedom around the world. Let's extend a hand to those who are in need and allow the value of *tikkun olam* to guide our work this holiday season.

This is also a time to be grateful for our friendships, both with each other and between our nations. And that includes, of course, our unshakeable support and commitment to the security of the nation of Israel.

So while it is not yet Hanukkah, let's give thanks for our blessings, for being together to celebrate this wonderful holiday season. And we never need an excuse for a good party. [*Laughter*] So we are going to see all of you in a second downstairs—

The First Lady. No. Aren't we in the Blue Room?

The President. Or wherever we are. [*Laughter*] I think we're downstairs. We are downstairs in the Map Room. So as I look around, I

see a whole bunch of good friends. We can't wait to give you a hug and a kiss and wish you a happy holiday. The guys with whiskers, I won't give you a kiss. [*Laughter*]

The President's Weekly Address *December 10, 2011*

Today, America faces a make-or-break moment for the middle class.

After the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes, some still want to return to the same policies that got us into this mess. They're the same policies that have stacked the deck against working Americans for way too long. They're part of a philosophy that says we're better off when everyone is left to fend for themselves and play by their own rules.

But I have a different vision. I believe that we are greater together than we are on our own. I believe that this country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone engages in fair play.

To ensure fair play, last year, we passed the toughest financial reform in generations.

See, for too long, the rules weren't the same on Wall Street as they were on Main Street. Risky bets were made with other people's money. Some folks made a lot of money taking advantage of consumers. It was wrong. And this irresponsible behavior on the part of some contributed to the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

So this financial reform refocuses the financial sector on what's really important: getting capital to entrepreneurs who want to grow their businesses and financing to millions of families who want to buy a house or send their kids to college.

A key part of that was putting in place the first-ever consumer watchdog, someone whose job it is to protect American families from being taken advantage of by mortgage lenders, payday lenders, and debt collectors.

Tens of millions of Americans use these services. Protecting them from unscrupulous practices is an important job. And that's why I nominated Richard Cordray to serve as the head of this consumer watchdog agency.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:10 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House.

As the former attorney general of Ohio, Richard helped recover billions of dollars on behalf of retirees and stood up to dishonest lending practices. He has the support of most attorney generals across the country, both Democrats and Republicans. Members of Congress from both parties say he's more than qualified for the job. And yet on Thursday, Republicans blocked his nomination. They refused to even allow it to come up for a vote.

That doesn't make any sense. Do Republicans in Congress think our financial crisis was caused by too much oversight of mortgage lenders or debt collectors? Of course not. And every day America has to wait for a new consumer protection watchdog is another day that dishonest businesses can target and take advantage of students, seniors, and servicemembers.

So I refuse to take no for an answer. Financial institutions have plenty of high-powered lawyers and lobbyists looking out for them. It's time consumers had someone on their side.

And while they're at it, Republicans in Congress should stop the games and extend the payroll tax cut for working Americans. Because if they don't, nearly 160 million Americans will see their taxes go up at the end of this month.

Congress cannot end the year by taking money out of the pockets of working Americans. Now's not the time for playing politics. Now's the time to do what's right for the American people.

No one should go home for the holidays until we get this done. So tell your Members of Congress, "Don't be a grinch." Tell them to do the right thing for you and for our economy. Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on December 9 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for