

succeed.” His peaceful resistance shook the foundations of an empire, exposed the emptiness of a repressive ideology, and proved that moral leadership is more powerful than any weapon. He played a seminal role in the Velvet Revolution that won his people their freedom and inspired generations to reach for self-determination and dignity in all parts of the world. He also embodied the aspirations of half a continent that had been cut off by the Iron Curtain and helped unleash tides of history that led to a united and democratic Europe.

Like millions around the world, I was inspired by his words and leadership and was humbled to stand with the Czech people in a free and vibrant Hradcany Square as President. We extend our condolences to President Havel’s family and all those in the Czech Republic and around the world who remain inspired by his example. Vaclav Havel was a friend to America and to all who strive for freedom and dignity, and his words will echo through the ages.

Statement on Storm and Flood Damage in the Philippines *December 19, 2011*

On behalf of the American people, I wish to express my deep condolences for the tremendous loss of life and devastation caused by recent flooding in the Philippines. In the spirit of our long history of friendship and

cooperation with the Philippines, the United States stands ready to assist the Philippine people and Government should humanitarian assistance and recovery efforts be needed.

Remarks During White House Press Secretary James F. “Jay” Carney’s Briefing *December 20, 2011*

The President. Hello, everybody. Sorry to interrupt.

Press Secretary Carney. It’s all yours, sir.

The President. Thank you. Well, good afternoon, everybody. It is no secret that there hasn’t been an abundance of partisanship in Washington this year. And that’s why what happened on Saturday was such a big deal.

Nearly the entire Senate, including almost all of the Republicans, voted to prevent 160 million working Americans from receiving a tax increase on January 1. Nearly the entire Senate voted to make sure that nearly 2.5 million Americans who are out there looking for a job don’t lose their unemployment insurance in the first 2 months of next year. And just about everybody, Democrats and Republicans, committed to making sure that early next year we find a way to extend the payroll tax cut and unemployment insurance through the end of 2012.

But now, even though Republicans and Democrats in the Senate were willing to compromise for the good of the country, a faction of Republicans in the House are refusing to even vote on the Senate bill, a bill that cuts taxes for 160 million Americans. And because of their refusal to cooperate, all those Americans could face a tax hike in just 11 days, and millions of Americans who are out there looking for work could find their unemployment insurance expired.

Now, let’s be clear: Right now the bipartisan compromise that was reached on Saturday is the only viable way to prevent a tax hike on January 1. It’s the only one. All of the leaders in Congress, Democrats and Republicans, say they are committed to making sure we extend the payroll tax cut and unemployment insurance for the entire year. And by the way, this is something I called for months ago.

The issue is, is that the Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate worked on a