

Statement on the Observance of Hanukkah

December 20, 2011

Michelle and I send our warmest wishes to all those celebrating Hanukkah around the world.

This Hanukkah season we remember the powerful story of a band of believers who rose up and freed their people, only to discover that the oil left in their desecrated temple, which should have been enough for only one night, ended up lasting for eight.

It's a timeless story of right over might and faith over doubt, one that has given hope to

Jewish people everywhere for over 2,000 years. And tonight, as families and friends come together to light the menorah, it is a story that reminds us to count our blessings, to honor the sacrifices of our ancestors, and to believe that through faith and determination we can work together to build a brighter, better world for generations to come.

From our family to the Jewish community around the world, *chag sameach*.

Remarks on Payroll Tax Cut and Unemployment Insurance Legislation

December 22, 2011

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Good afternoon to all of you. Merry Christmas. Happy holidays.

We've been doing everything we can over the last few weeks to make sure that 160 million working Americans aren't hit with a holiday tax increase on January 1. We've also been doing everything we can to make sure that millions of people who are out there looking for work in a very tough environment don't start losing their unemployment insurance on January 1.

Now, on Saturday, we reached a bipartisan compromise that would do just that: make sure that people aren't seeing a tax cut the first of the year; make sure that they still have unemployment insurance the first of the year. Nearly every Democrat in the Senate voted for that compromise; nearly every Republican in the Senate voted for that compromise. Democrats and even some Republicans in the House voted for that compromise. I am ready to sign that compromise into law the second it lands on my desk.

So far, the only reason it hasn't landed on my desk—the only reason—is because a faction of House Republicans have refused to support this compromise.

Now, if you're a family making about \$50,000 a year, this is a tax cut that amounts to about \$1,000 a year. That's about 40 bucks out

of every paycheck. It may be that there's some folks in the House who refuse to vote for this compromise because they don't think that 40 bucks is a lot of money. But anyone who knows what it's like to stretch a budget knows that at the end of the week, or the end of the month, \$40 can make all the difference in the world.

And that's why we thought we'd bring your voices into this debate. So many of these debates in Washington end up being portrayed as which party is winning, which party is losing. But what we have to remind ourselves of is this is about people. This is about the American people and whether they win. It's not about a contest between politicians.

So on Tuesday, we asked folks to tell us what would it be like to lose \$40 out of your paycheck every week. And I have to tell you that the response has been overwhelming. We haven't seen anything like this before. Over 30,000 people have written in so far, as many as 2,000 every hour. We're still hearing from folks. And I want to encourage everybody who's been paying attention to this to keep sending your stories to whitehouse.gov and share them on Twitter and share them on Facebook.

The responses we've gotten so far have come from Americans of all ages and Americans of all backgrounds, from every corner of the country. Some of the folks who responded