

are on stage with me here today, and they should remind every single Member of Congress what's at stake in this debate. Let me just give you a few samples.

Joseph from New Jersey talked about how he would have to sacrifice the occasional pizza night with his daughters. He said, and I'm quoting: "My 16-year-old twins will be out of the house soon. I'll miss this."

Richard from Rhode Island wrote to tell us that having an extra \$40 in his check buys enough heating oil to keep his family warm for three nights. In his words—I'm quoting—"If someone doesn't think that 12 gallons of heating oil is important, I invite them to spend three nights in an unheated home. Or you can believe me when I say that it makes a difference."

Pete from Wisconsin told us about driving more than 200 miles each week to keep his father-in-law company in a nursing home. Forty dollars out of his paycheck would mean he'd only be able to make three trips instead of four.

We heard from a teacher named Claire from here in DC who goes to the thrift store every week and uses her own money to buy pencils and books for her fourth grade class. Once in a while she splurges on science or art supplies. Losing \$40, she says, would mean she couldn't do that anymore.

For others, \$40 means dinner out with a child who's home for Christmas, a new pair of shoes, a tank of gas, a charitable donation. These are the things at stake for millions of Americans. They matter to people. A lot.

And keep in mind that those are just the individual stories. That doesn't account for the overall impact that a failure to extend the payroll tax cut and a failure to extend unemployment insurance would have on the economy as a whole. We've seen the economy do better over the last couple of months, but there's still a lot of sources of uncertainty out there: what's going on in Europe, what's going on around

the world. And so this is insurance to make sure that our recovery continues.

So it's time for the House to listen to the voices who are up here, the voices all across the country, and reconsider. What's happening right now is exactly why people just get so frustrated with Washington. This is it; this is exactly why people get so frustrated with Washington. This isn't a typical Democratic versus Republican issue. This is an issue where an overwhelming number of people in both parties agree. How can we not get that done? I mean, has this place become so dysfunctional that even when people agree to things we can't do it? It doesn't make any sense.

So enough is enough. The people standing with me today can't afford any more games. They can't afford to lose \$1,000 because of some ridiculous Washington standoff. The House needs to pass a short-term version of this compromise, and then we should negotiate an agreement as quickly as possible to extend the payroll tax cut and unemployment insurance for the rest of 2012. It's the right thing to do for the economy, and it's, most importantly, the right thing to do for American families all across the country.

This is not just my view. Just a few hours ago, this is exactly what the Republican leader of the Senate said we should do. Democrats agree with the Republican leader of the Senate. We should go ahead and get this done. This should not be hard. We all agree it should happen. I believe it's going to happen sooner or later. Why not make it sooner, rather than later? Let's give the American people—the people who sent us here—the kind of leadership they deserve.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

## Statement on Humanitarian Assistance to East Africa *December 22, 2011*

As we enter the season of giving and renewal, more than 13.3 million people in Ethiopia, Ke-

nya, and Somalia remain in urgent need of humanitarian assistance amid the worst drought

the region has seen in 60 years. The heartbreaking accounts of lives lost and of those struggling to survive remind us of our common humanity and the need to reach out to people in need. I want to thank the many Americans who have reached out in support and made donations over the last several months to support people in need in the Horn of Africa.

Today, on behalf of the U.S. Government and the American people, I am announcing an additional \$113 million in emergency relief assistance for the Horn of Africa. This funding will support urgently needed food, health,

shelter, water, and assistance needs. To date, the U.S. has provided approximately \$870 million for relief purposes. Importantly, and even as we help to meet the emergency needs of the people of this region, we are also investing in their long-term food security: [www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov).

For more information, please visit the FWD Campaign, run by the U.S. Agency for International Development, and to learn more about how you can get involved, please visit [action.usaid.gov](http://action.usaid.gov).

## Statement on Congressional Action on Payroll Tax Cut and Unemployment Insurance Legislation

*December 22, 2011*

For the past several weeks, I've stated consistently that it was critical that Congress not go home without preventing a tax increase on 160 million working Americans. Today I congratulate Members of Congress for ending the partisan stalemate by reaching an agreement that meets that test.

Because of this agreement, every working American will keep his or her tax cut, about \$1,000 for the average family. That's about \$40 in every paycheck. Vital unemployment insurance will continue for millions of Americans who are looking for work. And when Congress

returns, I urge them to keep working to reach an agreement that will extend this tax cut and unemployment insurance for all of 2012 without drama or delay.

This is good news, just in time for the holidays. This is the right thing to do to strengthen our families, grow our economy, and create new jobs. This is real money that will make a real difference in people's lives. And I want to thank every American who raised your voice to remind folks in this town what this debate was all about. It was about you. And today your voices made all the difference.

## Remarks on Congressional Action on Payroll Tax Cut and Unemployment Insurance Legislation

*December 23, 2011*

Good afternoon, everybody. I know you're all looking forward to spending time with your families over the holidays, but we did have one last piece of business to finish up. I said it was critical for Congress not to go home without preventing a tax increase on 160 million working Americans, and I'm pleased to say that they've got it done. So I want to thank all the Members of Congress for ending the stalemate and making this happen.

Because of this agreement, every working American will keep their tax cut, about \$1,000

for a typical family. And that's—translates into an extra \$40 or so in every paycheck. Vital unemployment insurance will continue for millions of Americans who are looking for work. And when Congress returns, I urge them to keep working, without drama, without delay, to reach an agreement that extends this tax cut as well as unemployment insurance through all of 2012.

Last week, I said that this should be a formality, and that's still the case. So let's make sure that we extend this tax break and unemployment insurance for a full year for our