

well and that has spillover effects, ripple effects throughout the economy here.

But it also benefits manufacturing. We've got folks in America driving Kias and Hyundais. I want to see folks in Korea driving Fords and Chryslers and Chevys. I want to sell goods all over the world that are stamped with three words: Made in America.

And all of these proposals will make a difference for rural communities. The only thing that is holding us back is our politics. The only thing that's preventing us from passing the bills I just mentioned is the refusal of a faction in Congress to put country ahead of party. And that has to stop. Our economy cannot afford it. Our economy can't afford it.

So I don't care whether you're a Democrat or Republican, Independent, if you're not registered with any party. I want to enlist your help. I need your help sending a message to Congress that it's time to put the politics aside and get something done.

The folks here in Iowa do the right thing. I've been traveling through these small towns and talking to folks, sitting down at diners. And you listen to people, they take such pride doing the right thing: taking care of their families, working hard, saving for the future, living within their means, giving back to their communities.

Remarks During a Breakout Session at the White House Rural Economic Forum in Peosta August 16, 2011

The President. Everybody, please have a seat. So I'm just going to hang out here for about 20 minutes. Karen's the one who's actually in charge.

Small Business Administration Administrator Karen Gordon Mills. Yes, he's my boss. We have no better advocate for small businesses than the President. So I don't know if you want to hear some of the stories or thoughts that people are starting to come out with.

The President. You know, I think all I want to say by way of introduction is, I had the chance to have breakfast with a couple of your

You do your part. You meet your obligations. Well, it's time Washington acted as responsibly as you do every single day. It's past time.

We've got a lot of work to do, and the only way it will get done is if Democrats and Republicans put country ahead of party and put the next generation ahead of the next election. And that's what I'm fighting for. That's why I'm out here visiting communities like this one and Decorah and small towns in Minnesota and Illinois.

I'm convinced; I've seen it. When we come together, there's no stopping this country. There is no stopping it. We can create opportunities for training and education and good careers in rural America so young people don't feel like they've got to leave their hometowns to find work. We can strengthen the middle class, restore that sense of economic security that's been missing for a lot of people for way too long. We can push through this period of economic hardship, and we can get to a better place. That's why we're here together. That's what this forum is all about.

So I appreciate all of your participation. I expect great ideas coming out of these breakout sessions. I'm going to join a couple of them. Let's get to work. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. at Northeast Iowa Community College.

panelists here, and—three of them, actually—and I was just struck by the creativity and the stick-to-it-ness that so many businesses here are exhibiting.

The good news, Karen, is all of them, uniformly, on a bipartisan basis, felt that the SBA—their local SBA office is doing a great job and working really hard.

Administrator Mills. Well I want to point out—[inaudible]—you can take credit for it.

The President. So there you go. Just wanted you to know. [Laughter] They were talking behind your back, and it was good.

At the same time, I think that there was a sense in the conversation I had at breakfast this morning that issues of credit are still a problem. In particular, smaller businesses and start-up businesses—\$100,000, \$200,000—that getting that initial startup capital oftentimes was a challenge.

And we also heard that getting help on things like marketing could make a big difference for businesses that want to break out beyond their immediate communities, and particularly if they're competing with larger businesses, even if they think they've got a better product.

So what I said to them is the same thing that I'd say to the entire group: We genuinely believe that small business is the backbone of America. It's going to be the key for us to be able to put a lot of folks back to work. What we're looking for is, how can we do our jobs better? How can the SBA or USDA or any of the other Federal agencies that touch on rural America on a regular basis help you create the

jobs and businesses and ideas that I think are so evident in a lot of communities all across the country?

We also heard, by the way, that there are a lot of young people, I think, who want to be more entrepreneurial. And so are there ways that we can connect, for example, the community colleges—but even beneath that, high schools—to help young people think about how they go about organizing, getting a business started?

So that's my initial report from breakfast, and what I want to do is just hear from all of you. And Karen will be taking copious notes, and she is somebody who I know is going to execute on any ideas that make sense. So with that—

[At this point, the discussion continued, but no transcript was provided.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:44 p.m. at Northeast Iowa Community College.

Remarks During a Breakout Session at the White House Rural Economic Forum in Peosta August 16, 2011

The President. John, sorry to interrupt.

Participant. No. No problem.

The President. You were making a good point. Good to see you. Everybody, please have a seat. I just wanted to jump in. I just came out of a small-business breakout session. So I don't want to interrupt. I just want to emphasize, first of all, I think Vilsack is doing a great job.

Second of all, this issue of energy innovation I think is absolutely vital for rural communities, but for the entire country. If we can harness homegrown fuels—whether it's biofuels, wind, solar, geothermal, you name it—then I think it can generate hundreds of thousands of jobs all across the country. It can help free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. It diversifies sources of income for farmers. I'm not telling you guys anything that you don't already know.

All I want to emphasize is, is that when you look at farm economies, right now obviously

prices are good, but given the volatility of the world market, for us to be able to figure out how we can also use energy and conservation as an enhancement to the core business of feeding people, then I think that we can make enormous progress. And Tom has a lot of creative ideas. Our Department of Energy, we've made this one of our highest priorities. And so I'm very interested in figuring out how the Federal Government can be even more helpful than it already is in moving this agenda forward.

So with that, let me just sit back and listen and—unless somebody has a question for me, then I'll try to answer it.

[At this point, the discussion continued, but no transcript was provided.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:09 p.m. at Northeast Iowa Community College.