

## Remarks at the Closing Session of the White House Rural Economic Forum in Peosta

August 16, 2011

Thank you so much. Please, please, everybody, have a seat.

I just want to again thank my extraordinary Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, for leading this forum. You don't have a more passionate advocate for farming communities in rural America than Tom Vilsack. And I will tell you, if you are not fully persuaded that this administration has been all over the rural agenda, spend 5 minutes with Tom Vilsack—[laughter]—and his enthusiasm for the steps that we've been taking just bubbles over. And it's been under his leadership more than anybody's that we've been able to make such a difference.

I want to thank all the members of my Cabinet who are here today as well. They've done a terrific job participating in some of these breakout sessions.

As I said earlier, despite the hits that we've taken over the last 2½ years, Tom's right: I am absolutely confident about our future. And I'm confident because I know that while we face serious challenges—and there's no sugarcoating that—there's not a nation on Earth that would not want to trade places with us. There's nothing wrong with our country, although there is some problems with our politics. That's what we need to fix. That's how we're going to unlock the promise of America and the incredible dynamism and creativity of our people.

And having a chance to meet with some of the men and women in this room have only made me feel more confident. I'm excited about the future that you're working towards each and every day. And it ought to remind us of a simple lesson: It's always a mistake to bet against America. It's always a mistake to bet against the American worker. [Applause] It's always a mistake to bet against the American worker, the American farmer, the American small-business owner, the American people.

And I know there are naysayers out there. We know that there are some who see hard

times and think that we've got to accept less, that our best days are past. We know that there are people who think that for America to get ahead, small towns and rural communities have to be left behind. You hear those sentiments. But we also know that, time and again, those kinds of skeptics and that kind of pessimism has been proven wrong.

You look at the people in this room. Look at what you're achieving. I met with a group of small-business owners, including a woman named Jan Heister, who started a small tooling and manufacturing company around 20 years ago. Started off with nine people in a very small plant, and with the help of a SBA loan, she's got a staff of more than 140 in a 160,000-square-foot factory. Jan's not messing around. [Laughter]

This morning I had breakfast with somebody who has not only been interested in wind power because their family got involved in it '77, back in 1977, but are now—have figured out a new technology to help locate where farm—wind farms would ideally be located. And have started a whole new business because they see the incredible potential of clean energy throughout this country.

I saw some of these Future Farmers of America, and their young president, right over there. And when you hear the enthusiasm and energy that these young people display, and the fact that if they can just get a little bit of a break when it comes to getting started on the front end, get a little bit of help with capital, that they are ready to take American agriculture to the next level, it gives you confidence. It gives you hope.

I joined a session with a group of entrepreneurs and ranchers and farmers and clean energy companies, and we were talking about all the ways in which folks right here in the heartland are pioneering new methods of raising crops and earning more off the land. And we talked about the ways in which farmlands are helping our Nation develop new forms of

energy: ranches where cattle graze next to solar panels, farms supplying crops for biofuels. I've got a former State senator here who's helping farms manage manure in creative ways—[laughter]—in creative ways. [Laughter]

So our task as a nation has to be to get behind what you're doing. Our task has to be making sure that nothing stands in your way, that we remove any obstacles to your success. That's why we're doing more to connect rural America with broadband and expanding small-business loans and investing in homegrown American energy. That's why forums like this are important, so that we hear directly from you about what you need and what you're facing. And what's interesting is, in these conversations, one thing you notice: In Washington, you'd think that the only two ways of thinking about our problems is either Government is terrible and it has to be basically eliminated, or Government is the answer to every problem. But when you sit in some of these breakout sessions, I had no idea who was Democrat, who was Republican, who was Independent. What everybody understood was, there are times when Government can make a huge difference. There are times where that SBA office or that USDA office can make all the difference in the world. There are some boneheaded things the Government is doing that need to be fixed.

And so it's a very practical way of thinking about these problems. It's not either-or. It's a recognition that the prime driver of economic growth and jobs is going to be our people and the private sector and our businesses. But you know what, Government can help. Government can make a difference.

So I hope that I can count on you in the days ahead to lend your voice to this fight to strengthen our economy. I need you to keep

your pressure on your elected representatives for things like the payroll tax cuts or road construction funds or the other steps that will help to put our country back to work.

That's our great challenge. It has been my central mission for the last 2½ years. It has to be all of our central missions going forward. That's what ought to unite us as a country, regardless of party or ideology, because if we can do that, if we can put country ahead of party, I know that our future is bright. I know that our best days are ahead of us.

And Tom is actually—absolutely right. Not only do I continue to have absolute confidence in you, but you're what gives me strength. As I was driving down those little towns in my big bus—[laughter]—I'm—we slowed down, and I'm standing in the front, and I'm waving. I'm seeing little kids with American flags and grandparents in their lawn chairs and folks outside a machine shop. And passing churches and cemeteries and corner stores and farms, I'm reminded about why I wanted to get into public service in the first place.

Sometimes there are days in Washington that will drive you crazy. But getting out of Washington and meeting all of you and seeing how hard you're working, how creative you are, how resourceful you are, and how determined you are, that just makes me that much more determined to serve you as best I can as President of the United States.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:46 p.m. at Northeast Iowa Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Janda K. Heister, president, Premier Tooling & Manufacturing, Inc.; and Riley Pagett, president, Future Farmers of America.

## Memorandum on Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians August 16, 2011

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security*

*Subject:* Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians

Since 1991, the United States has provided safe haven for Liberians who were forced to flee their country as a result of armed conflict and widespread civil strife, in part through granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The armed