

sense of the costs involved in very personal terms. Obviously, it would also have an impact on our economy, because if this family has a couple of thousand dollars less to spend, that translates into \$200 billion of less consumer spending next year. And that's bad for businesses large and small. It's bad for our economy. It means less folks are being hired, and we can be back in a downward spiral instead of the kind of virtuous cycle that we want to see.

So the message that I got from Tiffany and the message that, I think, we all want to send to Members of Congress is this is a solvable problem. The Senate has already passed a bill that would make sure that middle class taxes do not go up next year by a single dime. Ninety-eight percent of Americans whose incomes are \$250,000 a year or less would not see any increases. Ninety-seven percent of small businesses would not see any increases in their income taxes. And even folks who make more than \$250,000 would still have a tax break for their incomes up to \$250,000. So 100 percent of Americans actually would be keeping a portion of their tax cuts, and 98 percent of them would not be seeing any increase in their income tax.

That's the right thing to do for our economy. It's the right thing to do for families like Tiffany's and Richard's. And it's very important that we get this done now, that we don't wait. We're in the midst of the Christmas season; I think the American people are counting on this getting solved. The closer it gets to the brink, the more stressed they're going to be. Businesses are making decisions right now about investment and hiring, and if they don't have confidence that we can get this thing done, then they're going to start pulling back and we could have a rocky time in our econo-

my over the next several months or even next year.

So I'm encouraged to see that there's been some discussion on the part of Republicans acknowledging the need for additional revenue. As I've indicated, the only way to get the kind of revenue for a balanced deficit reduction plan is to make sure that we're also modestly increasing rates for people who can afford it, folks like me. For folks who are in the top 2 percent, we can afford to have a modest rate increase. That allows us to not only reduce our deficit in a balanced, responsible way, it also allows us to make investments in education, in making college affordable, in putting folks back to work, and investing in basic research that's important for our economy.

And I think we all recognize that there are some smart cuts we've got to make in Government. We're going to have to strengthen our entitlement programs so that they're there for future generations. Everybody is going to have to share in some sacrifice, but it starts with folks who are in the best position to sacrifice, who are in the best position to do a little bit more to step up. And that's what my plan does.

So just to be clear, I'm not going to sign any package that somehow prevents the top rate from going up for folks at the top 2 percent. But I do remain optimistic that we can get something done that is good for families like this one's and that is good for the American economy.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. at the residence of Tiffany and Richard Santana and her parents Jimmie and Velma Massenburg. In his remarks, he referred to S. 3412.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation To End the Application of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to Russia and Moldova

December 6, 2012

I commend the House and Senate for working on a bipartisan basis to pass legislation to

end the application of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to Russia and Moldova, allowing

me to extend Permanent Normal Trade Relations to both countries. I look forward to receiving and signing this legislation.

The legislation will ensure that American businesses and workers are able to take full advantage of the WTO rules and market access commitments that the United States worked so hard to negotiate. We are also one step closer to realizing job-creating export opportunities

and leveling the playing field for American workers, farmers, ranchers, and service providers. My administration will continue to work with Congress and our partners to support those seeking a free and democratic future for Russia and promote the rule of law and respect for human rights around the world.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 6156.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree December 6, 2012

The President. Merry Christmas, everybody! Michelle told me to be brief because she wants to hear music. [Laughter]

Thank you, Secretary Salazar, for that generous introduction and for your dedication to protecting our natural resources. I want to thank Neil Mulholland and the whole National Park Foundation and the National Park Service team for helping to put on this beautiful production.

Let's give a big hand to Neil Patrick Harris and this evening's performers for putting on a fantastic show. And I want to also thank all of you for joining us to celebrate this great American tradition.

As has been mentioned, we've been lighting the National Christmas Tree for 90 years now. In times of war and peace, triumph and tragedy, we've always come together to rejoice in the Christmas miracle. But our tree has been having a hard time recently; this is our third one in as many years. Our longstanding tree was lost in a storm, and then its replacement didn't take hold. It just goes to show, nobody's job is safe here in Washington. [Laughter] But I feel good about this one. It was planted just days before Hurricane Sandy, and it made it through the storm in one piece.

Now, we know that some of our neighbors to the north saw a more ruthless and destructive Sandy. And this holiday season is especially difficult for families who lost everything in the storm. But it's also a time for us to be grateful for the heroism and perseverance of ordinary men and women in the storm's path who have showed us that Americans will always

be stronger than the challenges that we face. And as I did before Thanksgiving, I can't help but tell a story of their enduring holiday spirit.

This evening in Midland Beach, New York, on a street lined with houses and businesses devastated by the storm, a great big Christmas tree shines out of the darkness. Just a couple of weeks ago, as impacted families were still seeking some sense of getting back to normal, one local nursery donated the tree, another chipped in for the lights and a star, and 70-year-old Tom Killeen and his longtime buddies from the area planted it at the end of the street, overlooking the town beach. As Tom says, the tree has one message: "It's Christmas time, not disaster time."

And Tom's right. For centuries, the message of Christmas, of peace and goodwill to all, has guided millions of people around the world through good times, but also through bad times. This year is no different. It's a chance for all of us to open our hearts to the least fortunate among us. It's a chance to remember what Christ taught us: that it is truly more blessed to give than to receive and that the simplest gifts bring the greatest joy. And it's a chance to count our blessings and give thanks to those outstanding servicemembers who bravely defend them.

For Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs, may this holiday season remind us of the spirit of brotherhood and generosity that unites us as citizens. And may every tree from Midland Beach to this Ellipse and all across the country shine as a beacon of hope for all Americans.