

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his re-

marks, he referred to Teresa Heinz Kerry, wife of Sen. Kerry.

Remarks on the National Economy *December 21, 2012*

Good afternoon, everybody. Over the last few weeks, I've been working with leaders of both parties on a proposal to get our deficit under control, avoid tax cuts—or avoid tax hikes on the middle class, and to make sure that we can spur jobs and economic growth; a balanced proposal that cuts spending, but also asks the wealthiest Americans to pay more; a proposal that will strengthen the middle class over the long haul and grow our economy over the long haul.

During the course of these negotiations, I offered to compromise with Republicans in Congress. I met them halfway on taxes, and I met them more than halfway on spending. And in terms of actual dollar amounts, we're not that far apart.

As of today, I am still ready and willing to get a comprehensive package done. I still believe that reducing our deficit is the right thing to do for the long-term health of our economy and the confidence of our businesses. I remain committed to working towards that goal, whether it happens all at once or whether it happens in several different steps.

But in 10 days, we face a deadline. In 10 days, under current law, tax rates are scheduled to rise on most Americans. And even though Democrats and Republicans are arguing about whether those rates should go up for the wealthiest individuals, all of us—every single one of us—agrees that tax rates shouldn't go up for the other 98 percent of Americans, which includes 97 percent of small businesses. Every Member of Congress believes that: every Democrat, every Republican. So there is absolutely no reason—none—not to protect these Americans from a tax hike. At the very least, let's agree right now on what we already agree on. Let's get that done.

I just spoke to Speaker Boehner, and I also met with Senator Reid. In the next few days, I've asked leaders of Congress to work towards

a package that prevents a tax hike on middle class Americans, protects unemployment insurance for 2 million Americans, and lays the groundwork for further work on both growth and deficit reduction. That's an achievable goal. That can get done in 10 days.

Once this legislation's agreed to, I expect Democrats and Republicans to get back to Washington and have it pass both Chambers. And I will immediately sign that legislation into law, before January 1 of next year. It's that simple.

Averting this middle class tax hike is not a Democratic responsibility or a Republican responsibility. With their votes, the American people have determined that governing is a shared responsibility between both parties. In this Congress, laws can only pass with support from Democrats and Republicans. And that means nobody gets 100 percent of what they want. Everybody's got to give a little bit, in a sensible way. We move forward together, or we don't move forward at all.

So as we leave town for a few days to be with our families for the holidays, I hope it gives everybody some perspective. Everybody can cool off; everybody can drink some eggnog, have some Christmas cookies, sing some Christmas carols, enjoy the company of loved ones. And then I'd ask every Member of Congress while they're back home to think about that. Think about the obligations we have to the people who sent us here. Think about the hardship that so many Americans will endure if Congress does nothing at all.

Just as our economy is really starting to recover and we're starting to see optimistic signs and we've seen actually some upside statistics from a whole range of areas, including housing, now is not the time for more self-inflicted wounds, certainly not those coming from Washington. And there's so much more work to be done in this country: on jobs and on in-

comes, education and energy. We're a week away from one of the worst tragedies in memory, so we've got work to do on gun safety, host of other issues. These are all challenges that we can meet. They're all challenges that we have to meet if we want our kids to grow up in an America that's full of opportunity and possibility, as much opportunity and possibility as the America that our parents and our grandparents left for us.

But we're only going to be able to do it together. We're going to have to find some common ground. And the challenge that we've got right now is that the American people are a lot more sensible and a lot more thoughtful and much more willing to compromise and give and sacrifice and act responsibly than their elected representatives are. And that's a problem.

There's a mismatch right now between how everybody else is thinking about these problems—Democrats and Republicans outside of this town—and how folks are operating here. And we've just got to get that aligned. But we've only got 10 days to do it.

So I hope that every Member of Congress is thinking about that. Nobody can get 100 percent of what they want. And this is not simply a contest between parties in terms of who looks good and who doesn't. There are real world consequences to what we do here.

And I want next year to be a year of strong economic growth. I want next year to be a year in which more jobs are created and more businesses are started and we're making progress on all the challenges that we have out there, some of which, by the way, we don't have as much control over as we have in terms of just shaping a sensible budget.

This is something within our capacity to solve. It doesn't take that much work. We just have to do the right thing. So call me a hopeless optimist, but I actually still think we can get it done.

And with that, I want to wish every American a merry Christmas. And because we didn't get this done, I will see you next week. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:34 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Memorandum on Designation of an Authorized Representative of the Federal Government Under Section 7302 of the National Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 *December 21, 2012*

Memorandum for the Attorney General

Subject: Designation of Authorized Representative of the Federal Government under Section 7302 of the National Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as President by section 7302 of the National Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (the "Act"), as amended (42 U.S.C. 5196 note), I hereby designate you as an autho-

rized representative of the Federal Government under the Act. Should a public service event be designated as a National Special Security Event (NSSE), you shall coordinate with the United States Secret Service regarding the intent to enter into a National Capital Region mutual aid agreement should this agreement impact the security plan for the designated NSSE.

BARACK OBAMA