

And you think about all that this city and all of you have been through over the last few years. Think about folks like Jeff Brower. Now, Jeff was in the trucking industry for over a decade. Two years ago, he got laid off, lost his job as a diesel mechanic. That's a tough thing to go through, even though Jeff's a pretty tough guy. But he bounced back. He decided it was time for him to change careers. He decided it was time to get some new skills. He went to AB-Tech, took a class in automated machining. A few months ago, Jeff got his diploma. He graduated on a Wednesday, interviewed at this plant on Thursday. By Friday, he was working as a machine operator.

Where's Jeff? There he is, right here. Now, obviously, Jeff is pretty good at interviews—[laughter]—because he just got hired like that. I hope he can give me some advice. [Laughter]

But here's the thing. The reason Jeff did all that—obviously, a lot of it was to support himself and his family—but it wasn't just to punch a clock at a new plant or pick up a paycheck from a new company. It was to make sure he could have a better future for his family and for his community and his country. Jeff said: "Getting my foot in the door has opened my eyes to bigger horizons. And I want to keep on going." I want to keep on going.

So that's our story. That's the American story. We don't give up. We get up. We innovate. We adapt. We learn new skills. We keep going. And I just want everybody here to know at this plant—but everybody in Asheville, everybody in North Carolina, and everybody all across the country—I want you to know as long as you're out here fighting every day to better your lives and to better the lives of your children, then I'll be back in Washington fighting for you. I will be back there fighting for you, because there's nothing we can't do and no possibilities we can't reach when we're working together. We just have to work together.

And we've got to stop with some of the politics that we see in Washington sometimes that's focused on who's up and who's down. Let's just focus on the same kind of common sense and cooperation that we're seeing at this plant and we see all across the country.

So thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Stratton Taylor, employee, Frank Hasenfratz, chairman of the board of directors, Jim Jarrell, president and chief operating officer, and Jeff Brower, machinist, Linamar Corp.; and Mayor Terry M. Bellamy of Asheville, NC.

## Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday *February 13, 2013*

Michelle and I join with Christians here and around the world in marking Ash Wednesday. This is a day of both reflection and joy, a time to ponder the meaning of re-

pentance and restoration. As we enter Lent, we join millions in renewing our faith and remembering our commitment to love and serve one another.

## Joint Statement by President Obama, President Herman Van Rompuy of the European Council, and President José Manuel Durão Barroso of the European Commission *February 13, 2013*

We, the Leaders of the United States and the European Union, are pleased to announce that, based on recommendations from the U.S.-EU High Level Working Group on Jobs

and Growth co-chaired by United States Trade Representative Kirk and European Trade Commissioner De Gucht, the United States and the European Union will each initiate the