

The President's Weekly Address *February 23, 2013*

Hi, everybody. Our top priority as a country right now should be doing everything we can to grow our economy and create good, middle class jobs.

And yet, less than 1 week from now, Congress is poised to allow a series of arbitrary, automatic budget cuts that will do the exact opposite. They'll slow our economy. They'll eliminate good jobs. They'll leave many families who are already stretched to the limit scrambling to figure out what to do.

But here's the thing: These cuts don't have to happen. Congress can turn them off anytime with just a little compromise. They can pass a balanced plan for deficit reduction. They can cut spending in a smart way and close wasteful tax loopholes for the well off and well connect-

ed. Unfortunately, it appears that Republicans in Congress have decided that instead of compromising—instead of asking anything of the wealthiest Americans—they'd rather let these cuts fall squarely on the middle class.

And here's what that choice means. Once these cuts take effect, thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off, and tens of thousands of parents will have to scramble to find childcare for their kids. Air traffic controllers and airport security will see cutbacks, causing delays across the country. Even President Bush's Director of the National Institutes of Health says these cuts will set back medical science for a generation.

Already, the threat of these cuts has forced the Navy to delay the deployment of an aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf, affecting our ability to respond to threats in an unstable part of the world. And just this week, the Pentagon announced that if these cuts go through, almost 800,000 defense employees—the equivalent of every person in Miami and Cleveland combined—will be forced to take an unpaid leave.

That's what this choice means. Are Republicans in Congress really willing to let these cuts

fall on our kids' schools and mental health care just to protect tax loopholes for corporate jet owners? Are they really willing to slash military health care and the border patrol just because they refuse to eliminate tax breaks for big oil companies? Are they seriously prepared to inflict more pain on the middle class because they refuse to ask anything more of those at the very top?

These are the questions Republicans in Congress need to ask themselves. And I'm hopeful they'll change their minds. Because the American people have worked too hard for too long to see everything they've built undone by partisan recklessness in Washington.

Instead of these reckless, unbalanced cuts, I believe we should work together to build on the more than \$2.5 trillion in deficit reduction we've already achieved. We should do it in a balanced way: with smart spending cuts, entitlement reform, and tax reform. That's my plan. It's got tough cuts, tough reforms, and asks more of the wealthiest Americans. It's on the White House website for everybody to see. And it requires Democrats and Republicans to meet halfway to resolve the problem. That's what the American people expect. And that's what you deserve.

We just need Republicans in Washington to come around. Because we need their help to finish the job of reducing our deficit in a smart way that doesn't hurt our economy or our people. After all, as we learned in the 1990s, nothing shrinks the deficit faster than a growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs. That has to be our driving focus. That has to be our north star: making America a magnet for good jobs, equipping our people with the skills required to fill those jobs, making sure your hard work leads to a decent living. That's what this city should be focused on like a laser. And I'm going to keep pushing folks here to remember that.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on February 22 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on February 23. In the address, the President referred to former President George W. Bush;

and Elias A. Zeroin, former Director, National Institutes of Health. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 23.

Remarks at the National Governors Association Dinner February 24, 2013

Welcome, everybody. It is wonderful for us to have you here at the White House. Michelle and I are so happy to host you, and I want to start by acknowledging your outstanding chair, Jack Markell, and your vice chair, Mary Fallin. But more importantly, I want to recognize the First Lady of Delaware and the First Gentleman of Oklahoma because we know that the spouses put up with an awful lot. That's who this dinner's really for. [Laughter] And we hope that you all get a chance to celebrate a little bit tonight.

Last year, I got to see firsthand some of the great work that our Governors are helping to accomplish all across the country. Now, it's true that I had the chance to see some accomplishments in some States more than others. Ohio. [Laughter] Iowa. [Laughter] Colorado. [Laughter] Virginia. [Laughter] But I hope to see more of you this year, the rest of you.

But all of you have helped to steer your States through some of the Nation's toughest times. You've had to make hard choices. You've had to make wise investments and mobilize the constituencies to do what needs to be done to grow your State. And that work is paying off. Companies are bringing jobs back to our shores. New homes are popping up in our neighborhoods. Small businesses are revitalizing our communities.

And many of you also had to deal with some incredible natural disasters. And, obviously, it's always painful to see the loss and the hardship that our families have suffered, but it's always wonderful to see the way in which Governors in particular are able to lead and mobilize their States and their communities, rallying around neighbors, friends, and communities.

So we know we've got more work to do: more jobs to create and more children to educate and more roads to repair. The task before

us is to find smart, commonsense solutions to each of these challenges that we can move forward on. And I'm looking for good partners. Because while nobody in this room sees eye to eye on everything, we know that when we work together, Democrats and Republicans—North, South, East, and West—we can accomplish so much more than we can on our own. Whether it's helping our citizens rebuild from a horrific hurricane or a turbulent economic storm, we're stronger when we work together as a team.

One of my predecessors, a former Governor himself, put it well. "America is nothing if it consists merely of each other"—"if it consists merely of each of us," Woodrow Wilson said. "It's something only if it consists of all of us." And nearly 100 years later, I expect that those words continue to be true, and they should be guiding all of our efforts.

So I want to wish everybody a toast. For the good that we've accomplished together, for the good that's yet to be done. I look forward to a year of progress working with all of you. I am grateful for your service. To those who are recently elected, congratulations. We look forward to seeing you again over the next several years. Cheers.

[At this point, the President offered a toast.]

And with that, I would like to present your chairman, Jack Markell.

[Gov. Jack A. Markell of Delaware made brief remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:20 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Carla Markell, wife of Gov. Markell; and D.