

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.

Wade Christensen, husband of Gov. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma. The transcript released by the

Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. Markell.

Remarks to the National Governors Association February 25, 2013

Thank you, guys. Please have a seat. Well, welcome, everybody. Thanks for being here.

We all have a lot on our plate, everything from our immigration system to our education system. As Joe talked about, our goal is to make sure that we can be an effective partner with you.

I want to thank the members of my Cabinet who are here, and members of the administration. I want to thank Jack and Mary for their leadership of the NGA. And, everybody else, I just want to say thanks to you for being on your best behavior last night. *[Laughter]* I'm told nothing was broken. No silverware is missing. *[Laughter]* I didn't get any calls from the neighbors about the noise, although I can't speak for Joe's after-party at the Observatory. I hear that was wild. *[Laughter]*

Now, I always enjoy this weekend when I have a chance to see the Governors. As leaders, we share responsibility to do whatever we can to help grow our economy and create good middle class jobs and open up new doors of opportunity for all of our people. That's our true north, our highest priority. And it's got to guide every decision that we make at every level.

As I've said, we should be asking ourselves three questions every single day: How do we make America a magnet for good jobs? How do we equip our people with the skills and the training to get those jobs? And how do we make sure if they get those jobs that their hard work actually pays off?

As Governors, you're the ones who are on the ground, seeing firsthand every single day what works, what doesn't work, and that's what makes you so indispensable. Whatever your party, you ran for office to do everything that you could to make our folks' lives better. And one thing I know unites all of us and all of you—Democrats and Republicans—and that is the last thing you want to see is Washington get in the way of progress.

Unfortunately, in just 4 days, Congress is poised to allow a series of arbitrary, automatic budget cuts to kick in that will slow our economy, eliminate good jobs, and leave a lot of folks who are already pretty thinly stretched scrambling to figure out what to do.

This morning you received a report outlining exactly how these cuts will harm middle class families in your States. Thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off. Tens of thousands of parents will have to deal with finding childcare for their children. Hundreds of thousands of Americans will lose access to primary care and preventive care like flu vaccinations and cancer screenings. Tomorrow, for example, I'll be in the Tidewater region of Virginia, where workers will sit idle when they should be repairing ships, and a carrier sits idle when it should be deploying to the Persian Gulf.

Now, these impacts will not all be felt on day one. But rest assured, the uncertainty is already having an effect. Companies are preparing layoff notices. Families are preparing to cut back on expenses. And the longer these cuts are in place, the bigger the impact will become.

So, while you are in town, I hope that you speak with your congressional delegation and remind them in no uncertain terms exactly what is at stake and exactly who is at risk. Because here's the thing: These cuts do not have to happen. Congress can turn them off any time with just a little bit of compromise. To do so, Democrats like me need to acknowledge that we're going to have to make modest reforms in Medicare if we want the program there for future generations and if we hope to maintain our ability to invest in critical things like education, research, and infrastructure.

I've made that commitment. It's reflected in proposals I made last year and the year before that and will be reflected in my budget, and I