

of true and lasting peace and prosperity. And at every step of the way, the United States will be there as a friend and partner. That is the message I will carry with me when I visit Northern Ireland and attend the G-8 summit in June.

On behalf of the American people, I salute the people and leaders of Northern Ireland

and the model they have given to others struggling toward peace and reconciliation around the world. I pledge our continued support for their efforts to build a strong society, a vibrant economy, and an enduring peace.

Remarks at PortMiami in Miami, Florida March 29, 2013

The President. Hello, Miami! It is good to be back. You know, I've been waiting for spring. I realize I just had to come down to Miami. [Laughter] It is wonderful to be here.

We've got some outstanding Representatives in Congress from this area. Joe Garcia is in the house. Frederica Wilson is in the house. And we've got Debbie Wasserman Schultz here. I want to thank the mayor of Miami-Dade County, Carlos Gimenez. And of course, it's good to see all of you. And I want to thank the gentlemen who just gave me a amazing tour of the PortMiami Tunnel.

Audience member. Yay!

The President. What are you yelling about? Hey, sweetie.

Audience member. She came just to see you!

The President. Okay, well, hello. [Laughter] She's going to be a politician, because I could hear her without a mike from far away. [Laughter]

Now, before we get started, I've got to get into a sticky subject right off the bat. I know you guys aren't happy with my Chicago Bulls.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. But I just want you to know the Heat are going to be just fine. They're going to be okay. They are playing basketball the right way. The Hurricanes—they had a great season—no, no, they deserve a big round of applause. Tonight you've got Florida and Florida Gulf Coast going at it. One of them will go to the Elite Eight. So let's face it: Florida is the center of basketball right now.

But I'm not here to talk about hoops. I'm here to talk about one of the plans that I put forward in my State of the Union Address: a plan to put people to work rebuilding America.

I've come to PortMiami today because there are few more important things we can do to create jobs right now and strengthen our economy over the long haul than rebuilding the infrastructure that powers our businesses and our economy: our roads, our bridges, our schools, and our ports just like this one.

As President, my top priority is to make sure we are doing everything we can to reignite the true engine of our economic growth, and that is a rising, thriving middle class. A growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs. That's got to be our true north. That's what has to guide our efforts every single day. And to do that, we should be asking ourselves three questions every single day. Number one, how do we make America a magnet for good jobs? Number two, how do we equip our workers with the skills they need to do the jobs? Number three, how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

When it comes to good jobs, no workers were hammered harder by the recession than construction workers. Fortunately, the unemployment rate for construction has been cut nearly in half over the past 3 years, partly because the housing market is starting to bounce back. But construction still has the highest unemployment rate of any industry. Breaking ground on more projects like this tunnel that I just saw means more good construction jobs that can't be outsourced. They have to be done right here in America. And they end up giving people good pay and good opportunities to raise their families.

Projects like this create a lot of other good jobs too. You ask any CEO where would they rather locate their business and hire new work-

ers. Are you going to set up shop in a country that's got raggedy roads, runways that are pot-holed; backed up supply chains? Or are you going to seek out high-speed rail, Internet, high-tech schools, new state-of-the-art power grids, new bridges, new tunnels, new ports that help you ship products made in America to the rest of the world as fast as possible? That's what people are looking for. That's what CEOs are looking for.

When you ask companies who brought jobs back to America in the last few years, they'll say, if we upgrade our infrastructure, we'll bring even more. So what are we waiting for? There's work to be done, there are workers who are ready to do it. Let's prove to the world there's no better place to do business than right here in the United States of America, and let's get started rebuilding America.

Now, over the last 4 years, we've done some good work. Construction crews have built or improved more than 350,000 miles of road. That's enough to circle the globe 14 times. We've upgraded more than 6,000 miles of rail, enough to go coast to coast and back. We've repaired or replaced more than 20,000 bridges. We've helped get tens of thousands of construction workers back on the job.

Because of these efforts, when the American Society of Engineers [American Society of Civil Engineers] put out their 2013 report card on our national infrastructure, they gave it the best overall grade in 12 years. That's the good news. The bad news is we went from a D to a D-plus. We still have all kinds of deferred maintenance. We still have too many ports that aren't equipped for today's world commerce. We've still got too many rail lines that are too slow and clogged up. We've still got too many roads that are in disrepair, too many bridges that aren't safe.

We don't have to accept that for America. We can do better. We can build better. And in a time of tight budgets, we've got to do it in a way that makes sure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Now what these outstanding folks here in Miami have been doing is a good example of how my plan would work. Port of Miami is a busy place. Hundreds of cargo containers pass through every day. Nearly one in five cruise ship passengers in North America sets sail from this port. All that commerce helps support a whole lot of high-paying jobs not just in Miami-Dade, but throughout the region.

But it also, let's face it, creates some congestion. Right now 16,000 cars and trucks travel to and from PortMiami every day, and they're stuck going through downtown. And those traffic jams are bad for business. Whether you're a small-business owner in South Beach or a manufacturer in Atlanta trying to get your goods overseas, that congestion wastes time and money.

Now some smart folks decided we could solve this problem by digging under the bay, linking the port directly to the highway. State, county, and local governments got together and agreed to jointly fund PortMiami Tunnel. Everybody had some skin in the game. They did something else; they partnered with a group of private sector companies to finance the design and construction of the project. They made it clear that the payments to these companies would be linked to their performance so if there were big cost overruns, the private companies would have to eat those extra costs. Because of those efforts, construction workers are on the job digging this tunnel, doing great jobs, getting good pay, boosting the economy, strengthening it for the long run. The port is in better shape, which means it's going to be able to get all the containers that are coming in from all around the world, matched up with the improvements that are being done on the Panama Canal, which means we're not going to be losing jobs to other countries.

We can do this not just here in Miami-Dade, but we can do this all across the country. So today I'm expanding on a proposal I made in the State of the Union. I'm calling it a Partnership to Rebuild America. It's a partnership with the

^o White House correction.

private sector that creates jobs upgrading what our businesses need most: modern ports to move our goods, modern pipelines to withstand a storm, modern schools worthy of our children.

And my plan does three things. First, we'll set up an independent fund that will attract private investment to build projects like this one and make sure companies share in the risk and returns. Instead of picking projects based on pork barrel politics, we'll pick them based on how much good they'll actually do for the economy, how much the projects make sense. And we'll better finance projects that involve more than one mode of transportation or more than one town or State, with less redtape to gum up the works. So all of this will make the process more efficient. It will help us break ground on some of the projects that our cities and States need most, and they can do it faster and better.

Second, we're going to fund more projects at less cost, by establishing a new infrastructure initiative called America Fast Forward bonds. It's going to give mayors and Governors more flexibility and power to attract private investment for public projects.

Number three, we'll strengthen a loan program that in recent years has helped Governors and mayors leverage four times the money Washington put into it and that means we're helping construction workers get on the job quicker, repaying taxpayers their hard-earned money faster. That's the kind of approach we used to help PortMiami Tunnel get off the ground—or I guess underground. *[Laughter]*

That's the Partnership to Rebuild America. That's how we'll create good jobs, doing the work America needs done. That's how we'll encourage more businesses to start here and grow here and hire workers here.

And by the way, this should not be a partisan idea. I know in Washington, people just like to argue. I guess it gets them on TV. But the fact is you've got the Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO agreeing to better infrastructure, knowing that it will help both businesses and workers. So if you're got the Chamber and

the unions agreeing, then the politicians should be able to agree too. Building better roads and bridges and schools, that's not a partisan idea. And in fact, that's where you can get mayors and Governors from both parties to find some common ground.

I know that Members of Congress are happy to welcome projects like this in their districts. I know because I've seen them at the ribbon cuttings. *[Laughter]* They'll all say how, no, we don't want to do it. And then, they're all writing me letters saying, we really need this port. Cut somebody else's port out. That's what they'll say. Cut somebody else's road. Cut somebody else's—well, no, we're all in this together. So if you think it's good for your district, then it's probably good for other districts too.

We can't afford Washington politics to stand in the way of America's progress. So I've put forward some ideas to get the private sector involved to protect taxpayer dollars. But ultimately, Congress has to fund these projects. And by the way, the three Members of Congress who are here, they all believe in this, they all support it. It will put people back to work and it will grow our economy in the process.

So, Miami-Dade, my main message is: Let's get this done. Let's rebuild this country we love. Let's make sure we're staying on the cutting edge. Let's make sure we've always got the best ports. Let's make sure we've got the best airports. Let's make sure we've got the best rail lines. Let's make sure we've got the best roads. Let's make sure we've got the best schools.

We're going to push on this issue each and every day, and make sure we get the middle class going again. We're going to fix our economy. We're going to fix our immigration system. We are going to make sure that our young people are getting a great education. We're going to prevent them from being victims of gun violence. We are going to make sure that everybody in this country has a fair shot and is doing their fair share so that when we pass on this country to the next generation and the generation after that, we'll be able to

once again say that here in the United States of America, it doesn't matter what you look like or where you come from, if you work hard, you can make it.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m.

Statement on the Observance of Easter

March 29, 2013

This weekend, Michelle and I join our fellow Christians here at home and around the world in marking Good Friday and celebrating Easter. These holy days are a time to reflect on the momentous sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for each of us and to celebrate the triumph of the resurrection and His gift of grace.

It is a time for renewed hope amidst continued challenges. It's also a time to ponder the common values that unite us: to have compassion for all and to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves. As we embrace our loved ones and give thanks for our blessings, we wish all who celebrate with us a blessed Easter.

The President's Weekly Address

March 30, 2013

Hi, everybody. For millions of Americans, this is a special and sacred time of year.

This week, Jewish families gathered around the Seder table, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and the triumph of faith over oppression. And this weekend, Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and I will join Christians around the world to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hopeful promise of Easter.

In the midst of all of our busy and noisy lives, these holy days afford us the precious opportunity to slow down and spend some quiet moments in prayer and reflection. As Christians, my family and I remember the incredible sacrifice Jesus made for each and every one of us, how He took on the sins of the world and extended the gift of salvation. And we recommit ourselves to following His example here on Earth, to loving our Lord and Savior, to loving our neighbors, and to seeing everyone, especially "the least of these," as a child of God.

Of course, those values are at the heart not just of the Christian faith, but of all faiths. From Judaism to Islam, Hinduism to Sikhism, there echoes a powerful call to serve our brothers and sisters, to keep in our hearts a deep and

abiding compassion for all, and to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves.

That's the common humanity that binds us together. And as Americans, we're united by something else too: faith in the ideals that lie at the heart of our founding and the belief that, as part of something bigger than ourselves, we have a shared responsibility to look out for our fellow citizens.

So this weekend, I hope we're all able to take a moment and pause and reflect, to embrace our loved ones, to give thanks for our blessings, to rededicate ourselves to interests larger than our own. And to all the Christian families who are celebrating the resurrection, Michelle and I wish you a blessed and joyful Easter.

God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 6:15 p.m. on March 29 in the Grand Foyer at the White House for broadcast on March 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 29, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 30.