

Remarks on the Resignation of Alan B. Krueger as Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and the Nomination of Jason L. Furman To Be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers

June 10, 2013

Good afternoon, all of you. It's now been nearly 5 years since an economic crisis and a punishing recession came together to cost far too many Americans their jobs and their homes and the sense of security that they had built up over time. And by the time I took office, my team and I were facing bubbles that had burst, markets that had cratered, bank after bank on the verge of collapse. And the heartbeat of American manufacturing, our auto industry, was flatlining. And all this meant that hundreds of thousands of Americans were losing their jobs each month. So this was a scary time. And nobody had any idea where the bottom would be.

Four and a half years later, our businesses have created nearly 7 million new jobs over the past 36 months. The American auto industry has come roaring back. We're producing more of our own energy; we're consuming less that we import from other countries. Our deficits are shrinking rapidly. The cost of health care is slowing. The housing market is rebounding. People's retirement savings are growing. The wealth that was lost from that recession has now been recovered.

All of this progress is a testament to the grit and resolve of the American people, most of all. But it's also due in some measurable way to the incredible dedication of the men and women who helped to engineer America's response. And two of those people are standing next to me, two very smart economists: Alan Krueger and Jason Furman.

Today I can announce that Alan is heading back to teach his beloved students at Michelle's alma mater, Princeton University. When they get together, all they can talk about is Princeton, and they're all very proud, and those of us who didn't go to Princeton have to put up with it. [Laughter] And I'm proud to say that Jason Furman has agreed to replace Alan as the Chairman of my Council of Economic Advisers.

Now, during the crisis, Alan stepped in initially to help engineer our response as Assistant Secretary and chief economist at the Treasury Department. He was so good that we then had to beg him to come back, extend his tour, to serve as the Chairman of my Council of Economic Advisers, where he's been the driving force behind actions that we've taken to help restart the flow of lending to small businesses and create new jobs and arm workers with the skills they need to fill them, to reduce income inequality, to rebuild our aging infrastructure, and to bring down our deficits in a responsible way.

And Alan is driven by the basic bargain at the heart of our economy: the idea that hard work should be rewarded. He's motivated by the principle that no one who works full time in the greatest nation on Earth should have to raise their families in poverty or below poverty levels. His commitment to a rising, thriving middle class shines through in his often passionate presentations and—at least for an economist, they're passionate—[laughter]—and in the policies that he's pushed, and I know this will continue to be a focus of his research.

Alan's wife and son are here today, and I know that they're all looking forward to having Alan back. [Laughter] And now that Alan has some free time, he can return to another burning passion of his: "rockonomics," the economics of rock and roll. This is something that Alan actually cares about; seriously, on Wednesday, he's giving a speech at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He's got a T-shirt under his suit—[laughter]—with a big tongue sticking out. [Laughter] Don't show it. [Laughter]

So Alan has become one of my most trusted advisers. He's become a wonderful friend. I'm sad to see him go. But I know that he will continue to do outstanding work, and fortunately, he'll still be available for us to consult with him periodically, because he's a constant font of

good ideas about how we can further help the American people. So thank you very much, Alan, for all the good work that you've done.

Now, I'm also proud to nominate another outstanding economist to take his place. Jason Furman is one of the most brilliant economic minds of his generation. Don't take my word for it: You can talk to other economists who know a lot more than I do about it. He's won the respect and admiration from his peers across the political spectrum. His Ph.D. thesis adviser, Greg Mankiw, chaired the Council of Economic Advisers under George W. Bush. Nobel Prize Winner Joe Stiglitz, on the other side of the economic spectrum, hired Jason to work for the CEA under President Clinton.

After leaving President Clinton's White House, Jason finished his Ph.D. in economics, quickly acquired a reputation as a world-class scholar and researcher. But public service kept calling, and Jason's kept answering that call because he believes deeply in it. So from working at the World Bank on issues of inequality and international finance to developing new proposals to strengthen our health and retirement programs, he helped to shape some of our most important economic policy debates.

And when I asked him to join my team in 2008, even though his baby daughter—that's right—[laughter]—you were this big, had just been born—he agreed to serve once again. And over the last 5 years, I've come to trust not only his head, but also his heart, because Jason never forgets who it is that we're fighting for: middle class families, folks who are working hard to climb their way into the middle class, the next generation.

And when the stakes are highest, there's no one I'd rather turn to for straightforward, unvarnished advice that helps me to do my job. He understands all sides of an argument, not just one side of it. He's worked tirelessly on just about every major economic challenge of the past 4½ years, from averting a second depression to fighting for tax cuts that help millions of working families make ends meet, to creating new incentives for businesses to hire, to reducing our deficits in a balanced way that benefits the middle class.

And so Eve, Jason's wife, who is an accomplished writer herself, has put up with a lot of hours with Jason away. Henry and Louisa, who are here, they've made a lot of sacrifices so that their husband and dad could be here working for the American people. So I appreciate you guys for sharing daddy—[laughter]—just a little bit longer. [Laughter] And the reason it's important is because, while we've cleared away the rubble of crisis and laid a new foundation for growth, our work is nowhere near done.

Even though the economy is growing, too many middle class families still feel like they're working harder and harder and can't get ahead. Inequality is still growing in our society. Too many young people aren't sure whether they'll be able to match the living standards of their parents. We have too many kids in poverty in this country still.

There are some basic steps that we can take to strengthen the position of working people in this country, to help our economy grow faster, to make sure that it's more competitive. And some of that requires political will. Some of it requires an abiding passion for making sure everybody in this country has a fair shot. But it also requires good economists. I know it's called a dismal science, but I don't find it that dismal. [Laughter] I think it's actually pretty interesting. Alan and Jason appreciate that. [Laughter] So sometimes, the rest of my staff thinks, oh, Obama is getting together with his economists, and they're going to have a wonkfest for the next hour. [Laughter]

But this stuff matters. It's not just numbers on a page. It makes a difference in terms of whether or not people get a chance at life and also, how do we optimize opportunity and make sure that it—we don't have a contradiction between an efficient, growing, free market economy, and one in which everybody gets a fair shot and where we're caring for the vulnerable and the disabled and folks in our society who need help.

So a growing economy that creates good middle class jobs, that rewards hard work and responsibility, that's our north star. Jason shares that focus. I know Alan shares that passion. In Jason's new role as the Chairman of

the Economic—Council of Economic Advisers, he'll be working with some of our country's leading economists, including Jim Stock, who has joined us. And I'm relying on them to provide analysis and recommendations with just one thing in mind: What's going to do the most good for the most people in this country, not what's best for a political party, not what's best for a special interest. I don't have another election. It's not what's best for me—what's best for our middle class, and everybody who is working hard to get there. That's what the American people deserve.

So I would urge the Senate to swiftly confirm Jason Furman. And I want to again thank Alan for his outstanding service. I want to

thank Jason and his family for continuing to serve the country they love. And for all the economists in the room, thank you for the occasionally underappreciated work that you do. [Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lisa Simon Krueger, wife, and Benjamin, son, of Chairman Krueger; Eve Gerber, wife, and Louisa and Henry, children, of Chairman-designate Furman; and James H. Stock, member, Council of Economic Advisers.

Remarks on Immigration Reform June 11, 2013

Well, good morning, everybody. Welcome to the White House. It is a pleasure to have so many distinguished Americans today from so many different walks of life. We've got Democrats and Republicans; we've got labor and business leaders up on stage; we have law enforcement and clergy—Americans who don't see eye to eye on every issue, in fact, in some cases, don't see eye to eye on just about any issue—[laughter]—but who are today standing united in support of the legislation that is front and center in Congress this week: a bipartisan bill to fix our broken immigration system.

And I have to say, please give Tolu another round of applause. She did a wonderful job. It takes a lot of courage to do what Tolu did: to step out of the shadows, to share her story, and to hope that, despite the risks, she could make a difference. But Tolu, I think, is representative of so many DREAMers out there who have worked so hard—and I've had a chance to meet so many of them—who've been willing to give a face to the undocumented and have inspired a movement across America. And with each step, they've reminded us, time and again, what this debate is all about. This is not an abstract debate. This is about incredible young people who understand themselves to be Americans, who have done everything right,

but have still been hampered in achieving their American Dream.

And they remind us that we're a nation of immigrants. Throughout our history, the promise we found in those who come from every corner of the globe has always been one of our greatest strengths. It's kept our workforce vibrant and dynamic. It's kept our businesses on the cutting edge. It's helped build the greatest economic engine that the world has ever known.

When I speak to other world leaders, one of the biggest advantages we have economically is our demographics. We're constantly replenishing ourselves with talent from all across the globe. No other country can match that history.

[At this point, a beeping noise came from the audience.]

And what was true years ago is still true today. Who's beeping over there? [Laughter] You're feeling kind of self-conscious, aren't you? [Laughter] It's okay.

In recent years, one in four of America's new small-business owners were immigrants. One in four high-tech startups in America were founded by immigrants. Forty percent of Fortune 500 companies were started by a first- or second-generation