

## Remarks at M. Luis Construction Company in Rockville, Maryland October 3, 2013

*The President.* Hello, everybody! Good to see all of you. Please, please have a seat. Well, hello, Rockville!

Let me start by recognizing three public servants who fight hard every day for Maryland families and businesses. Now, first of all, Congressman Chris Van Hollen is here. Yay, Chris! Congressman John Delaney is here. And we have the acting head of the Small Business Administration, Jeanne Hulit is here.

And I also want to give a big thanks to your bosses, Cidalia and Natalia, for being such gracious hosts. I had a chance to meet them at the White House, and—[*applause*]. Thank you. Now I know where they got their good looks from, because I had a chance to meet mom and dad, and their beautiful families. So I'm so glad to be here. And I had a chance to learn a little bit about their story. So when their parents brought them from Portugal to America almost 40 years ago, no one in the family spoke a word of English. But that didn't stop their father Manuel and their mother Albertina from having a big dream, believing that if they worked hard, they could get ahead and that even though they'd never had any schooling, maybe their daughters could go to college. Maybe in America you could make it if you tried. That's what they believed.

So they started their own construction company with a pickup truck and a wheelbarrow. And when Cidalia and Natalia turned 14, they began to help: cleaning tools, translating documents. And they became the first in their family to go to college. And after graduation, they started their own business, and later, they bought the family business from their parents. So today, M. Luis Construction is a \$60 million company with about 250 employees. And I understand you're opening your fourth office at the end of this month. So this story is what America is all about. You start off, maybe you don't have a lot, but you're willing to work hard, you put in the time, opportunities out there, and you're able to pass on an even better

life to your family, your children, your grandchildren.

And it's good news that after how hard the construction industry got hit during the recession, things are starting to get a little better. Remember, it was just 5 years ago that our economy was in a free fall. Businesses were shedding hundreds of thousands of jobs every single month, and the recession ultimately cost millions of Americans their jobs, their homes, their savings—everything they had worked hard to build.

Today, over the last 3½ years, our businesses have added 7½ million new jobs. Our deficits are falling. Our housing market is healing, which means construction is improving. Manufacturing is growing. The auto industry is back. America is on pace to become the number-one energy producer in the world this year. More small businesses have gotten loans so they can grow and they can hire, just like M. Luis did with the help of the Small Business Jobs Act that I signed 3 years ago. So that's part of what allowed this company to grow.

So we still have a long way to go. We've still got a lot of work to do, especially to rebuild the middle class. But we're making steady progress. And the reason I'm here is, we can't afford to threaten that progress right now. Right now hundreds of thousands of Americans, hard-working Americans, suddenly aren't receiving their paycheck. Right now they're worrying about missing the rent or their mortgage or even making ends meet. We can all relate to that. Imagine if suddenly you weren't sure whether you were going to get your next paycheck, with all the bills that might be mounting up. Well, that's what's happening right now to hundreds of thousands of Americans across the country.

Companies like this one worry that their businesses are going to be disrupted, because obviously—particularly in an area like Maryland, Virginia, where there are a lot of Federal workers—you don't know how that's going to impact the economy. Veterans, seniors,

women—they're all worrying that the services they depend on will be disrupted too.

And the worst part is, this time it's not because of a once-in-a-lifetime recession. This isn't happening because of some financial crisis. It's happening because of a reckless Republican shutdown in Washington.

*Audience member.* That's right!

*The President.* Now, we've all seen the offices locked down, the monuments closed. We've heard about services denied; we've heard about benefits that are delayed. But the impacts of the shutdown go way beyond those things that you're seeing on television. Those hundreds of thousands of Americans—a lot of whom live around here—don't know when they're going to get their next paycheck, and that means stores and restaurants around here don't know if they'll have as many customers.

Across the country, you've got farmers in rural areas and small-business owners who deserve a loan, but they're being left in the lurch right now. They might have an application pending as we speak, but there's nobody in the office to process the loan. The SBA gives a billion dollars of loans a month to small businesses. A billion dollars a month goes to small businesses all across the country. Right now those can't be processed because there's nobody there to process them.

Veterans who deserve our support are getting less help. Little kids who deserve a Head Start have been sent home from the safe places where they learn and grow every single day. And of course, their families then have to scramble to figure out what to do. And the longer this goes on, the worse it will be. And it makes no sense.

The American people elected their representatives to make their lives easier, not harder. And there is one way out of this reckless and damaging Republican shutdown: Congress has to pass a budget that funds our Government with no partisan strings attached.

Now, I want everybody to understand what's happened, because sometimes when this gets reported on, everybody kind of thinks, well, you know, both sides are just squabbling; Democrats and Republicans, they're always ar-

guing, so neither side is behaving properly. I want everybody to understand what's happened here. The Republicans passed a temporary budget for 2 months at a funding level that we, as Democrats, actually think is way too low because we're not providing help for more small businesses, doing more for early childhood education, doing more to rebuild our infrastructure. But we said, okay, while we're still trying to figure out this budget, we're prepared to go ahead and take the Republican budget levels that they proposed.

So the Senate passed that with no strings attached, not because it had everything the Democrats wanted. In fact, it had very little that the Democrats wanted. But we said, let's go ahead and just make sure that other people aren't hurt while negotiations are still taking place.

So that's already passed the Senate. And we know there are enough Republicans and Democrats to vote in the House of Representatives for the same thing. So I want everybody to understand this: There are enough Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives today that, if the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, simply let the bill get on the floor for an up-or-down vote—every Congressman could vote their conscience—the shutdown would end today.

The only thing that is keeping the Government shut down, the only thing preventing people from going back to work and basic research starting back up and farmers and small-business owners getting their loans—the only thing that's preventing all that from happening, right now, today, in the next 5 minutes—is that Speaker John Boehner won't even let the bill get a yes-or-no vote, because he doesn't want to anger the extremists in his party. That's all. That's what this whole thing is about.

We've heard a lot from congressional Republicans in the past couple of days saying they don't want this shutdown. Well, there's a simple way to prove it. Send the bill to the floor. Let everybody vote. It will pass. Send me the bill. I will sign it. The shutdown will be over, and we can get back to the business of governing and helping the American people.

It could happen in the next half hour. National parks, monuments, offices would all reopen immediately. Benefits and services would resume again. Hundreds of thousands of dedicated public servants who are worrying about whether they're going to be able to pay the mortgage or pay the car note, they'd start going back to work right away. So my simple message today is: Call a vote. Call a vote.

*Audience members.* Call a vote!

*The President.* Put it on the floor, and let every individual Member of Congress make up their own minds. And they can show the American people, are you for a shutdown or not? If you're not for a shutdown, you'll vote for the bill; if you're for a shutdown, you won't vote for a bill. We don't have to twist anybody's arms. But that way, the American people will be clear about who is responsible for the shutdown. Or alternatively, more hopefully, they'd be clear that this is something that doesn't make sense and we should go ahead and make sure that we're looking out for the American people. It should be that simple.

But as I said, the problem we've got is that there's one faction of one party in one half of one branch of Government that so far has refused to allow that yes-or-no vote unless they get some massive partisan concessions in exchange for doing what they're supposed to be doing anyway, in exchange for doing what everybody else agrees is necessary. And they won't agree to end the shutdown until they get their way. And you may think I'm exaggerating, but just the other day, one Tea Party Republican called the idea of a shutdown "wonderful." Another said that a shutdown is "exactly what we wanted." Well, they got exactly what they wanted. Now they're trying to figure out how to get out of it.

Just yesterday one House Republican said—I'm quoting here, all right, because I want to make sure people understand I didn't make this up—one House Republican said: "We're not going to be disrespected. We have to get something out of this. And I don't know what that even is." That was a quote. "We're not going to be disrespected. We've got to get some-

thing out of this. And I don't know what that even is." Think about that.

You have already gotten the opportunity to serve the American people. There is no higher honor than that. You've already gotten the opportunity to help businesses like this one, workers like these. So the American people aren't in the mood to give you a goodie bag to go with it. What you get is our intelligence professionals being back on the job. What you get is our medical researchers back on the job. What you get are little kids back into Head Start. What you get are our national parks and monuments open again. What you get is the economy not stalling, but continuing to grow. What you get are workers continuing to be hired. That's what you get. That's what you should be asking for. Take a vote, stop this farce, and end this shutdown right now.

If you're being disrespected, it's because of that attitude you got: that you deserve to get something for doing your job. Everybody here just does their job, right? You don't—if you're working here and in the middle of the day you just stopped and said, you know what, I want to get something, but I don't know exactly what I'm going to get. [Laughter] But I'm just going to stop working until I get something. I'm going to try—I'm going to shut down the whole plant until I get something.

*Audience member.* You'd get fired.

*The President.* You'd get fired. [Applause] Right? Because the deal is, you've already gotten hired. You've got a job. You're getting a paycheck. And so you also are getting the pride of doing a good job and contributing to a business and looking out for your fellow workers. That's what you're getting. Well, it shouldn't be any different for a Member of Congress.

Now, unlike past shutdowns—I want to make sure everybody understands this because, again, sometimes, the tendency is to say, well, both sides are at fault—this one has nothing to do with deficits or spending or budgets. Our deficits are falling at the fastest pace in 60 years. We've cut the deficits in half since I took office. And some of the things that the Republicans are asking for right now would actually add to our deficits. Seriously.

So this is not about spending. And this isn't about fiscal responsibility. This whole thing is about one thing: the Republican obsession with dismantling the Affordable Care Act and denying affordable health insurance to millions of Americans. That's all this has become about. That seems to be the only thing that unites the Republican Party these days.

Through this whole fight, they've said the American people don't want Obamacare, so we should shut down the Government to repeal it or delay it. But here's the problem: The Government is now shut down, but the Affordable Care Act is still open for business. So they're not even accomplishing what they say they want to accomplish. And by the way, in the first 2 days since the new marketplaces—basically, big group plans that we've set up—the first two 2 that they opened, websites where you can compare and purchase new affordable insurance plans and maybe get tax credits to reduce your costs, millions of Americans have made it clear, they do want health insurance.

More than 6 million people visited the website [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov) the day it opened. Nearly 200,000 people picked up the phone and called the call center. In Kentucky alone—this is a State where I didn't—I didn't win Kentucky. [Laughter] So I know they weren't doing it for me. In Kentucky, nearly 11,000 people applied for new insurance plans in the first 2 days. Just in one State, Kentucky. And many Americans are finding out when they go on the website that they'll save a lot of money or get health insurance for the first time.

So my—I would think that if in fact this was going to be such a disaster that the Republicans say it's going to be, that it was going to be so unpopular, they wouldn't have to shut down the Government. They could wait, nobody would show any interest, there'd be, like, two people on the website—[laughter]—and everybody would then vote for candidates who want to repeal it.

It's not as if Republicans haven't had a chance to debate the health care law. It passed the House of Representatives. It passed the Senate. The Supreme Court ruled it constitutional. You remember all this. Last November,

voters rejected the Presidential candidate that ran on a platform to repeal it. So the Affordable Care Act has gone through every single democratic process, all three branches of Government. It's the law of the land. It's here to stay.

I've said to Republicans, if there are specific things you think can improve the law to make it even better for people as opposed to just gutting it and leaving 25 million people without health insurance, I'm happy to talk to you about that. But a Republican shutdown won't change the fact that millions of people need health insurance and that the Affordable Care Act is being implemented. The shutdown does not change that. All the shutdown is doing is making it harder for ordinary Americans to get by and harder for businesses to create jobs at a time when our economy is just starting to gain traction again.

You've heard Republicans say that Obamacare will hurt the economy, but the economy has been growing and creating jobs. The single greatest threat to our economy and to our businesses like this one is not the Affordable Care Act, it's the unwillingness of Republicans in Congress to stop refighting a settled election or making the demands that have nothing to do with the budget. They need to move on to the actual business of governing. That's what will help the economy. That's what will grow the economy. That's what will put people back to work.

And more than that, House Republicans need to stop careening from one crisis to another in everything they do. Have you noticed that? Since they've taken over the House of Representatives, we have one of these crises every 3 months. Have you noticed? And you keep on thinking, all right, well, this is going to be the last one; they're not going to do this again. And then they do it again.

I know you're tired of it. I'm tired of it. It doesn't mean that they're wrong on every single issue. I've said I'm happy to negotiate with you on anything. I don't think any one party has a monopoly on wisdom. But you don't negotiate by putting a gun to the other person's head or, worse yet, by putting a gun to the

American people's head by threatening a shutdown.

And by the way, even after Congress reopens your Government, it's going to have to turn around very quickly and do something else, and that's pay America's bills. I want to spend a little time on this. It's called—it's something called raising the debt ceiling. And it's got a lousy name, so a lot of people end up thinking, I don't know, I don't think we should raise our debt ceiling, because it sounds like we're raising our debt. But that's not what this is about.

It doesn't cost taxpayers a single dime. It doesn't grow our deficits by a single dime. It doesn't allow anybody to spend any new money whatsoever. So it's not something that raises our debt. What it does is allow the U.S. Treasury, the U.S. Government to pay the bills that Congress has already racked up. I want you to think about this.

If you go to a restaurant, you order a meal, you eat it. Maybe you have some wine. Maybe you have two glasses of wine, great meal. And then you look at the tab—it's pretty expensive—and you decide, I'm not going to pay the bill. Well, you're not saving money. You're not being frugal. You're just a deadbeat, right? [Laughter] If you buy a house and you decide, man, this month, I'd rather go on vacation somewhere, so I'm not going to pay my mortgage, you didn't just save yourself some money. You're just going to get foreclosed on.

So you don't save money by not paying your bills. You don't reduce your debt by not paying your bills. All you're doing is making yourself unreliable and hurting your credit rating. And you'll start getting those phone calls and those notices in the mail. And the next time you try to borrow, somebody is going to say, uh-uh, because you don't pay your bills; you're a deadbeat. Well, the same is true for countries.

The only thing that the debt ceiling does is to let the U.S. Treasury pay for what Congress has already bought. That's why it's something that has been routine. Traditionally, it's not a big deal. Congress has raised it 45 times since Ronald Reagan took office. This is just kind of a routine part of keeping the Government run-

ning. The last time the House Republicans flirted with not raising the debt ceiling, back in 2011—some of you remember this—our economy took a bad hit. Our country's credit rating was downgraded for the first time, just like you'd be downgraded if you didn't pay your mortgage.

This time, they are threatening to actually force the United States to default on its obligations for the very first time in history. Now, you'll hear John Boehner and Mitch McConnell and these other Republicans say, we don't want to default. But everybody knows—it's written about in all the papers—that their basic theory is, okay, if the shutdown doesn't work, then we are going to try to get some extra concessions out of the President. We'll put, like a long laundry list, all the things that we want that we can't get passed on our own. And if we don't get it, we'll tell them we don't—we won't vote to pay the country's bills. We'll let the country default.

I'm not just making this up. I mean, it's common knowledge. Every reporter here knows it. And I want you to understand the consequences of this. As reckless as a Government shutdown is, as many people as being—as are being hurt by a Government shutdown, an economic shutdown that results from default would be dramatically worse. In a Government shutdown, Social Security checks still go out on time. In an economic shutdown, if we don't raise the debt ceiling, they don't go out on time.

In a Government shutdown, disability benefits still arrive on time. In an economic shutdown, they don't. In a Government shutdown, millions of Americans—not just Federal workers—everybody faces real economic hardship. In an economic shutdown, falling pensions and home values and rising interest rates on things like mortgages and student loans—all those things risk putting us back into a bad recession, which will affect this company and those workers and all of you. And that's not my analysis. That's—every economist out there is saying the same thing. We've never done it before.

And the United States is the center of the world economy. So if we screw up, everybody

gets screwed up. The whole world will have problems, which is why generally nobody has ever thought to actually threaten not to pay our bills. It would be the height of irresponsibility. And that's why I've said this before; I'm going to repeat it: There will be no negotiations over this. The American people are not pawns in some political game. You don't get to demand some ransom in exchange for keeping the Government running. You don't get to demand ransom in exchange for keeping the economy running. You don't get to demand ransom for doing your most basic job.

And the sooner that the Republicans in Congress heed the warnings not just of me or Democrats like Chris and John, but heed the warnings of the Chamber of Commerce and CEOs and economists and a whole lot of Republicans outside of Congress; they're all saying, do not do this. They're all saying to Congress, do your job. And the sooner you do your job, the less damage you'll do to our economy and to businesses like this one.

So pass a budget, end the Government shutdown. Pay our bills. Prevent a economic shutdown. Just vote and end this shutdown. And you should do it today so we can get back to growing this economy, creating jobs, and strengthening our middle class.

Let me close just by sharing a story I heard as I was getting ready to come here today. Many of you already know it. Two years ago, a mulch factory next to M. Luis's main equipment storage facility caught fire, and most of the company's equipment was destroyed, causing millions of dollars in damage. But even while the fire was still burning, dozens of employees rushed over to the facility and tried to save as much as they could. Some of you were probably there. And when they finished cutting fire lines and spraying down the perimeter of their own property, they went over to help their neighbors.

And afterwards, even though all the employees here at M. Luis are on salary, even though the company had just taken a big financial hit, Cidalia and Natalia paid everyone overtime,

and along with each check, they included a personalized note saying just how much they had appreciated the efforts of the workers. And Cidalia said, everybody says the biggest asset to a business is employees. Some people mean it; some people don't. We actually do.

So this company right here is full of folks who do right by each other. They don't try to see if they can work every angle. They don't lie about each other. They don't try to undermine each other. They understand they're supposed to be on the same team. You pitch in, you look out for one another. When somebody gets knocked down, you help them back up. You don't ask what can you get out of this, because you know that success doesn't depend on one of you, it depends on all of you working together.

Well, America is no different. I see that same spirit in so many cities and towns that I visit all across the country. It is alive and well all across the country. It's alive and well in this community where restaurants and businesses are rallying around their regulars, and they're looking out for all the dedicated public servants who have been furloughed. You've been reading stories about restaurants who are saying, you know what, while you're on furlough, come on, we'll give you a burger, we'll give you a meal, we'll help you out.

That's the American ideal. It says, we're working together, looking out for one another, meeting our responsibilities, doing our jobs, thinking about future generations. And that's why I believe, ultimately, reason and common sense will prevail. That spirit, at some point, will infiltrate Washington as well. Because I think the American people are so good and so decent, they're going to get better behavior from their Government than this. And we'll once again make sure this is a country where you can make it if you try.

So thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:49 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Cidalia Luis-Akbar, president, and Natalia Luis, vice presi-

dent, M. Luis Construction Co. Inc., and their parents Albertina and Manuel Luis; Reps. Michele M. Bachmann and Marlin A. Stutzman;

and 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney. He also referred to H.J. Res. 59.

## The President's Weekly Address *October 5, 2013*

Good morning. Earlier this week, the Republican House of Representatives chose to shut down a Government they don't like over a health care law that they don't like. Now, I've talked a lot about the real-world consequences of this shutdown in recent days: the services disrupted, the benefits delayed, the public servants kicked off the job without pay.

But today I want to let the Americans dealing with those real-world consequences have their say. And these are just a few of the many heartbreaking letters I've gotten from them in the past couple weeks, including more than 30,000 over the past few days.

Kelly Mumper lives in rural Alabama. She works in early education, and she has three kids of her own in the Marines. Here's what she wrote to me on Wednesday:

Our Head Start agency was forced to stop providing services on October 1 for over 770 children, and 175 staff were furloughed. I'm extremely concerned for the welfare of these children. There are parents who work and who attend school. Where are they leaving their children? Is it a safe environment? Are [they] getting the food that they receive at their Head Start program?

On the day Julia Pruden's application to buy a home for her and her special needs children was approved by the USDA's rural development direct loan program, she wrote me from Minot, North Dakota:

We put in an offer to purchase a home this weekend, and it was accepted. If funding does not go through, our chances of the American Dream [are] down the drain. We've worked really hard to get our credit to be acceptable to purchase a

home. If it weren't for the direct lending program provided by the USDA, we would not qualify to buy the home we found.

These are just two of the many letters I've received from people who work hard, try to make ends meet, try to do right by their families. They're military or military spouses who've seen commissaries closed on their bases. They're veterans worried the services they've earned won't be there. They're business owners who've seen their contracts with the Government put on hold, worried they'll have to let people go. I want them to know, I read the stories you share with me.

These are our fellow Americans. These are the people who sent us here to serve. And I know that Republicans in the House of Representatives are hearing the same kinds of stories too.

As I made clear to them this week, there's only one way out of this reckless and damaging shutdown: pass a budget that funds our Government with no partisan strings attached. The Senate's already done this. And there are enough Republican and Democratic votes in the House of Representatives willing to do the same and end this shutdown immediately. Unfortunately, the far right of the Republican Party won't let Speaker Boehner give that bill a yes-or-no vote. Take that vote. Stop this farce. End this shutdown now.

The American people don't get to demand ransom in exchange for doing their job. Neither does Congress. They don't get to hold our democracy or our economy hostage over a settled law. They don't get to kick a child out of Head Start if they don't agree to take her parent's health insurance away. That's not how our democracy is supposed to work.