

for how we should move forward, then we want to hear them. I'll be listening. I know that Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, those who voted for immigration reform already, are eager to hear those additional ideas. But what we can't do is just sweep the problem under the rug one more time, leave it for somebody else to solve sometime in the future.

Rather than create problems, let's prove to the American people that Washington can actually solve some problems. This reform comes as close to anything we've got to a law that will benefit everybody now and far into the future. So let's see if we can get this done. And let's see if we can get it done this year.

Now, the—we've got the time to do it. Republicans in the House, including the Speaker, have said we should act. So let's not wait. It doesn't get easier to just put it off. Let's do it now. Let's not delay. Let's get this done, and let's do it in a bipartisan fashion.

To those of you who are here today, I want to just say one last thing, and that is, thank you. I want to thank you for your persistence. I want to thank you for your activism. I want to thank you for your passion and your heart when it

comes to this issue. And I want to tell you, you've got to keep it up. Keep putting the pressure on all of us to get this done. There are going to be moments—and there are always moments like this in big efforts at reform—where you meet resistance and the press will declare something dead, it's not going to happen, but that can be overcome.

And I have to say, Joe, as I look out at this room, these don't look like people who are easily deterred. [*Laughter*]

Vice President Joe Biden. No, I don't think so.

The President. They don't look like folks who are going to give up. You look fired up to make the next push. And whether you're a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent, I want you to keep working—and I'm going to be right next to you—to make sure we get immigration reform done. It is time. Let's go get it done.

Thank you very much, everybody. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at Pathways in Technology Early College High School in New York City

October 25, 2013

The President. Hello, Brooklyn! How you doing?

Audience members. Good!

The President. Well, it is good to be back in Brooklyn. Good to be in New York City. And it is good to see some friends who stick up for students and teachers and education every day. We've got your Governor; Andrew Cuomo is in the house. Give him a big round of applause. We've got your Senator, Chuck Schumer. Outstanding Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. We've got a—your outstanding congressional delegation is here. Give them a big round of applause. We've got your Public Advocate and my friend, Bill de Blasio is here. We've got the outstanding leader of one of America's iconic companies, IBM CEO Ginni

Rometty. And I want to give a special shout-out to a man who's been an extraordinary mayor for this city; he's been a leader throughout the country for the past 12 years. Mr. Michael Bloomberg is here.

And I want to thank your principal here at P-TECH, Rashid Davis, who, I am pretty confident, is the coolest looking principal in America. [*Laughter*] I mean, there just are not that many principals with dreadlocks and yellow kicks. There aren't that many of them. I mean, there may be some, but there aren't that many. [*Laughter*]

And I had a wonderful time visiting with one of your teachers, Ms. Seiluffah—Seifullah, Seifullah? Ms. Seifullah. She was outstanding. She welcomed me into her classroom. She showed

me around. I want to thank all of you for letting me spend some time here. In return, you got out of class a little early on Friday, which I know always gets a little applause, although, in this school maybe not, because you guys are enjoying learning so much. [Applause] That's worth applauding, that you're enjoying learning so much.

Now, part of the reason I'm glad to be here is because I used to live in Brooklyn, and I actually landed Marine One in Prospect Park; I used to live across the street from Prospect Park and—[applause]. But mainly, I'm here because I wanted to talk—I wanted to come here ever since I talked about you in my State of the Union Address this year because what's going on here at P-TECH is outstanding, and I'm excited to see it for myself.

I know Brooklyn in general is blowing up right now. It—when I was living here, Brooklyn was cool, but not this cool. [Laughter] Barclays Center hadn't been built yet. I know the Nets just picked up Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett offseason, which is a lesson to all the young people: Old people can still play. [Laughter] We've still got some gas in the tank.

But this whole borough is where generations of hopeful, striving immigrants came in search of opportunity: a chance to build better lives for themselves and for their kids. And that's been true for decades. And I'm here today to talk about what we need to do as a country to build the same kind of opportunity for your generation, for the next generation, and for your kids and for future immigrants.

This country should be doing everything in our power to give more kids the chance to go to schools just like this one. We should be doing everything we can to put college within the reach of more young people. We should be doing everything we can to keep your streets safe and protect you from gun violence. We should be doing everything we can to keep families from falling into poverty and build more ladders of opportunity to help people who are willing to work hard climb out of poverty. We should be doing everything we can to welcome new generations of hopeful, striving immigrants.

I want to—I want us to do everything we can to give every single young person the same kind of opportunity that this country gave me and gave Chuck and gave Governor Cuomo and gave Mayor Bloomberg and gave your principal. That's what I'm focused on.

Yes, by the way, if you have chairs, go ahead and sit down. [Laughter] If you don't have chairs, then don't sit down because you'll fall. [Laughter] I didn't realize everybody had chairs there. I would have told you to sit down earlier. [Laughter]

So that's what we can achieve together. It's possible. We know we can do it. P-TECH is proof of what can be accomplished, but we've got to have the courage to do it. The American people work hard, and they try to do right, day in and day out. And that resilience and that toughness helped to turn our economy around after one of the hardest periods that we've ever faced as a country. But what we also need is some political courage in Washington. We don't always see that.

Right now we need to all pull together. We need to work together to grow the economy, not shrink it; to create good jobs, not eliminate jobs. We've got to finish building a new foundation for shared and lasting prosperity so that everybody who works hard, everybody who studies hard at a school like this one or schools all across the country have a chance to get ahead. That's what we need to do. That's what I'm focused on.

And that all begins with the education that we give young people. Because all of you are growing up in changing times, especially for the economy. The world you're growing up in is different than the one that previous generations here in Brooklyn knew and here—and all across the country knew.

In the old days, a young person, they might have just followed their parents' footsteps and gotten a job in their parents' line of work, keep that job for 30, 40 years. If you were willing to work hard, you didn't necessarily need a great education. If you'd just gone to high school, you might get a job at a factory or in the garment district. Or you might be able to just get a job that allowed you to earn your wages, keep

pace with people who had a chance to go to college. But those days are over, and those days are not coming back.

We live in a 21st-century global economy. And in a global economy, jobs can go anywhere. Companies, they're looking for the best educated people, wherever they live, and they'll reward them with good jobs and good pay. And if you don't have a well-educated workforce, you're going to be left behind. If you don't have a good education, then it is going to be hard for you to find a job that pays a living wage.

And by the way, other countries know this. In previous generations, America's standing economically was so much higher than everybody else's that we didn't have a lot of competition. Now you've got billions of people from Beijing to Bangalore to Moscow, all of whom are competing with you directly. And they're—those countries are working every day to out-educate and outcompete us.

And every year brings more research showing them pulling ahead, especially in some of the subject matter that this school specializes in: math and science and technology. So we've got a choice to make. We can just kind of shrug our shoulders and settle for something less, or we can do what America has always done, which is adapt. We pull together, we up our game, we hustle, we fight back, we work hard, and we win.

We have to educate our young people—every single person here, but also all the young people all across Brooklyn, all across New York City, all across New York State, and all across this country—so that you're ready for this global economy. And schools like P-TECH will help us do that.

Here at P-TECH, you've got folks from IBM, City Tech, City University of New York, City Department of Education; everybody is pulling together to make sure a high school education puts young people on a path to a good job. So you guys have opportunities here that you don't find in most high schools yet. You can take college-level courses in math and science. You can work with mentors from IBM so you're learning specific skills that you know

leads to a good job. And most important, you'll graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree in computer systems or electromechanical engineering. And that means you'll be in demand. Companies will want to hire you. IBM has even said that P-TECH graduates will be first in line when you apply for jobs once you graduate.

And at a moment when the cost of higher education's—keeps going up—and Arne and I are working hard to make sure that we're doing everything we can to reduce the burden of student loans on young people—here's how much 2 years of college will cost P-TECH students and their families: Zero. Nothing. *[Applause]* Nothing. I noticed some of the parents were the first to clap. They're all, like, "Yes." *[Laughter]* They like that.

But that's a huge burden. I mean, that's thousands of dollars that you're saving, and that means when you start working, you're going to have that much less of a burden in terms of debt, which means you can afford to buy a house sooner, you can afford to start your business sooner. Radcliffe was saying how he's thinking about starting his own business. And that kind of attitude is a lot easier when you're not burdened with a lot of student loans.

So this is a ticket into the middle class, and it's available to everybody who's willing to work for it. And that's the way it should be. That's what public education is supposed to do. And the great thing is that what started small is now growing. So Governor Cuomo, he's opening up P-TECH model schools in districts throughout the State—*[applause]*—throughout the State. So all those schools together, they're going to prepare more than 6,000 high school students for good, high-skilled jobs.

Back in my hometown of Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel is opening up schools like this one. He's opening up a school, for example, called Sarah E. Goode STEM Academy. And—you've got a little Chicago person here. *[Applause]* Yes, there you go. *[Laughter]* Across the country, companies like Verizon and Microsoft and ConEd and Cisco, they saw what IBM was doing, and they said, well, this is a good idea, we can do this too. So they're

working with educators and States to replicate what you're already doing here. And you guys should feel good about that. You're starting something all across the country.

So as a country, we should all want what all of you are receiving right now, the same chance for a great education. Here's what I think we should do as a country to make sure they've got the same opportunities you do. First of all, we've got to give every child an earlier start at success by making high-quality pre-school available to every 4-year-old in America.

We should give every student access to the world's information. When I went into the classroom today, young people were working off computers, and the problem is, a lot of places, even if they've got computers, they're not hooked up to wireless. So what we're doing is having the Federal agencies moving forward on a plan to connect 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet within 5 years. We were already moving on that front.

We need to bring down the cost of college and give more young people the chance to go to college. So a couple of months ago, I put forward an ambitious new plan to do that, to reduce the cost of college.

We need to redesign more of our high schools so that they teach young people the skills required for a high-tech economy. So I've been meeting with business leaders and innovative educators to spread the best ideas.

And I also want to congratulate Governor Cuomo and all of you in New York for having the courage to raise your standards for teaching and learning to make sure that more students graduate from high school ready for college and a career. It's not easy, but it's the right thing to do. It's going to prepare more young people for today's economy. We should stay at it.

And here's one more thing we should do, and that is just remember, none of this works unless we've got outstanding teachers, which means we've got to make sure that we're funding education so that teachers have the support that they need so that they can support their own families so that they're not having to dig into their pockets for school supplies. And we've got to show them the respect and pro-

vide pathways of excellence for teachers so that they're treated like the professionals that they are. It is a hard job, and we've got to make sure we're investing in them.

Now, some of these ideas I've laid out before; some of them I'm just going ahead and doing on my own. Some of them do require Congress to do something. [Laughter] And one way we can start is by Congress passing a budget that reflects our need to invest in our young people. I know that budgets aren't the most interesting topic for a Friday afternoon, even at a school where young people like math. And by the way, I just sat in on a lesson called real-world math, which got me thinking whether it's too late to send Congress here—[laughter]—for a remedial course.

But a budget is important, because what a budget does is, it sets our priorities. It tells us what we think is important, what our priorities are. And the stakes for our middle class could not be higher. If we don't set the right priorities now, then many of you will be put at a competitive disadvantage compared to other countries. If you think education is expensive, wait until you see how much ignorance costs. So we've got to invest.

So we need a budget that is responsible, that is fiscally prudent, but a budget that cuts what we don't need, closes wasteful tax loopholes that don't create jobs, freeing up resources to invest in the things that actually do help us grow: things like education and scientific research, and infrastructure, roads, bridges, airports. This should not be an ideological exercise. We should use some common sense.

What's going to help us grow, what's going to create jobs, what is going to expand our middle class, what's going to give more opportunity to young people—those are the things we should be putting money into. That's what we need to do.

And we've got enough resources to do it if we stop spending on things that don't work and don't make sense, or if we make sure that people aren't wiggling out of their taxes through these corporate loopholes that only a few people at the very top can take advantage of. If we just do everything in a fair, commonsense way,

we've got the resources to be fiscally responsible and invest in our future.

And this obsession with cutting just for the sake of cutting hasn't helped our economy grow, it's held it back. It won't help us build a better society for your generation. And by the way, it's important to remember—for those who are following the news—our deficits are getting smaller. They've been cut in half since I took office. All right? So that gives us room to fix longer term debt problems without sticking it to your generation. We don't have to choose between growth and fiscal responsibility; we've got to do both. And the question can't just be how much more we can cut, it's got to be how many more schools like P-TECH we can create. That should be our priority.

And after the manufactured crisis that Congress—actually, a small group in the House of Representatives just put us through, shutting down the Government and threatening to potentially default on our debt—I don't want to hear the same old stuff about how America can't afford to invest in the things that have always made us strong. Don't tell me we can afford to shut down the Government, which cost our economy billions of dollars, but we can't afford to invest in our education systems. Because there's nothing more important than this.

In fact, what I'd like to do is have every Member of Congress—maybe Chuck can arrange, and the congressional delegation can arrange, some tours for some of their colleagues. Come here. Come to Brooklyn. Meet some of these young people. They ought to meet some of the young people here.

Meet somebody like Leslieanne John, young woman who sang the national anthem this afternoon. Leslieanne is in the 11th grade, she's already taken eight college classes, which is about as many as I took when I was in college. [Laughter] She knows she has a great opportunity here; she's working hard to make the most of it. Eventually, she plans to become a lawyer.

And Leslieanne is clear eyed about the challenges that the students here face. She put it in a way that a lot of people can relate to; she said, "We see a whole bunch of craziness going

on in the streets of Crown Heights sometimes." That's what she said. But she also said that being here at P-TECH taught her something important: "There's more for us than just the streets." And she said that "At the end of the day, we've got to make something of ourselves." And that's important, that's important.

It's not just what the government or adults can do for you, it's also what you can do for yourselves. And that sense of responsibility, that sense that you set the bar high for yourself, that's what America is all about. That's been the history of New York: people working hard, but also working together to make sure that everybody has got a fair shot; to make sure you don't have to be born wealthy, you don't have to be born famous; that if you've got some drive and some energy, then you can go to a school that teaches you what you need to know. You can go to college even if you don't have a lot of money. You can start your own business even if you didn't inherit a business.

Making something of ourselves, that's what we do in this country. That's a message worth sending to Washington. No more games, no more gridlock, no more gutting the things that help America grow and give people the tools to make something of themselves. That's what this is about. That's what P-TECH represents; that's what Brooklyn represents.

And as long as I have the privilege to be your President, I'm going to keep fighting to make sure that no matter who you are, where you come from, what you look like, this country will always be a place where you can make it if you try.

So thank you, Brooklyn. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jamillah Seifullah, teacher, Pathways in Technology Early College High School; Paul Pierce, strong forward, and Kevin Garnett, power forward, National Basketball Association's Brooklyn Nets; and Radcliffe Saddler, student, Pathways in Technology Early College High School, who introduced the President.