

Statement on the Federal Budget

December 10, 2013

Earlier this year, I called on Congress to work together on a balanced approach to a budget that grows our economy faster and creates more jobs, not through aimless, reckless spending cuts that harm our economy now, but by making sure we can afford to invest in the things that have always grown our economy and strengthened our middle class. Today's bipartisan budget agreement is a good first step.

This agreement replaces a portion of the across-the-board spending cuts known as the sequester that have harmed students, seniors, and middle class families and served as a mindless drag on our economy over the last year. It clears the path for critical investments in things like scientific research, which has the potential to unleash new innovation and new industries. It's balanced and includes targeted fee increases and spending cuts designed in a way that doesn't hurt our economy or break the ironclad promises we've made to our seniors. It does all this while slightly reducing our deficits over time, coming on top of 4 years of the fastest deficit reduction since the end of World War II. And because it's the first budget that leaders of both parties have agreed to in a few years, the American people should not have to endure the pain of another Government shut-down for the next 2 years.

This agreement doesn't include everything I'd like, and I know many Republicans feel the same way. That's the nature of compromise.

But it's a good sign that Democrats and Republicans in Congress were able to come together and break the cycle of shortsighted, crisis-driven decision-making to get this done. That's the way the American people expect Washington to work. I want to thank Senator Murray, Congressman Ryan, and all the other leaders who helped forge this bipartisan agreement. And I want to call on Members of Congress from both parties to take the next step and actually pass a budget based on this agreement so I can sign it into law and our economy can continue growing and creating jobs without more Washington headwinds.

But as I said last week, the defining challenge of our time is not whether Congress can pass a budget, it's whether we can make sure our economy works for every working American. And while today's agreement is a good first step, Congress has a lot more to do on that front. In the immediate term, Congress should extend unemployment insurance so more than a million Americans looking for work don't lose a vital economic lifeline right after Christmas and our economy doesn't take a hit. And beyond that, they should do more to expand broad-based growth and opportunity: by creating more jobs that pay better wages, by growing our economy, and by offering a path into the middle class for every American willing to work for it.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Cornelia T.L. "Nina" Pillard as a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

December 12, 2013

I thank the Senate for confirming Nina Pillard to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which for the first time will have five active female judges on the bench. Throughout her career, Ms. Pillard has displayed an unwavering commitment to justice and integrity. Her landmark ac-

complishments on behalf of women and families include Supreme Court cases defending the constitutionality of the Family and Medical Leave Act and opening the doors of the Virginia Military Institute to female students. I'm confident she will be a diligent, thoughtful, and judicious addition to the DC Circuit.

NOTE: The statement referred to Judges Janice Rogers Brown, Karen L. Henderson, Patricia A. Millett, and Judith W. Rogers, U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Newly Elected Mayors December 13, 2013

Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome not only some of the most outstanding mayors in the country, but also folks who are representing incredible cities, world-class cities, that are going to be central to America's economic growth and progress for years to come.

I've always said that mayors don't have time to be ideological, and they don't really have time to be partisan, because they, every day, are held accountable for concretely delivering the services that people count on all across the country. And I think it's for that reason that when we think about mayors, we think about folks who actually get stuff done.

This is an outstanding group of both mayors and mayors-elect, representing some of our largest cities. They have a shared vision of cities as being critical hubs in which we're creating jobs; bringing businesses; seeing startups develop; making sure that there are pathways, gateways for opportunity for people from the surrounding areas, the surrounding States, the regions, and in many cases, the world, because I think you've got a lot of immigrant populations that naturally gravitate towards the diversity and dynamism of the city.

And although we have seen terrific progress in our cities, as we have across the country over the last several years—millions of jobs being created, the housing market starting to recover, businesses investing again, manufacturing making an extraordinary comeback—what we know is, we've still got a lot of work to do to deliver a vision that we all share, which is an America where if you work hard, you can make it.

And what that means is, is that my hope and goal out of this meeting is, we immediately set up a strong partnership with all the mayors here and all the mayors who aren't here where we get a clear sense of what their vision is and how they're trying to deliver services; how we can make sure that our kids are getting the very best education possible; how we make

sure that we are creating the platforms, the infrastructure for jobs to succeed—or jobs to be created and businesses to succeed in these cities; how we make sure our transportation dollars are flowing in a way that maximizes economic development that, hopefully, reduces congestion and rush-hour traffic—I suspect that's something that some of you have heard from your constituents about—[laughter]—how we make sure that there's a strong social safety net there that is not a place where people stay over the long term, but rather is a mechanism whereby people who have had some bad luck can get back on their feet and get back into the workforce.

So I'm very much looking forward to the conversation. In the meantime, at the Federal level, there's some things that we can do to help mayors. If we in fact can get this budget deal completed and out of the Senate, we can get away for the first time in a couple of years from the constant brinkmanship and crisis governance that we've seen up on Capitol Hill that impedes growth and makes businesses and investors less certain about wanting to put their money in. So that would be an important achievement, and that's something the Federal Government can do to help make.

One element that's not in this budget that needs to be passed right away is UI, unemployment insurance. You've got potentially 1.3 million people who, during Christmastime, are going to lose their unemployment benefits, at a time when it's still very difficult for a lot of folks to find a job. And that's not just bad for those individuals and for those families, that's bad for our economy, and that's bad for our cities, because if they don't have the money to pay the rent or be able to buy food for their families, that has an impact on demand and businesses and it can have a depressive effect generally. In fact, what we know is, the economists have said failing to extend