

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Mothers To Discuss the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and an Exchange With Reporters December 18, 2013

*The President.* Well, Michelle and I just had a wonderful conversation with this group of moms and one aunt who have been working tirelessly out there on behalf of our mission, which is to make sure that everybody in America, regardless of where they live, their background, that they are able to get high-quality health care coverage that provides them with financial protection and looks after them when they get sick.

And obviously, over the last couple of months, we had a rocky start with the website and all this. Despite that, we've seen hundreds of thousands of people signing up, more and more every single day, in part because we've got these wonderful folks like the people we met with today who are out there telling their personal stories: what it's like when a son gets sick and you have to make sure that not only are you providing the care that they need now, but also making sure that in the future that they're going to be able to get health care because they've got a preexisting condition; knowing what it's like to be in a position where your child is transitioning from college to the workplace and maybe their first job is part-time or they're working two part-time jobs, so they're doing everything they can to be responsible, but they still can't get health care on the job.

And I think this conversation really drove home in a very personal way why this is important. Sometimes, and here in Washington, this is a very abstract conversation or an entirely political conversation. But when you boil it down to stories and people hear what it means to have the security of solid health insurance at an affordable price when you need it, it reminds me at least of why we've been fighting so hard to get this done.

And we anticipate that there's still going to be challenges over the coming months, and we're going to continue to find ways to smooth out this transition and make sure that people know what the Affordable Care Act is actually

about. But we're absolutely confident that the demand is there, the need is there, and the more people learn about the fact that we've got 3 million people—young people who are able to stay on their parent's plan until they're 26; or the more they learn about the free preventive care that can avoid illness in the first place; or the more that they hear about the fact that there are no lifetime limits, so if you end up having a really severe illness you're not going to be hurt with a bunch of fine print. The more information they get I think the more satisfied they're going to be that this was the right thing to do and that it's been worth the fight.

And the last point I would just make—and I know, Michelle, you wanted to say a little bit—is what we communicated to the women here is there's something about moms—[laughter]—that, number one, they've got credibility generally. Number two, women oftentimes are the ones who are making the health care decisions in the family. Number three, moms can tell young people who think they're invincible that they're not and prod them to at least get information.

So as much as here in the White House we're going to continue to promote the Affordable Care Act and as much as we're going to be working hard with other organizations like AARP and others around the country to make sure people are signing up, nothing can replace the story that Mary Todd is telling in the grocery store to somebody who may be skeptical. And that kind of face-to-face interaction makes this concrete, and it describes exactly why this is so important.

So I just want to say to all the women here who have been telling their stories and working with others to make sure that people get good information, we are grateful to you. It's a great gift what you're doing, and we're really, really appreciative. So—sure.

*The First Lady.* Absolutely.

*The President.* Michelle.

*The First Lady.* The words that come to mind for me are “peace of mind.” And what the Affordable Care Act provides and can provide for so many families out there is peace of mind. This isn’t about politics, it’s about making sure that every family has the peace of mind to know that if a child gets sick or someone loses a job or someone has an illness that requires hundreds of thousands of dollars in coverage, that they’re going to have the safety net that they need to make sure that they don’t lose their home, that they aren’t spending the rest of their lives paying off medical fees.

And as Barack said, your stories are powerful. And it’s our job as mothers to make sure that our young people are informed about their “invincibility,” to make sure that other moms and families out there really understand what this law provides and that they can take advantage of it. This is the beauty of it. People have choices. They can go on to the website, they can talk to a navigator, they can learn for themselves what the law means and what it doesn’t mean. And that’s really, really what we want people to do, is educate yourselves. Get that education. Make the choice that’s best for your family, because the options are there.

So we are, again, very grateful to you all. And we urge everyone out there who has a story to share it. And we urge people to reach out. And if they’ve signed up their child, then sign up their friends. If you’ve got grandkids, make it a Christmas treat around the table to talk about a

little health care. [Laughter] Ring in the New Year with a—new coverage. [Laughter]

But we can really change the face of health care in this country. We can be a country that focuses on prevention. We can be a country where no one goes bankrupt because they get sick. And that is a worthwhile goal. So thank you all for being a part of this. Thanks so much.

*The President.* Thank you, guys.

*The First Lady’s Involvement in Health Care Reform*

Q. Mrs. Obama, why did you want to be involved in the health care push?

*The First Lady.* Because I’m a mom.

*The President.* Thank you, guys. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:54 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the meeting were Virginia Beach, VA, resident Mary Todd Glascock; Chevy Chase, MD, resident Jeanne K. Wardford; Teaneck, NJ, resident Susan Heskins-Lazar; Arlington, VA, resident Janise Kyle; Mary Marker, volunteer, Enroll America and Organizing for Action; Neeta Datt, chapter leader, Organizing for Action in Montgomery County, MD; Felicia Willems, volunteer, MomsRising in Raleigh, NC; and Nicole Duritz, vice president of health education and outreach, AARP.

## Statement on Congressional Passage of Federal Budget Legislation December 18, 2013

I’m pleased that with tonight’s vote in the Senate, for the first time in years, both parties in both Houses of Congress have come together to pass a budget. It’s a budget that unwinds some of the damaging sequester cuts that have harmed students and seniors and acted as headwinds our businesses had to fight. It clears a path for critical investments in things like education and research that have always grown our economy and strengthened the middle class. And it will continue to reduce our deficits at a time when we’ve seen four of the fast-

est years of deficit reduction since the end of World War II.

All told, it’s a good first step away from the shortsighted, crisis-driven decisionmaking that has only served to act as a drag on our economy. It helps chart our economic course for the next 2 years, which means that the American people won’t be exposed to another painful and unwise Government shutdown. But there is much more work to do to ensure our economy works for every working American. For one, Congress should pass an extension of