

and more appreciative and prouder of what you're doing.

Just a couple of more points. Number one, you've seen reports over the last couple of days that we actually slightly exceeded our targets for ACA signups and enrollments this past month, in the month of January. We now have well over 3½ million people who have signed up and are getting insurance through the marketplaces for the first time. That does not count the close to 7 million folks who have signed up for Medicaid because of the law that you passed or the 3 million young people who are staying on their parents' plans. We're starting to see data already that the uninsured rate is coming down. We are going to keep on pushing on this to make sure that here in America, everybody can enjoy the kind of financial security and peace of mind that good quality health insurance provides.

And I just want to say thank you for all of you hanging in there tough on an issue that I think, 10 years from now, 5 years from now, we're going to look back and say this was a monumental achievement that could not have happened had it not been for this caucus.

And finally, there are some big things that we have to do that I cannot do through executive action, where we have to get Congress and where the American people are on our side. A Federal minimum wage law is one of them. Another, though, is making sure that we've got a smart immigration policy in this country that grows our economy, gets people out of the shadows, makes sure that our businesses are thriving. That's got to be a top priority. We're going to have to keep on working on that.

And I believe, frankly, that there are folks on the other side of the aisle who genuinely want to see this done, but they're worried, and they're

scared about the political blowback. And look, everybody here is an elected official, and we can all appreciate the maneuverings that take place, particularly in an election year. But when it comes to immigration reform, we have to remind ourselves that there are people behind the statistics, that there are lives that are being impacted, that punting and putting things off for another year, another 2 years, another 3 years, it hurts people. It hurts our economy. It hurts families.

And part of what I'd like to think makes us Democrats is not simply some abstract ideological set of beliefs, but the fact that we're reminded every single day that we're here to help a whole bunch of folks out there—our neighbors, our friends, our communities—who are struggling still and need our help. And they're counting on us. The good thing is, they've got some outstanding Members of Congress who are willing to fight for them regardless of the political cost, starting with your leader Nancy Pelosi.

I'm grateful for you. And I'm looking forward to making sure that this year we keep on making progress even if we continue to get a little resistance from the other side. The American people know that we could be breaking out if Washington gets its act together, and it's important for us to lead that process. All right?

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:43 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa and Marina. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Joseph Crowley, Steny H. Hoyer, James E. Clyburn, and Xavier Becerra; and Paul F. Pelosi, Sr., husband of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. He also referred to Executive Order 13658, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to a Roundtable Discussion on Drought Relief Efforts and Water Management Policy in Firebaugh, California

February 14, 2014

I wanted to come here basically to listen. We're all equally dependent upon California producers for so many of products in our lives.

As you know, Michelle wants us to use more of your products, not less. In fact, I think her "Let's Move!" initiative has met with some of

the producers to talk about how we can get our kids eating more produce, more nuts, and more healthy foods. And because of the huge economic impact of what you do not just on California, but the Nation overall, there is a national concern around the drought that is facing California.

Now, as I'm sure Tom has shared with you and, I think, many of you know firsthand, we've been monitoring this for quite some time, and a whole host of our agencies have been coming in to interact with all of you and find ways that we can provide some immediate relief. But the truth of the matter is, is that this is going to be a very challenging situation this year, and frankly, the trend lines are such where it's going to be a challenging situation for some time to come.

And as we were flying over those beautiful mountains of yours that are the source of traditionally so much water in this area and despite the rain and snow that had come just over the last few days, it was still looking fairly bare; it gives you a sense that the baseline of water throughout the West, not just California, is going to be probably lower than what we've been accustomed to over the last hundred years. And that means we're going to have to make some decisions about how we conserve better, how we allocate water better, how we recycle water better, and how we cooperate more effectively not just in this State, but throughout the region and around the country.

Now, water politics in California traditionally, I know, has been pretty heated—[laughter]—and I told the Governor I'm not going to wade into this, because I want to get out of here alive on Valentine's Day. [Laughter] So my goal today—and I think, my administration's goal generally—is to try to facilitate and work with a whole range of stakeholders at the local levels and see how we can find common ground that points us in the new direction moving forward.

But I will say this: I think there's a tendency, historically, to think of water as a zero-sum

game, where either the agricultural interests are getting it or urban areas are getting it; it's North, it's South. Given what we anticipate to be a significant reduction in the overall amount of water, we're going to have to figure out how to play a different game. And if the politics are structured in just such a way where everybody is fighting each other and trying to get as much as they can, my suspicion is, is that we're going to not make much progress, particularly because Jim Costa told me, if you want to guarantee yourself a job in California, become a water rights lawyer. [Laughter]

So what we can't afford, I think, is just years of litigation and no real action. And our hope is, is that we can convene a conversation that helps us move forward.

So I'm glad to be here. Even though I'm only going to be here for a little over an hour, what I am at the outset making a commitment to all of you is, is that we are going to stay on top of this, because it has national implications not only for our economy, but we're also going to have to make sure that we weave in this issue of water in the West with the broader issues of climate change that are having an impact all across the country in different ways. There's a connection between drought in the West and hurricanes along the Atlantic and coastal erosion. And what this all means is we're going to have to start rethinking our infrastructure and what are the projects that 50 years from now, 100 years from now, our children and grandchildren are going to be able to say, we had the foresight to deal with these problems in a serious way.

And that's not going to be happening overnight. We'll try to get immediate relief right now, but we also have to have this larger conversation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. at a San Luis Water District facility. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack; and Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., of California.