

like to commend the dramatic role of the United States in that regard.

As you're very well aware, we're obviously a stakeholder in all final status negotiations, and therefore, our national interests in these issues are of paramount importance. But I am cautiously optimistic, even with the major challenges, that America has been really working tirelessly to really improve the situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Obviously, as you mentioned, sir, the main challenge that we have is, how do we bring a political, comprehensive solution to the Syrian people? Our major concern in the area is the rise of extremism in Syria, the sectarian violence, and if we don't find a solution, the spill-over in the region and the effect that will have. But again, I'm sure that our views are similar, and we will be working very closely with you, sir, and our Western friends in trying to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people as quickly as possible.

Sir, you've mentioned your very generous support by yourself and the American people of the challenges that Jordan faces. Jordan is a resilient country. We see ourselves as an oasis of stability to our neighbors. And you have

mentioned that the challenges that we face with the immense pressure of Syrian refugees and what it does to the host nation from a humanitarian point of view. And the United States has been beyond the call of duty in its support for us. And I just wanted to mention, again in front of you, how grateful I am and the people of Jordan for that outstanding support.

We do hope that the rest of the international community also steps up and catches up in the support not only for the Syrian refugees, but also the impact it has on Jordanians and Jordanian infrastructure, as well as looking at mechanisms of how we can push humanitarian supplies into Syria.

So we have a lot to talk about, sir, today, but I am very grateful on behalf of all of us for this time that you're giving us and the tremendous support that you've shown our people. Thank you.

President Obama. All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:55 p.m. at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

The President's Weekly Address *February 15, 2014*

Hi, everybody. In this year of action, I said I'd do everything in my power to expand opportunity for more Americans. And this week, I took action to lift more workers' wages by requiring Federal contractors to pay their employees a fair wage of at least \$10.10 an hour. These are workers who serve our troops' meals, wash their dishes, care for our veterans, Americans who work hard and will get a raise as these contracts come up. This will be good for contractors, for taxpayers, and for America's bottom line.

We know why this is important. Our economy has been growing for 4 years. Our businesses have created 8½ million new jobs. But while those at the top are doing better than ever, average wages have barely budged. Too many Americans are working harder than ever just to

get by, let alone get ahead. And that's been true since long before the recession hit.

That's why we've got to build an economy that works for everybody, not just a fortunate few. We've got to restore opportunity for all, the notion that no matter who you are or how you started out, with hard work and responsibility, you can get ahead in America.

The opportunity agenda I've laid out is built on more new jobs that pay good wages, better training for folks to fill those jobs, a smarter education for our kids, and making sure honest work is rewarded. And the action I took this week will reward hard work for more Americans.

But to finish the job, Congress needs to act. In the year since I first asked Congress to raise the minimum wage, six States have passed laws

to raise theirs. More States, cities, counties, and companies are taking steps to join them. An overwhelming majority of Americans support raising a minimum wage that's worth about 20-percent less than when Ronald Reagan took office.

Right now there's a bill in Congress that would boost America's minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour. That's easy to remember: 10–10. And remember, the average worker who would get a raise if Congress acts is about 35 years old. Most low-wage jobs are held by women. And raising the minimum wage wouldn't just raise their wages, its effect would lift wages for about 28 million Americans. It would lift millions of Americans out of poverty and help millions more work their way out of poverty, without requiring a single dollar in new taxes or spending. It will give more businesses more customers with more money to spend, and that means growing the economy for everyone.

You deserve to know where the people who represent you stand on this issue. If they don't support raising the Federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour, ask them, why not? The opponents of raising folks' wages have deployed the same old arguments for years, and time and again, they've been proven wrong. Let's prove them wrong again and give America a raise. Let's make opportunity easier to come by for every American who's willing to work for it.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:50 p.m. on February 13 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on February 15. In the address, the President referred to Executive Order 13658, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 14, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 15.

Statement on the Ugandan Parliament's Passage of Legislation Criminalizing Homosexuality *February 16, 2014*

As a country and a people, the United States has consistently stood for the protection of fundamental freedoms and universal human rights. We believe that people everywhere should be treated equally, with dignity, and respect, and that they should have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential, no matter who they are or whom they love.

That is why I am so deeply disappointed that Uganda will shortly enact legislation that would criminalize homosexuality. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, once law, will be more than an affront and a danger to the gay community in Uganda. It will be a step backward for all Ugandans and reflect poorly

on Uganda's commitment to protecting the human rights of its people. It also will mark a serious setback for all those around the world who share a commitment to freedom, justice, and equal rights.

As we have conveyed to President Museveni, enacting this legislation will complicate our valued relationship with Uganda. At a time when, tragically, we are seeing an increase in reports of violence and harassment targeting members of the LGBT community from Russia to Nigeria, I salute all those in Uganda and around the world who remain committed to respecting the human rights and fundamental human dignity of all persons.

Remarks at the Safeway Distribution Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland *February 18, 2014*

The President. Well, good morning, everybody.
Audience members. Good morning.

The President. It is good to be here. And I want to thank Jack Jacobs and all the folks at