

May 7 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Message to the Congress on Withdrawing the Designation of Russia as a Beneficiary Under the Generalized System of Preferences Program May 7, 2014

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 502(f)(2) of the Trade Act of 1974 (the “1974 Act”) (19 U.S.C. 2462(f)(2)), I am providing notice of my intent to withdraw the designation of Russia as a beneficiary developing country under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program.

Sections 501(1) and (4) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2461(1) and (4)), provide that, in affording duty-free treatment under the GSP, the President shall have due regard for, among other factors, the effect such action will have on furthering the economic development of a beneficiary developing country through the expansion of its exports and the extent of the beneficiary developing country’s competitiveness with respect to eligible articles.

Section 502(c) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2462(c)) provides that, in determining whether to designate any country as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP, the President shall take into account various fac-

tors, including the country’s level of economic development, the country’s per capita gross national product, the living standards of its inhabitants, and any other economic factors he deems appropriate.

Having considered the factors set forth in sections 501 and 502(c) of the 1974 Act, I have determined that it is appropriate to withdraw Russia’s designation as a beneficiary developing country under the GSP program because Russia is sufficiently advanced in economic development and improved in trade competitiveness that continued preferential treatment under the GSP is not warranted. I intend to issue a proclamation withdrawing Russia’s designation consistent with section 502(f)(2) of the 1974 Act.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 7, 2014.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner in Los Angeles, California May 7, 2014

Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, let me start by thanking Cindy and Alan for the incredible hospitality. We are so grateful to you—and arranging this nice weather. It’s a little cool for L.A. I know we’ve got some folks in blankets here—[laughter]—but for a Chicagoan, it feels pretty good. It’s pretty balmy. [Laughter]

Let me also acknowledge two outstanding leaders who are doing great work every single day. From the Senate, the head of the Democratic Senate Committee, Michael Bennet, the great Senator from Colorado. We appreciate him. And California’s own, former Speaker and soon to be Speaker again, Nancy Pelosi is in the house. Nancy Pelosi! We love Nancy.

I’m going to make my remarks at the top real brief because I want to spend most of the time in a conversation, and it’s a small enough group that I can spend some time on questions. I’m in trouble at home. And the reason is, is because I told Michelle back in 2012, I had run my last campaign, but a couple months ago, I had to let her in on a secret, and that is, honey, I’ve got one more campaign I’ve got to run. [Laughter] I need to make sure we continue to have a Democratic Senate, and I need a Democratic House of Representatives in Washington. And I’m going to do everything I can to make that happen.

Now, let me describe to you why this is so important, just in case you guys did not get the

memo. [Laughter] Over the last 5½ years, as Cindy said, we've made enormous progress on a whole range of issues. We were losing 800,000 jobs a month; we've now created 9.2 million jobs. The unemployment rate is the lowest it's been since 2007. The financial sector has obviously recovered. People have recovered the values of their pensions and 401(k)s that they had lost, so trillions of dollars of wealth restored. The housing market has rebounded.

On the energy front, we have increased our production of wind energy threefold, solar energy by tenfold. We've actually reduced our carbon emissions faster than any other country in the world, even as we are also producing more energy generally, doubling our production of clean energy. Increased fuel efficiency standards on cars; saved an auto industry that was on the verge of collapse; provided health insurance to millions of Americans all across the country, including right here in California, and made the protections of those of us who already had insurance that much more sturdy.

We've expanded access for young people to go to college. Millions of young people are able to go to college that weren't going before. We actually have the highest college enrollment rates in our history. We've reduced the drop-out rate for Latino students; we've cut it in half since 2000.

And yet, despite all that, despite ending two wars, despite the progress that we've made on issues that are important to everybody here, there's still disquiet around the country. There's an anxiety and sense of frustration. And the reason is, is because people understand that for all that we've done, the challenges out there remain daunting, and we have a Washington that's not working.

And for families, in particular, even with the recovery, they still have not seen an increase in wages, an increase in incomes. They're still worried that they're not going to be able to retire when they plan to retire. They worry about the prospects for their kids, whether they're going to be able to live out their American Dream the same way that they did.

And we can debate a lot about whether the Senate rules need to be changed and are there problems with our media and campaign finance and there are a whole bunch of structural reasons why Washington isn't working as well as it should. But the principal reason is that there is just a fundamental difference in what we as Democrats believe and what this particular brand of Republicans that we've got in Congress believes.

We believe in pay equity; they say no. We believe in a higher minimum wage; they say no. We believe in making sure that we're investing in our infrastructure and putting people back to work and investing in innovation and basic research that can unlock cures for things like Alzheimer's; their budget takes us in the opposite direction. We believe in early childhood education to make sure that opportunity for all actually means something, that it's not just a slogan; they say no. We think climate change is real; some of them say it's a hoax, that we're fabricating it.

And the biggest challenge we have is not just that there's a fundamental difference in vision and where we want to take the country, not just the fact that they continue to subscribe to a top-down approach to economic growth and opportunity and we believe that the economy works better when it works for everybody and that real growth happens from the bottom up and the middle out—

[At this point, a car alarm went off.]

Sound the alarm, because there's a problem. [Laughter] Let's see if we can cut that. Whose car is that? You recognize that one? [Laughter] There you go. [Laughter]

But here's what's more disconcerting. Their willingness to say no to everything—the fact that since 2007, they have filibustered about 500 pieces of legislation that would help the middle class just gives you a sense of how opposed they are to any progress—has actually led to an increase in cynicism and discouragement among the people who were counting on us to fight for them. The conclusion is, well, nothing works. And the problem is, is that for the folks worth fighting for—for the person

who's cleaning up that house or hotel, for the guy who used to work on construction, but now has been laid off—they need us. Not because they want a handout, but because they know that government can serve an important function in unleashing the power of our private sector.

And when they get discouraged, they don't vote. And the congenital problem that Democrats have is in midterms especially, we don't vote. Our voters are younger, they're more likely to be minority. And because they're more likely to be struggling, they're not always paying attention when the President—Presidential candidate isn't on the ballot. And so you've got a self-fulfilling prophecy: People who have the most at stake in a government that works opt out of the system, those who don't believe that government can do anything are empowered, gridlock reigns, and we get this downward spiral of even more cynicism and more dysfunction.

And we have to break out of that cycle. And that's what this election is about. Because I am optimistic about America's prospects. I've been traveling a lot over the last couple months, and I go all around the world—I go to Europe, I go to Asia, and everywhere I go—do not buy this notion perpetrated here that somehow America is on a downward trajectory. By every indicator, we are better positioned than any country on Earth to succeed in this knowledge economy in the 21st century. But what is absolutely true is if we don't make good choices, we could decline.

And we're not going to make good choices unless we break out of this cycle in which dysfunction breeds cynicism and cynicism then breeds more dysfunction. We've got to break out of it. And that happens during midterms.

Remarks at the USC Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles May 7, 2014

Thank you so much. Please, please, everybody have a seat.

Well, thank you, Steven, for your incredibly generous words, for this great honor, for your friendship, and most importantly, for the ex-

traordinary work which brings us here all tonight. To Robert Katz and all the members of the board and staff of the Shoah Foundation; to President Max Nikias and everybody at USC; to all the distinguished guests; and to all

That does not happen during Presidential elections.

A lot of people here are already excited about 2016. You guys were excited about 2008. You got geared up for 2012. I am grateful. But I need some partners. I've got to have a Democratic Senate. And when you think about everything I was able to accomplish with Nancy Pelosi at the helm in the House, all the issues that you care about that we were able to advance when she was the leader, I think you've got a big stake in making sure that we've got a Democratic House as well.

So my main message to all of you is: Feel a sense of urgency about this election. This is my last campaign, and I'm going to put everything I've got into it, but I need you to feel that this is just as important, because we can't afford to wait until 2016. And nothing is going to happen magically, by the way, that changes in 2016 if we still have the same kind of voting patterns and the same dysfunction that we've got right now in Congress. We'll be stymied all over again.

The good news is we've got public opinion on our side if people actually turn out. On every issue—on minimum wage, on pay equity, on clean energy, on immigration reform—there's not an issue in which we do not possess a majority in this country. But it has to manifest itself during election time and especially during midterms.

So I hope you guys get fired up, because I'm fired up. [*Laughter*] And I continue to be ready to go. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:52 p.m. at the residence of Alan F. and Cindy Horn. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.