

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2015

June 26, 2014

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Budget amendments for the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of State and Other International Programs (State/OIP) to fund Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). These amendments would provide \$58.6 billion for DOD OCO activities, which is \$20.9 billion less than the \$79.4 billion placeholder for DOD OCO in the FY 2015 Budget. It would also provide \$1.4 billion for State/OIP OCO activities, which is in addition to the \$5.9 billion for State/OIP included in the FY 2015 Budget. Overall, these amendments would decrease the total OCO funding requested for FY 2015 by \$19.5 billion.

Final decisions about the number and activities of U.S. forces in Afghanistan after December 2014 had not yet been made at the time the FY 2015 Budget was submitted. As a result, the Budget included a placeholder for

DOD FY 2015 OCO funding equivalent to the amount requested in the FY 2014 Budget. The Administration noted in the FY 2015 Budget that after determining required force levels in Afghanistan, a Budget amendment updating the OCO request would be submitted to the Congress. The enclosed amendments include the necessary updates to the OCO request in order to fund military operations in Afghanistan, a significant portion of the U.S. military presence around the Middle East, the Administration's proposed Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund and European Reassurance Initiative, and State/OIP peacekeeping costs in the Central African Republic.

The details of these amendments are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Minneapolis, Minnesota

June 26, 2014

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. This is a rowdy crowd. [*Laughter*]

So, obviously, first and foremost, I want to thank Sam and Sylvia. It is true that the last time I was in this house, I had no gray hair. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying. And many people could not pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] But Sam and Sylvia, and some of you who are here tonight took a flyer on me.

And Minnesota actually really did have a lot to do with my deciding to run. There are a few charter members of the "Draft Obama" club, along with R.T., who started—who decided I should run for President before I had decided I should run for President. And that's not surprising, because Minnesota has a history of

putting confidence in people who represent a progressive tradition, and nobody represents that better than a man sitting right next to me, Mr. Walter Mondale. Thank you. We love Walter Mondale. Thank you so much.

Couple other people who are carrying on that tradition who are here and I just want to acknowledge very quickly. Your outstanding Senator—you've got two of them, one of them is here—Amy Klobuchar is here. Yay, Amy! Part of the extraordinary Minnesota delegation: Congressman Keith Ellison is here; Congresswoman Betty McCollum is here; Congressman Rick Nolan is here; and Congressman Tim Walz is here. Tim is getting a little too slim.

[*Laughter*] He's been working out too much, given that House gym a run for its money.

We also have somebody who has a thankless job and does it extraordinarily well, and that is the head of the DCCC, and we're very grateful to him, Steve Israel. Steve here? And finally, a person who—let me just say it—I love her. And I love her because she is tough and she's smart and she's fearless and she's in politics for the right reasons. And when she was Speaker of the House, she and I together got more done than any Congress since the 1960s. And I want her back with the gavel, and that's why we're here today—Nancy Pelosi. Nancy Pelosi.

[*At this point, a dog barked.*]

Yes! Got a few "Amen's" there from the dog. [*Laughter*] So I'm going to make very brief remarks at the top so I can take some questions and have some fun.

I had lunch today with a young woman named Rebekah who had written me a letter, I guess, a couple of months ago. And I get 40,000 pieces of correspondence today; we have an entire office that's assigned to process it, and they select for me 10 letters a day that I read every night. And they're from all across the country and people of every background, and it's on every topic. And purposely, they're not just supposed to be just, "Oh, Mr. President, you're doing such a great job." We get Tea Party letters in the packets, and, "You're the worst President ever," and I sometimes write back to those folks and say, "Well, thank you so much for your letter"—[*laughter*]"—and I'm not running again, so you don't have to worry about that."

But Rebekah sent me this letter, and it moved me. Because her story—she's 35 years old. She's got a 5-year-old and a 3-year-old. She and her husband married about 6, 7 years ago; he was in—he was a carpenter, he was in contracting. He had a good job. Housing market plummets, loses his job. Gets another job. Gets injured on the job, they accumulate some debt, that job is lost. There are suggestions that maybe they should file for bankruptcy; he says no, we've got these debts, we're going to pay them. He gets another job with the railroads,

which require him to be away basically 4 or 5 days a week while she's taking care of two kids. She goes back to school to get an accounting degree so that she can get a better job; manages her classes as smartly as she can, but still ends up with \$12,000 worth of debt. She gets a job at the accounting firm, he gets a new job, although at a significantly lower pay, back in construction, and he can be with the family more.

And the essence of the letter was, you know, I have a great life, she says. I have a beautiful family. We're healthy. We take advantage of the great parks in Minnesota, and we take advantage of a wonderful community and neighbors and friends. So I'm not looking for pity, but I work really hard, and my husband works even harder. And we've done everything right, and it still feels like at the end of the month, because of childcare costs and because of student loans and the fact that we don't get raises really, it's just really hard. And I just want you to know, Mr. President, that we're out here and that I believe in you and I know you care about us, but sometimes, it doesn't feel like what's happening in our lives is ever being discussed in Washington, and I want you to know that we're out here and we have faith in you, but we're losing faith a little bit in the system.

And so I met—I had lunch with her today at a burger place—Jucy Lucy's—which was a very good burger, tasty burger. And she could not have been more wonderful. The spirit of dignity and optimism and kindness that had come through in the letter, it was just embodied in her. She was lovely, and we had a good time.

But it reminded me, as it often reminds me when I get out of Washington, why we do this stuff in the first place. And I told her this. I said, you may not hear it because the press will not report it, the only reason I'm in politics is because of you. It's folks like you. Because when I see you, I see my mother, who wasn't lucky enough to have such a great husband, raising two kids on her own trying to go back to school and work at the same time; and when I see you, I'm reminded of when Michelle and I were starting off early on, and Michelle calling

me in tears because we had just lost the nanny and we had no idea whether we were going to be able to replace her with somebody; and when I see you, I think about friends of mine who have lost their jobs and had to reinvent themselves, and how hard that was, but that they kept on plugging away at it.

And the only reason I'm in politics is because I remember all of that. And it wasn't that long ago when I was trying to figure out some of the same things you're figuring out: how do you lead a good life and raise your kids, not looking to get wildly wealthy, not trying to have more than you need, but just be able to make ends meet and enjoy your family and, hopefully, retire with some security and be able to look back on a life that was worth living.

And that's what we should be talking about every day in Washington. And we should be able to act on that every day in Washington. And we don't. We talk about everything else. We talk about everything that doesn't have to do with that young woman.

We talk about phony scandals, and we talk about Benghazi, and we talk about polls, and we talk about the Tea Party, and we talk about the latest controversy that Washington has decided is important, and we don't talk about her.

And so I hope the reason you're here tonight is because you remember what this is supposed to be about. I know Nancy Pelosi does. I know the delegation that's here, they remember what this is supposed to be about and that that's worth fighting for. And we don't have time for cynicism, and we don't have time for discouragement, because she's still there doing everything she's supposed to do, and all she's looking for is somebody who's got her back a little bit.

Remarks in Minneapolis, Minnesota June 27, 2014

The President. Hello, Minneapolis! How is everybody doing today? You look good. It is good to see all of you. I miss Minneapolis. I missed you guys. Go ahead and have a seat, I'm going to be talking for a while. [*Laughter*]

And so when we talk about minimum wage or we talk about early childhood education or we talk about reinvesting in infrastructure to put folks back to work or we talk about equal pay for equal work or we talk about paid family leave or whatever the issues that you hear us promoting, they're in service to her. And the other side has nothing to offer her except cynicism and fear and frustration. And sometimes, we just take that for granted, and we shouldn't.

Other people can—Steve can tell you about the 17 seats we need, and they can tell you about all the polls and what we need to do to win and how we message things and what's been poll tested. All that stuff is important. We've got to be good at that. But in the end, what matters is, how hard are we fighting for the folks that sent us and the people who in most cases inspired us to get into politics in the first place?

That's what this is about. And it's useful for us to remember that, because if we do, we're going to win, because we actually have something to offer that young lady. And if she wins, then the country wins, and our kids and our grandkids win. So I hope all of you remember that. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:26 p.m. at the residence of Sam and Sylvia Kaplan. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN; former Vice President Walter F. Mondale; and St. Anthony, MN, resident Rebekah Erler, her husband Ben Erler, and their sons Jack and Henry. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

So we've got some wonderful folks here today. I want to acknowledge a few of them. First of all, your outstanding Governor, Mark Dayton. Your wonderful Senators, Al Franken and Amy Klobuchar. Congressman Keith Ellison.