

the severity of wildfires, which is both fiscally imprudent and self-defeating.

My request includes language to support a discretionary cap adjustment to allow the Federal Government to respond to severe, complex, and threatening fires or a severe fire season in the same way as we fund other natural disasters such as hurricanes or earthquakes. This approach would provide funding certainty in future years for firefighting costs, free up resources to invest in areas that will promote long-term forest health and reduce fire risk, and maintain fiscal responsibility by addressing wildfire disaster needs through agreed-upon funding mechanisms.

My Administration requests that the funding described above be designated as emergency requirements pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, (BBEDCA). In addition, my Administration requests that a new cap adjustment

for wildfire suppression operations be added to section 251(b)(2) of BBEDCA.

I urge the Congress to act expeditiously in considering this important request, the details of which are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Finally, separate from this request, my Administration will continue to work with the Congress—following up on my letter to congressional leadership on June 30, 2014—to ensure that we have the legal authorities to maximize the impact of our efforts, including providing the Secretary of Homeland Security additional authority to exercise discretion in processing the return and removal of unaccompanied minor children from non-contiguous countries like Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, and increasing penalties for those who smuggle vulnerable migrants, like children.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks in Denver, Colorado July 9, 2014

The President. Hello, Denver!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Everybody, have a seat. So I think we should just stay here all afternoon and have a picnic. This is really nice around here. Wow! What a gorgeous day.

Can everybody please give Alex a big round of applause for that great introduction? It is so good to be back in Denver. It is great to be back in Colorado. As all of you know, I spent a lot of time here in my last campaign. I have been itching to get back.

I got to have dinner last night with Alex and four other Coloradans—Elizabeth Cooper, Leslie Gresham, Carolyn Reed and her husband David—at the Wazee Supper Club. It was tasty. That was some good pizza. [*Laughter*] And then, I walked down the block to shoot some pool with Governor Hickenlooper at his old bar, the Wynkoop Brewing Company. You should not ask him who won. [*Laughter*] No, no, you just—really, don't ask Gover-

nor Hickenlooper who won at pool. [*Laughter*] And it's a great time to be in this beautiful park with my friend Ken Salazar, who I love and I haven't seen in a while. There he is right there. As well as your Congressman, Ed Perlmutter. Yay, Ed.

So let me tell you why I'm here. Every day, we get thousands of letters and e-mails at the White House. I think it's something like 40,000 a day of some sort of correspondence. And every night, our Correspondence Office selects 10 letters for me to read. And I've been doing that since I first came into office. And it's one of the most important things I do—it's right there next to my national security briefing and whatever policy issues that we're supposed to be working on—because it reminds me of why I ran for office.

And so I have a chance just to hear from people as they tell their stories. They talk about the hardships that they're going through; sometimes, they talk about a success that they've

had. Kids write to me, asking questions about what I'm doing about climate change or how old is Bo. [Laughter] So people describe to me their fears and their hopes not just for themselves, but also for their children and their grandchildren and for the country. And sometimes, they thank me for taking a position on an issue. And sometimes, they say, how dare you take that position on an issue? And sometimes, people say they're proud of the work that I've done, and sometimes, people call me an idiot—or worse than an idiot—which is how I know that I'm getting a good sample. [Laughter]

So Alex wrote to tell me that the day after my State of the Union Address, her boss gave her a raise to \$10.10 an hour. Alex actually, last night, confessed she actually didn't watch my State of the Union Address. [Laughter] Which, hey, I understand. [Laughter] When I was her age, I'm sure I missed a whole bunch of State of the Union Addresses. But her boss caught it, and he decided, let me make sure I'm paying my employees a fair wage.

Carolyn, from up in Wellington, wrote to say she and David used an SBA loan from the Recovery Act to open the third of their six Silver Mine Subs shops. They had—[applause]. Oh, you know Silver Mine? All right. Everybody is happy about that. It was a wonderful story because both her and her husband were Teamsters. See, she worked at UPS, and he worked for Bud. And they just knew that they wanted to start something of their own. And she described to us last night what it was like to take the risk to mortgage the house, make a business for herself, and then now to have a hundred employees and to be giving those folks an opportunity. They're hiring, by the way—[laughter]—in case people are interested.

Leslie, from Parker, wrote to say she'd been teaching preschool for 26 years and was an early childhood education educator of the year, just a wonderful teacher. But she described the difference she could see in children who had that early exposure to the kind of classroom education that she's providing.

And Elizabeth, who's going to be a junior this fall at the University of Northern Colorado, wrote to tell me how hard it is for middle

class families like hers to afford college. And she shared something I know many of you feel when you wonder what the heck is going on in Washington. She wrote she feels “not significant enough to be addressed, not poor enough for people to worry about, and not rich enough to be cared about.” That's what she wrote.

So part of the reason I wanted to have dinner with these folks is because they reminded me of why I ran for office and what I'm supposed to be doing every single day. And the reason I'm here today is very simple: I'm here because of Elizabeth and Alex and Carolyn and Leslie. And I'm here for every American who works their tail off and does everything right and who believes in the American Dream and asks for nothing but a chance at a decent life for themselves and their families. That's why I'm here. And to tell all of you that I hear you.

I mean, sometimes, it's as simple as that, that I am listening and paying attention, partly because when I listen to Alex or I listen to Carolyn or I listen to any of the folks that I met with, I see myself in them. Because I remember my first minimum wage job—at Baskin Robbins, by the way—[laughter]—I had to wear a cap and an apron—and how, like, a little raise would have really helped. I think about what it was like for me to finance college. I think about childcare costs when Michelle and I were first starting out with Malia and Sasha. Your stories are ours. You're why I ran.

And so what I want to make sure of is, is that as screwed up sometimes as Washington gets, that everybody here understands that there's progress to be made and that there's somebody out there who's fighting for them, even if it sometimes feels like the system's rigged against them.

The other thing I want to make sure people understand is, is that we are making progress, as bad as the news looks if all you were doing was watching cable TV all day long. Yes, the crisis that hit towards the end of my first campaign hit us all really badly; 2007, 2008, that was rough. But today, our businesses have added nearly 10 million new jobs over the past 52 months. Construction and housing are rebounding. Our auto industry is booming.

Manufacturing is adding jobs for the first time since the nineties. The unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest point since September of 2008, the fastest 1-year drop in nearly 30 years.

And look, most of this is attributable to you, the American people, starting businesses and paying down debt and tightening belts and doing all kinds of stuff just to make sure that you kept on and were able to look after your families. But the decisions we made early on not only stopped the slide, but also built a new foundation for our economy, and they're paying off now.

We're more energy independent. We've tripled the electricity we generate from the wind, ten times from the sun, creating jobs across the country, while producing more oil at home than we buy abroad for the first time in nearly 20 years. Our energy sector is booming. And by the way, we're doing that while reducing our carbon emissions more than any other country over the last 5 years. So we're making progress on climate change as well.

In education, our high school graduation rate is at a record high. The Latino dropout rate has dropped in half. More young people are graduating from college than ever before. We made our Tax Code fairer. We cut our deficits by more than half. We've given millions more Americans the security of health care that means you won't go broke just because you get sick.

So thanks to the hard work of you, and some actually pretty smart policies by us—[laughter]—we have come farther and recovered faster than almost any other advanced nation on Earth. More companies are choosing to bring back jobs from overseas. Thanks to our leadership in technology and innovation, for the first time in more than a decade, business leaders around the world have declared, China is not number one when it comes to the place to invest, the United States is. And our lead is growing.

So, despite what you may hear, there is no doubt we are making progress. By almost every measure, we are better off than when I took office—by almost every measure. But here's the thing, and this is why I've got to get out more

and have lunch with—and pizza with the—with my friends, because the fact is, we know we've still got a long way to go.

Here's the challenge: We've created more jobs at this point of the year than any year since 1999. More jobs have been created in the first half of this year than we have since the nineties. But many families barely earn what they did in the nineties. Corporate profits are higher than ever. CEOs make more than ever. But most people are working harder than ever just to get by. Wages, incomes have flatlined. They have not gone up.

So, as a whole, the country is doing better, but too much improvement goes to the folks at the top and not enough of it is making a difference in the lives of ordinary Americans. And that's what we should be spending all our time talking about: How do we reverse some of those trends? That's what I came to Denver to talk about: that. That issue: How do we make sure if you work hard, do the right thing, you can get ahead? Washington may chase whatever political story they think will get attention, but to me the only story that matters is your story. And I am here to say that this country does not succeed when just a few at the top do well and everybody else is treading water. America does better when the middle class does better, when folks who work hard can afford to buy what they make and provide for our families and leave something better for our kids.

So this is what I'm spending time on. This is what I'm fighting for. This is my opportunity agenda. I'm focused on how do we create good jobs that pay good wages, jobs in American manufacturing and construction, in American energy and innovation.

I'm fighting for an opportunity agenda that trains more workers with the skills to fill those jobs at community colleges and in apprenticeships and internships that give young people a solid start.

We're fighting for an opportunity agenda that guarantees every child a world-class education, from high-quality pre-K to a redesigned high school, to colleges and a rewarding career

that's affordable and you're not loaded up with debt.

We're fighting to make sure your hard work pays off with higher wages that you can live on and savings you can retire on; workplace flexibility so if your kids get sick or you've got an ailing parent, you're not looking at losing your job; overtime pay that you've earned; affordable health care that's there when you get sick and you need it most.

We're fighting for the idea that everybody gets opportunity, no matter what you look like or where you come from or who you love or how you grew up or what your last name is. America is a place where you should be able to make it if you try.

And the good news is, we actually know how to do some of these things. If we make just some modest changes—we don't need revolutionary changes. If we made some modest changes, made some sensible decisions we'd create more jobs, we'd lift more income, we'd strengthen the middle class. We wouldn't solve every problem overnight, but we'd be making more progress even than we're already making. That's what we should be doing. And of course, that's what drives you nuts about Washington, because that's not what it's doing. [Laughter]

After everything we've been through together, you'd think that these challenges would absorb the attention of folks in Washington. But these days, basic, commonsense ideas cannot get through Congress. Basic stuff, stuff that used to be uncontroversial. It used to be that Republicans, Democrats, everybody said, you know what, America, it's a good thing when we build roads and bridges and a smart grid and—to transmit energy. All those things are good for business, they're good for workers, it helps. Now can't—they can't seem to pass a bill just to fund basic projects that we know are good for our economy.

We have evidence that early childhood education, every dollar we spend there, you get 7 bucks back because kids do better in school, they don't drop out, they're less likely to get in trouble. They're less likely to go to jail. They're less—more likely to be taxpayers later on. But you look at Congress: They can't do it.

Think about it. So far this year, Republicans in Congress have blocked or voted down every serious idea to strengthen the middle class. They've said no to raising the minimum wage. They said no to fair pay legislation so that women are getting paid the same as men for doing the same work. They said no to unemployment insurance for Americans who are out there looking for a new job. I know, because I get letters from them every day, folks who have worked all their lives, paid taxes all their lives. And now, right when they're having a tough time because of an unprecedented recession that we just went through, and they need a little help so they don't lose their house or they don't lose their car, suddenly, Congress can't do it.

Congress just said no to fixing our broken immigration system in a way that strengthens our borders and our businesses, despite the fact that everybody from law enforcement to corporations to evangelicals—there's a coalition around immigration reform that's unprecedented. These guys still can't get their act together.

Rather than invest in education that lets working families get ahead, they voted to give another massive tax cut to the wealthiest Americans. Rather than invest in roads and bridges to create construction jobs and help our businesses succeed, they've chosen to preserve and protect tax loopholes for companies that shift their profits overseas that don't do anybody any good.

Republicans in Congress right now have shown over and over, they'll do anything to rig the system for those at the top or to try to score political points on me, even if the obstruction keeps the system rigged against the middle class. I mean, the best thing you can say for them this year is they haven't yet shut down the Government so far or threatened to go deadbeat on America's obligations. But it is still early, so—[applause].

Now, I always have to say this: I don't think that they're all terrible people. I think they love their families. They love the country. They've got a different economic theory. Maybe they don't know what ordinary folks are

going through. But maybe it's not that they don't get it. Maybe it's just because the theory they have is, is that if the economy is doing good for folks at the very top, then it's going to help everybody else, despite the fact that we have evidence over and over again that those theories have failed the middle class.

More tax breaks to those at the top, fewer investments in things like education. Looser rules for big banks or credit card companies or polluters or insurers—they believe all that stuff really makes the economy hum and prosperity trickles down.

Just because they believe it doesn't mean the rest of us believe it, because we know from our history, it doesn't work. Our economy grows best from the middle out, when everybody has a shot, everybody is doing well. And with a slight change of priorities, we could do it. We could help a lot more Americans get ahead. And folks at the top will do well too. Everybody will do better.

And by the way, that—Republicans used to understand this. This is not, like, a crazy Democratic, socialist idea. [*Laughter*] My favorite President is a Republican, Abraham Lincoln, who built—helped build a transcontinental railroad and invested in the Homestead Act that helped people get land and invested in our first major Federal scientific research; understood that you make these common investments—land-lease colleges—or land-grant colleges, that all these things would end up giving people tools to improve themselves and thereby improve the country. And we couldn't all do it alone. We had to do it with each other.

This wasn't just a Democratic idea. Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System. Teddy Roosevelt started our national parks. These are basic ideas that made America work. They're not partisan. So I'm going to keep on working with Republicans and Democrats to try to get things moving over there.

In the meantime, I'm not going to stand by while partisan gridlock or political games threaten the hard work of millions of Americans. So, wherever and whenever I can go ahead and help families like yours—I've got the legal authority to do it—I'm going to do it.

I'm not going to wait. [*Applause*] Not going to wait.

That's why I've taken a bunch of actions this year just to help working Americans while still reaching out to Congress. What I've said to them is, if you're not acting, I'm going to go ahead and do what I can.

So, if Congress won't act to make sure woman—women have the ability to get equal pay for equal work, I made sure that women had the protections they need to fight for fair pay in the workplace. I think when women succeed, America succeeds. We're going to keep on investing in that.

If Congress won't act to create jobs in construction or manufacturing, we're going to go ahead and speed up permits for big projects that are already funded and launch new hubs to attract more high-tech manufacturing jobs. Because I want to make sure the next revolution in manufacturing and technology is an American revolution, right here in the United States. I don't want it going to France or Germany or China. I want it to happen here.

If Congress won't act to help more young people manage their student loan debt so far—and Republicans voted against a bill that would have allowed young people to refinance at lower rates—I went ahead and gave nearly 5 million Americans the opportunity to cap their student loan payments at 10 percent of their income. I don't want them saddled with debt before they start out in life. I want to make sure that they're able to pursue a career in teaching or social work or work in a non-for-profit, and they can still afford it.

Republicans so far refuse to raise workers' wages. I did what I could. I'm—it turns out, I'm a pretty big employer. [*Laughter*] So I said, any Federal worker—anybody who works for Federal contractors, they're going to have to pay their employees a fair wage of at least \$10.10 an hour. And I asked business owners and Governors and mayors and State legislators to do what they could on their own.

And by at way, since I first asked Congress to raise the minimum wage, 13 States have gone ahead and raised theirs, and those States have seen higher job growth than the States

that haven't raised their minimum wage. And more and more business owners are choosing to lift wages for workers like Alex. America needs a raise. And when—by the way, when America needs a raise—I was talking to Carolyn, our sub owner, last night, and she made the simple point, look, I want tax cuts and raises for my workers and for others who don't have a lot because that means they're going to buy more sandwiches. I mean, I can already afford a sub sandwich. If you give me a tax cut, I'm not going to spend—I'm not going to buy more sub sandwiches; I can only eat so many. [Laughter] But that's true about the economy generally. When you give tax breaks and you give raises, you raise the minimum wage, you give a bigger chance to folks who are climbing the ladder, working hard, don't have a lot at the end of the month, that money gets churned back into the economy. And the whole economy does better, including the businesses.

Now, I gather that some of the Republicans in Congress are mad at me for going ahead and doing things. [Laughter] And I don't know which things they find most offensive, whether it's creating jobs or easing student loan burdens or raising wages, but it's really bothering them. They have a plan to sue me. They have plans to sue me for taking executive actions that are within my authority, while they do nothing.

I have a better idea. They should do something. I will work with them. Rather than engage in political stunts that waste time and taxpayer money, join me. Let's do some things together. Let's build some roads. Let's give America a raise. Let's help families with child-care costs. There are all kinds of things we can do. Don't be mad at me for doing something. How about teaming up with me? Let's all do something. Let's all get America working.

We are better than this. Gosh, aren't—doesn't it get you just frustrated? [Laughter] We could do so much more if Republicans in Congress focused less on protecting the folks who've got the lobbyists and all that soft money out there. Stop worrying about the folks who already got—are doing just fine. Focus more on stoking opportunity for all people. Work

with me. That's the American way. That's what makes this country great, a sense of common purpose and patriotism, an economic patriotism that says we fall and we rise as one Nation, as one people.

So we can rally America around an economic patriotism that says, don't give tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires, let's give more tax breaks to help working families pay for child-care or college.

Let's rally around a patriotism that says, don't give tax loopholes to corporations shifting jobs overseas, let's put people back to work here rebuilding our roads, our bridges, our airports, making sure the next generation of manufacturing is made in America. That's patriotism. [Applause] That's patriotism.

Don't stack the deck in favor of those who've already succeeded. We're stronger when we're helping everybody succeed, cultivating every talent of every child. Every 4-year-old in America, give them high-quality preschool so they're safe and taught well while we go to work, and redesign our high schools to prepare our kids for the 21st century. And tell every American, you know, if your job was stamped "obsolete," if it was shipped overseas, we're going to train you for an even better one.

We need an economic patriotism that says it's a good thing that everybody gets health insurance. That's not a bad thing. That's a good thing. It's a good thing when women are paid the same as men for doing the same work. That's not un-American. It's a good thing when parents have some flexibility when their kids are sick. It will make the employees more loyal; they're more productive. It's a good thing when nobody who works full time is living in poverty. That's not un-American. It's not radical. It's right. It's what built this country.

I know that sometimes, it must be frustrating watching what's going on. I guarantee, I get frustrated. There are some things that I have to mutter under my breath sometimes. [Laughter] And the hardest thing to change in politics is a stubborn status quo. And it's harder when Washington seems distracted by everything except the things you care about. And there's a cottage industry in Washington that counts on

you just being cynical about stuff so that you don't vote, you don't get involved, you get discouraged, you say a plague on both your houses. But you can't give into that cynicism. Do not let them win by you being cynical, because despite everything that's happened, despite all the obstruction, America is making progress.

We're better off now than we were 5 years ago. We're going to be better off 5 years from now than we are right now. Despite the unyielding opposition of a few, there are workers who have jobs who didn't have them before. There are families who have health insurance who didn't have them before. There are students who can afford to go to college who couldn't afford to go before. There are troops who are home with their families after serving tour after tour of war. Don't get cynical. Don't do it.

Cynicism is a popular choice these days. It's what passes off for wisdom. [Laughter] But cynicism isn't wise. And remember that it is a choice. Cynicism is a choice, and hope is a better choice. And it's a choice that I make every time I sit down with these incredible people

that I had dinner with last night. They make me hopeful.

It's the hope that Alex has when she sits down and she picks up a pen and she writes to the President hoping that the system still works; hoping maybe the letter gets there; hoping that I'll listen; hoping that even when Washington seems tone deaf, your voice might reach a President, your voice might reach a crowd in a park, your voice might move fellow citizens to change what needs changing.

Every day, I receive these thousands of acts of hope from you. I'm listening. It's why I ran for office. It's why I'm fighting for you. I will keep treating your cares and concerns as my own. I will keep trying to restore the American Dream for everybody who is willing to work for it.

Thank you, Denver. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. at Cheesman Park. In his remarks, he referred to Alex Dooley, an employee at a furniture upholstery store in Denver; small-business owner David Johnson, husband of Carolyn Reed; and former Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Lunch in Denver July 9, 2014

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. It is good to be back here. [Laughter] I love Colorado, love Denver. Everybody looks good in Denver too. [Laughter] I don't know what it is, the hair or sun, altitude? I don't know. [Laughter] It's just a bunch of good-looking people in Denver, Colorado. [Laughter]

We've got some great friends here, and I just want to mention some of them. First of all, nobody has a bigger heart, nobody did better work on behalf of the natural resources of this amazing country of ours, nobody has been a better friend to me than the person who just introduced me. Love him dearly. We came into the Senate together, and our lives have crossed paths ever since, and I'm so very, very

proud of him and Hope. So please give Ken Salazar a big round of applause.

To Maggie Fox and Tess Udall, thank you for putting up with somebody in politics. [Laughter] That's always rough, but you do it with grace, and we're so grateful to you.

To your wonderful former Governor, Bill Ritter, who continues to do great work on behalf of the environment. My dear friend, who was actually on the steering committee for my first race in '08, one of our national board members, Federico Peña, your former mayor. Somebody who helped begin the tradition of great Democratic Senators from Colorado, Gary Hart is here. There he is. Former Mayor Wellington Webb is here in the house. Andrew Romanoff, who is running for Congress, is