

NCCIC and DHS for the great job you are doing. You are helping to keep the Nation safe and secure.

And with that, we're going to get out of here so you can get back to work. Who knows what's

been happening while you've been paying attention to me? [Laughter] All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:10 p.m.

Statement on the Resignation of Acting Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality Michael J. Boots January 13, 2015

I want to thank Mike Boots for his service to the American people over the past 6 years, including his tenure as one of my top environmental advisers. It is no coincidence that Mike's leadership of the Council on Environmental Quality has coincided with historic national progress on climate change and conservation. His deep policy expertise and his work with mayors, Governors, and other local leaders have guided my actions to strengthen our Nation's infrastructure and address the

threats communities face from climate change. His leadership has helped me fulfill the pledge I made a year ago to protect the pristine and special places Americans care about, including by permanently preserving more than 260 million acres of environmentally and culturally significant lands and waters as national monuments. The country is better off because of Mike's contribution, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Remarks at Cedar Falls Utilities in Cedar Falls, Iowa January 14, 2015

The President. Hello, Cedar Falls!

Audience members. Hello!

Audience member. Welcome!

The President. Thank you. It's good to be back.

Well, first of all, give Marc a big round of applause for the introduction and the great work he's doing. I also want to thank Mayor Jon Crews as well as Jim Krieg and the whole team here at Cedar Falls Utilities for hosting us here today. Give them a big round of applause.

We've got our Commerce Secretary, Penny Pritzker, here, as well as Iowa Congressman Dave Loebsack and Attorney General Tom Miller. [Applause] Yay, Tom! And I was reminded by the president that we have to give a shout-out to a top-25 basketball team that you've got here in town. The president was lobbying me about putting them in my brackets. I said, it's a little early. [Laughter] I've got to kind of see what happens the second half of the season.

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. [Laughter] The Panthers are putting together a heck of a season again. And I think most folks learned a few years ago that when March rolls around, you do not bet against UNI.

Now, it's great to be back. I've seen a lot of good friends. Unfortunately, they're not giving me time to grab a beer down at the Pump Haus this trip, although I understand the mayor said he'd brought a Bud Light with me—or for me. The mayor brought a Bud Light, and he's trying to sneak it around Secret Service. [Laughter] But obviously, it's wonderful coming back to Iowa, even during winter, in fact, especially in the cold. These folks in Washington can't handle the cold. We know how to handle cold in the Midwest.

And here in Iowa, on a cold January caucus night about 7 years ago, we talked about change and said that it was time for us to move this country in a new direction. And obviously,

a lot has changed. I'm much grayer, for example. [Laughter]

As a country, we fought through the worst financial crisis and recession in our lifetimes. But the American people showed a lot of resilience and resolve. And there is no doubt about it: Thanks to the steps that we took early to rescue the economy, to rebuild it on a new foundation, America is coming back.

Last year was the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s. Unemployment fell in 2014 faster than any year since 1984. Our businesses have created more than 11 million jobs in the last 58 straight months. That's the longest stretch of private sector job growth in American history. Since 2010, America has put more people back to work than Europe, Japan, and every other advanced economy combined. And a lot of folks talk about some of the jobs are being created in the service sector, they're not paying as much. The truth is, American manufacturing is in its best stretch of job growth since the 1990s. Manufacturing is actually growing faster than the rest of the economy. Meanwhile, America is now the number-one producer of oil and gas in the world. And by the way, you're saving about a buck-20 a gallon at the pump over this time last year.

So these past 6 years were trying, demanded a lot of hard work, a lot of sacrifice on everybody's part. But as a country, we have a right to be proud about what we've got to show for it. America's resurgence is real, and we're better position than any country on Earth to succeed in the 21st century.

Now, on Tuesday, I'm going to deliver my State of the Union Address, and in my speech, I'm going to focus on how we can build on the progress we've already made and help more Americans feel that resurgence in their daily lives, with higher wages and rising incomes and growing our middle class. But since I only got 2 years in office left, I'm kind of in a rush—[laughter]—so I didn't want to wait until the State of the Union to share some of my ideas and some of my plans.

I've been traveling across the country rolling out some of these ideas: plans to help more families afford a home, plans to make more

students—can attend community college without loading up with debt, plans to make more workers find good jobs in high-tech manufacturing. And in the 21st century, in this age of innovation and in technology, so much of the prosperity that we're striving for, so many of the jobs that we want to create depend on our digital economy. It depends on our ability to connect and to shop and to do business and discover and learn online, in cyberspace.

So this week, I've been laying out new proposals on how we can keep seizing these opportunities in this Information Age, while at the same time protecting our security and our privacy and our prosperity and our values. On Monday, I announced new steps to protect American consumers from identity theft and make sure that your privacy is protected. Yesterday I spoke at the Department of Homeland Security about how we can work with the private sector to better defend American companies against cyber attacks.

Today I'm in Cedar Falls to talk about how we can give more communities access to faster, cheaper broadband so they can succeed in the digital economy. And I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. Today, high-speed broadband is not a luxury, it's a necessity. This isn't just about making it easier to stream Netflix or scroll through your Facebook newsfeed, although that's fun—[laughter]—and it is frustrating if you're waiting for a long time before the thing finally comes up. [Laughter] This is about helping local businesses grow and prosper and compete in a global economy. It's about giving the entrepreneur, the small businessperson on Main Street a chance to compete with the folks out in Silicon Valley or across the globe. It's about helping a student access the online courses and employment opportunities that can help her pursue her dreams.

And that's why, through the Recovery Act, when I first came into office and we were trying to make sure that we prevented a Great Depression, but also start building some foundations for long-term growth, we built or improved more than 113,000 miles of network infrastructure throughout the country. That's

enough to circle the globe more than four times. And we offered tax credits to help spur businesses to expand their networks. We've hooked up tens of thousands of schools and libraries and medical facilities and community organizations. And then, we launched something we call ConnectED, which trains teachers and spurs private sector innovation and is connecting 99 percent of America's students to high-speed Internet.

But—and this is why I'm here—we've still got a lot of work to do. Right now 98 percent of Americans have access to the most basic levels of broadband, and that's a good thing. But that number doesn't look quite as good when you look at the speeds we're going to need for all the apps and the videos and all the data and new software that is constantly coming onto market. We've got to keep pace. We've got to be up to speed.

Right now about 45 million Americans cannot purchase next-generation broadband. And those are—that next generation of broadband creates connections that are six or seven times faster than today's basic speeds. And by the way, only about half of rural Americans can log on at that superfast rate.

And if folks do have good, fast Internet, chances are, they only got one provider to pick from and today, tens of millions of Americans have only one choice for that next-generation broadband, so they're pretty much at the whim of whatever Internet provider is around. And what happens when there's no competition? You're stuck on hold. You're watching the loading icon spin. You're waiting and waiting and waiting. And meanwhile, you're wondering why your rates keep on getting jacked up when the service doesn't seem to improve.

Now, in Cedar Falls, things are different. About 20 years ago, in a visionary move ahead of its time, this city voted to add another option to the market and invest in a community broadband network. Really smart thing you guys did. [Applause] It was a really smart thing you guys did. And you've managed it right here at Cedar Falls Utilities. Then, a few years ago, you realized that customers were demanding more and more speed. All the movies, all the increased

data, Instagram—all this stuff suddenly is just being loaded up, and basically, you guys were like the captain in "Jaws," where he said, "We're going to need a bigger boat." [Laughter]

So having already made the smart investment 20 years ago, about 5 years ago you said, we've got to upgrade to a fiber network throughout the city and, eventually, with the help of some Federal funding, the surrounding rural areas as well.

So today, Cedar Falls is Iowa's first Gigabit City. Now, that sounds like something out of a Star Wars movie, Gigabit City. Here's what it means: Your network is as fast as some of the best networks in the world. There's Hong Kong, Tokyo, Paris, Cedar Falls. [Laughter] Right? That's the company you're keeping.

You are almost a hundred times faster than the national average—a hundred times faster. And you can log on for about the same price as some folks pay for a fully loaded cable bundle. So today, you've got small businesses like Marc's that are serving clients worldwide. Google named you the best city in Iowa for e-commerce. And what you're showing is that here in America, you don't have to be the biggest community to do really big things, you just have to have some vision, and you have to work together.

And we're seeing that same kind of innovation and that same kind of energy and foresight in communities across the country. In Lafayette, Louisiana, companies are bringing jobs to the city in part because of their fast, next-generation broadband network. In November, the people of Yuma County, Colorado, voted overwhelmingly in favor of a community broadband network. That's in the same election where 85 percent of folks just voted for a Republican Senate candidate. So this is not a partisan issue. It's not a red issue or a blue issue. Folks just want to know that they're at the cutting edge of this new economy. Folks around the Nation want these broadband networks. They're good for business. They're good for communities. They're good for schools. And they're good for the marketplace because they promote efficiency and competition.

Here in Cedar Falls, if you don't want the highest speed package, you can still choose between the Cedar Falls Utilities or options like Mediacom or CenturyLink. It's not like you don't have choices. You can pick the company that offers the best service at the lowest cost for your family's needs. That's how free markets and capitalism are supposed to work.

But here's the catch: In too many places across America, some big companies are doing everything they can to keep out competitors. Today, in 19 States, we've got laws on the books that stamp out competition and make it really difficult for communities to provide their own broadband the way you guys are. In some States, it is virtually impossible to create a community network like the one that you've got here in Cedar Falls. So today I'm saying we're going to change that. Enough is enough. We're going to change that so every community can do the smart things you guys are doing.

So not long ago, I made my position clear on what's called net neutrality. I believe we've got to maintain a free and open Internet. Today I'm making my administration's position clear on community broadband. I'm saying I'm on the side of competition. And I'm on the side of small-business owners like Marc. I'm on the side of students and schools. I believe that a community has the right to make its own choice and to provide its own broadband if it wants to. Nobody is going to force you to do it, but if you want to do it, if the community decides this is something that we want to do to give ourselves a competitive edge and to help our young people and our businesses, they should be able to do it.

And if there are State laws in place that prohibit or restrict these community-based efforts, all of us—including the FCC, which is responsible for regulating this area—should do everything we can to push back on those old laws. I believe that's what stands out about America, this belief that more competition means better products and cheaper prices. We do that with just about every other product. We ought to be doing it with broadband. It's just common sense.

And that's why leaders from 50 cities and towns across the country—it's a coalition called Next Century Cities—have pledged to bring next-generation broadband to their cities and towns. And that's why I'm announcing a series of additional actions to support their efforts and encourage more communities to follow your lead, Cedar Falls. I'm directing Federal agencies to get rid of unnecessary regulations that slow the expansion of broadband or limit competition. They're going to report back to me in 6 months. The Department of Commerce—Penny Pritzker, who is here—they're going to work to offer support and tactical assistance to communities that want to follow your lead and set up their own networks. USDA—the Department of Agriculture—is announcing new loan opportunities for rural providers. And this summer, I'll host mayors from around the Nation at a community broadband summit to chart the next steps that we need to take.

So that's what we're going to be doing. We're going to clear away redtape. We're going to foster competition. We're going to help communities connect and help communities succeed in our digital economy.

And the good news is, we know it works because of you. [*Laughter*] You guys were like the guinea pigs on this thing. You took a chance and you made something happen. And you're supporting the jobs of the future through faster, cheaper Internet. We want everybody to do that.

Now, I want to leave you with a story of another community that has done this as well. Chattanooga, Tennessee—it's an old railroad town—was once called the dirtiest city in the Nation. During the recession, they were hit harder than most places. But that did not stop them from building America's first citywide, high-speed, fiber network, right down the middle of downtown. It's as fast as what you guys have got here in Cedar Falls.

Today, a new generation of engineers and entrepreneurs have moved down to Chattanooga. Big businesses have set up shop. Volkswagen built a billion-dollar manufacturing plant. It's unleashing a tornado of innovation.

The city is even testing out futuristic technologies like 3-D holograms. And here's what their former mayor said: "It's like having"—"It's like being the first city to have fire." [Laughter] "We don't know all of the things we can do with it yet."

Yet. But think about that. And when you're first in something, when you figure something out, you may not know all the applications right away, but that's the spirit of America: imagining what might come next. We may not always know what's right around the corner, but we know we'll figure it out as long as we're bold and we go ahead and work together.

We've been through some very hard times. We didn't always know those hard times were coming, but we pulled together, we worked together, we relied on each other, we believed in each other, and we figured it out.

We're blessed with the greatest natural resource in the world—not corn—[laughter]—

but the pluck and the ingenuity and the willingness to take risks of the American people. And I'm absolutely confident, if we just give Americans the tools they need, if we just help lay the foundation and allow them to access the amazing opportunities and technologies at this moment in world history, we're not just going to continue recovering from a bad recession, we're going to ignite the next generation of American innovation. And it's going to start right here in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Marc Reifennath, president, Spinutech; William N. Ruud, president, University of Northern Iowa; Sen. Cory S. Gardner; and former Mayor Ron C. Littlefield of Chattanooga, TN.

Remarks at Charmington's Cafe in Baltimore, Maryland

January 15, 2015

Hello, everybody. I want to thank Amanda and the whole crew here at this wonderful coffee shop. And I also want to thank Vika and Mary, as well as the senior Senator from the State of Maryland, Barbara Mikulski.

We've had a great conversation about the announcements I'm making today and that I'll amplify in the State of the Union about how can we support working families so that they have the tools to succeed in this new economy.

Now, part of the reality of the new economy is that 60 percent of households have at—two people working, and if they've got kids or they've got an ailing parent, juggling both doing right by their families and making a living can be tough.

Now, one of the biggest problems that we have is that there are 43 million Americans who don't get paid sick leave, which, when you think about, is a pretty astonishing statistic. And that means that no matter how sick they are or how sick a family member is, they may find themselves having to choose to be able to

buy groceries or pay the rent or look after themselves or their children.

And part of the reason we wanted to have this conversation here was because Amanda, is part of the cooperative that opened this coffee shop, is really adamant, as a small business, in looking after their employees and providing paid sick leave, in making sure that they're paying above minimum wage. And what Amanda's found—and we've heard this from a lot of employers—is, is that when they make that investment in their employees it pays dividends because the employees are more productive, there's lower turnover, there's greater productivity. And in fact, both large and small companies, it turns out, end up being more profitable over the long term, because, typically, any organization and certainly business is only going to be as good as its people.

We had a chance to hear from Mary, who is a school nurse as well as a small-businesswoman, and Mary made the point that even now, she finds herself in a situation where during flu season, you've got a kid who is at school, has a