

Jan. 22 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

pluralism, diversity, and the freedoms of religion and expression. Moreover, when the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Jews are repressed, the rights and freedoms of other minorities and other sectors are often not far behind. For all these reasons, combating anti-Semitism

is an essential responsibility for all of us. Every nation, every region, and every community must do its part. I call on the members of the U.N. General Assembly to lend their voice to this struggle and pledge the unwavering support of the United States as we wage this fight together.

Statement on the Death of Former Senator Wendell H. Ford *January 22, 2015*

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former Senator Wendell Ford. A veteran, businessman, Governor, and four-term Senator, Wendell dedicated his life to the people of Kentucky. He believed deeply in fairness: everyone doing their part, everyone getting a fair shot. A formidable political strategist, he fought to make sure all Americans had equal access to the polls, championed paying workers a decent wage and extending a helping hand to

those looking for work, and mentored scores of young people who entered public service with Wendell's advice and support. Few in politics were as admired as he, and few have had as great an impact on his beloved Kentucky. Wendell leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of service and a Commonwealth and country that are stronger and fairer thanks to him. Michelle and I send our condolences to his wife Jean and all the members of the Ford family.

Statement on the Death of King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia *January 22, 2015*

It is with deep respect that I express my personal condolences and the sympathies of the American people to the family of King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz and to the people of Saudi Arabia. King Abdallah's life spanned from before the birth of modern Saudi Arabia through its emergence as a critical force within the global economy and a leader among Arab and Islamic nations. He took bold steps in advancing the Arab Peace Initiative, an endeavor that will outlive him as an enduring contribution to the search for peace in the region. At home, King Abdallah's vision was dedicated to the ed-

ucation of his people and to greater engagement with the world.

As our countries worked together to confront many challenges, I always valued King Abdallah's perspective and appreciated our genuine and warm friendship. As a leader, he was always candid and had the courage of his convictions. One of those convictions was his steadfast and passionate belief in the importance of the U.S.-Saudi relationship as a force for stability and security in the Middle East and beyond. The closeness and strength of the partnership between our two countries is part of King Abdallah's legacy. May God grant him peace.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors *January 23, 2015*

Thank you! Hey! Good to see you, mayors. Good to see you. All right, everybody, have a seat, have a seat. I would have thought that would bring back bad memories for Kevin, playing that song. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Kevin for that introduction. I have to say that that introduction is longer than my remarks and more exciting. *[Laughter]* So I'm feeling a little outshone here by Kevin. But as everybody knows, Kevin has that

flair about him; he did when he was a professional basketball player. He, not surprisingly, has brought that flair to his outstanding work in Sacramento, and we're very, very proud of him. So I just want to thank him for his outstanding leadership, as well as the introduction. Give Kevin a big round of applause.

I want to thank Stephanie Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore and Mayor Mick Cornett of Oklahoma City for their leadership as well. We are very proud of them. And I want to just thank all of you.

We've got—is that playing again, Kevin? [Laughter] We've got over 200 mayors here, representing tens of millions of Americans. And I think as you've seen today, we take our partnership with you seriously because you're often the place where change happens fastest. That's one of the reasons why I named—two of my Cabinet members happen to be former mayors; a former president of this conference, Jerry Abramson of Louisville, is one of my top advisers.

The other night, I talked about what we can do together to make sure that middle class economics helps more Americans get ahead in the new economy. And that's something we want to partner with you on as well. And in some areas—in fact, many areas—we already have.

Last year, we kicked off the Mayors' Maker Challenge to support local entrepreneurs working to create the industries and jobs of the future. And Mayor Greg Fischer of Louisville stepped up. Now students and engineers are creating smarter appliances at a community space in town, and hundreds of folks are getting trained for local software development jobs.

We've worked with some of you to raise the minimum wage without waiting for Congress. And more than 20 cities and counties have stepped up to raise the wage since 2013. Some have passed sick leave laws as well, and I want to help more of you do that. We launched the Mayors' Challenge To End Veterans Homelessness. And Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans stepped up. Just a few weeks ago, New Orleans became the first major city to wipe out homelessness among veterans, and we could not be

prouder of them. Thank you. And Mayor Greg Stanton in Phoenix, Mayor Ralph Becker in Salt Lake City are closing in on that goal as well.

We issued a "My Brother's Keeper" Community Challenge to create more pathways of success for boys and young men of color, and all young people, and over 150 local and tribal leaders have stepped up. So in Birmingham, Mayor William Bell and business leaders have created a mentoring program. In New Haven, Mayor Toni Harp is canvassing neighborhoods along with police, teachers, and firefighters to connect kids with services and support.

So that's what mayors do. They get things done. They make things happen. And on other urgent issues, like responding to climate change or getting more families insured, rebuilding infrastructure, making sure that our youngest Americans get the best start in life with quality pre-K, mayors like you are helping to get it done. And we want to help.

So I had a chance to meet some folks earlier before I came out here, and I just emphasized to them what I always do whenever I'm at a Mayors Conference, and that is to emphasize that we are here in large part to make sure that you are able to achieve your goals. Because if cities are successful, then America is going to be successful. That's not disrespect towards suburbs, that's not disrespect towards rural communities. The truth is, in every State of our Union, the city and its health becomes a bellwether for how well the State as a whole is doing. And that's true around the world as well.

What we know now is that successful cities and metropolitan areas end up being the engines by which communities and States and ultimately nations succeed. And what I also say whenever I meet with mayors is that I have confidence in you because the fact is that you can't afford to be ideological. I don't care whether you're Republican, Democratic, or Independent, the truth of the matter is, folks want to make sure that their garbage is picked up, that their roads are functioning properly and traffic isn't sucking away their days. They want to make sure that their schools are high

quality, and they want to make sure that their streets are free from crime.

And so you don't have the luxury of just yacking instead of doing. [Laughter] Because at some point, people are going to ask, what are you getting done? And that, in this town, is always refreshing—[laughter]—and I think presents enormous opportunities, which is part of the reason why our Cabinet members are always so excited to present to you what they're doing and to find out what's working for you.

Because my instructions to my Cabinet over these last 2 years is that we want to squeeze every possible opportunity to do some good from this fourth quarter. And a lot of stuff happens in the fourth quarter. [Laughter] And one of the most promising avenues for us is to partner with you and help you do some of the terrific things you're already doing and help you with visions of things that you want to do in the future.

And I can guarantee you that we will not only partner with you aggressively, but we're also

going to be creative and show flexibility. And if you have ideas that don't neatly fit into what's already being done, we're going to try to come up with answers to make sure that you can succeed.

All right? So thank you all for being here. Thank you for the great work that you are doing. With that, I'm going to take a couple of questions, but I think we're going to ask our fourth estate just to step out 1 second so we can let our hair down, as they say. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:54 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Kevin M. Johnson of Sacramento, CA; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro, in his former capacity as mayor of San Antonio, TX; Secretary of Transportation Anthony R. Foxx, in his former capacity as mayor of Charlotte, NC; and Jerry E. Abramson, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President's Weekly Address January 24, 2015

Hi, everybody. This week, in my State of the Union Address, I talked about what we can do to make sure middle class economics helps more Americans get ahead in the new economy.

See, after some tough years, and thanks to some tough decisions we made, our economy is creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999. Our deficits are shrinking. Our energy production is booming. Our troops are coming home. Thanks to the hard work and resilience of Americans like you, we've risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth.

Now we have to choose what we want that future to look like. Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and rising chances for everyone who makes the effort?

I believe the choice is clear. Today, thanks to a growing economy, the recovery is touching more and more lives. Wages are finally starting

to rise again. Let's keep that going. Let's do more to restore the link between hard work and growing opportunity for every American. That's what middle class economics is: the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules.

Middle class economics means helping workers feel more secure in a world of constant change, making it easier to afford childcare, college, paid leave, health care, a home, and retirement. Middle class economics means doing more to help Americans upgrade their skills through opportunities like apprenticeships and 2 years of free community college so we can keep earning higher wages down the road. Middle class economics means building the most competitive economy in the world by building the best infrastructure, opening new markets so we can sell our products around the world and investing in research so that businesses keep creating good jobs right here.