

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.

And we can afford to do these things by closing loopholes in our Tax Code that stack the decks for special interests and the super-rich and against responsible companies and the middle class.

This is where we have to go if we're going to succeed in the new economy. I know that there are Republicans in Congress who disagree with my approach, and I look forward to hearing their ideas for how we can pay for what the middle class needs to grow. But what we can't do is simply pretend that things like childcare or college aren't important or pretend there's nothing we can do to help middle class families get ahead.

Statement on the Death of Ernie Banks *January 24, 2015*

Michelle and I send our condolences to the family of Ernie Banks and to every Chicagoan and baseball fan who loved him. Ernie came up through the Negro Leagues, making \$7 a day. He became the first African American to play for the Chicago Cubs and the first number one player on the team retired. Along the way, he became known as much for his 512 home runs and back-to-back National League MVPs as for his cheer, his optimism, and his love of the game.

As a Hall of Famer, Ernie was an incredible ambassador for baseball and for the city of Chi-

cago. He was beloved by baseball fans everywhere, including Michelle, who, when she was a girl, used to sit with her dad and watch him play on TV. And in 2013, it was my honor to present Ernie with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Somewhere, the sun is shining, the air is fresh, his team's behind him, and Mr. Class—"Mr. Cub"—is ready to play two.

Because we've got work to do. As a country, we have made it through some hard times. But we've laid a new foundation. We've got a new future to write. And I'm eager to get to work.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:05 a.m. on January 22 in Room 1440A (Soccer Locker Room) of the Anschutz Sports Pavilion at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS, for broadcast on January 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 23, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 24.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Statement on the Death of Haruna Yukawa *January 24, 2015*

The United States strongly condemns the brutal murder of Japanese citizen Haruna Yukawa by the terrorist group ISIL. Our condolences today are with the people of Japan for their terrible loss. We renew our call for the immediate release of Kenji Goto and all other remaining hostages. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our ally Japan and applaud its commitment to peace and development in a region far from its shores. We will work together

to bring the perpetrators of these murders to justice and will continue to take decisive action to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL.

NOTE: The statement referred to freelance journalist Kenji Goto, who traveled to Raqqa, Syria, in October 2014 to plead for Mr. Yukawa's release, and was subsequently taken hostage by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.