

continue in effect for 1 year beyond August 17, 2015.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

## The President's Weekly Address

*August 8, 2015*

Hi, everybody. The right to vote is one of the most fundamental rights of any democracy. Yet, for too long, too many of our fellow citizens were denied that right, simply because of the color of their skin.

Fifty years ago this week, President Lyndon Johnson signed a law to change that. The Voting Rights Act broke down legal barriers that stood between millions of African Americans and their constitutional right to cast a ballot. It was and still is one of the greatest victories in our country's struggle for civil rights.

But it didn't happen overnight. Countless men and women marched and organized, sat in and stood up, for our most basic rights. For this they were called agitators and un-American; they were jailed, and they were beaten. Some were even killed. But in the end, they reaffirmed the idea at the very heart of America: that people who love this country can change it.

Our country is a better place because of all those heroes did for us. But as one of those heroes, Congressman John Lewis, reminded us in Selma this past March, "There is still work to be done." Fifty years after the Voting Rights Act, there are still too many barriers to vote and too many people trying to erect new ones. We've seen laws that roll back early voting, force people to jump through hoops to cast a ballot, or lead to legitimate voters being improperly purged from the rolls. Over the years,

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

we've seen provisions specifically designed to make it harder for some of our fellow citizens to vote. In a democracy like ours, with a history like ours, that's a disgrace.

That's why, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, I'm calling on Congress to pass new legislation to make sure every American has equal access to the polls. It's why I support the organizers getting folks registered in their communities. And it's why, no matter what party you support, my message to every American is simple: Get out there and vote, not just every 4 years, but every chance you get. Because your elected officials will only heed your voice if you make your voice heard.

The promise that all of us are created equal is written into our founding documents, but it's up to us to make that promise real. Together, let's do what Americans have always done: Let's keep marching forward, keep perfecting our Union, and keep building a better country for our kids.

Thanks, everybody. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:30 a.m. on August 7 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on August 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 8.

## Statement on the Health of Former President Jimmy Carter

*August 12, 2015*

Michelle and I send our best wishes to President Carter for a fast and full recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with Rosalynn and the

entire Carter family as they face this challenge with the same grace and determination that they have shown so many times before. Jimmy,

you're as resilient as they come, and along with the rest of America, we are rooting for you.

NOTE: The statement referred to former First Lady Rosalynn Smith Carter.

## The President's Weekly Address *August 15, 2015*

Hi, everybody. It's now been a year since the tragic death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. His death—along with the events in Cleveland, Staten Island, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and other communities—sparked protests and soul searching all across our country. Over the past year, we've come to see, more clearly than ever, the frustration in many communities of color and the feeling that our laws can be applied unevenly.

After Ferguson, I said that we have to face these issues squarely. I convened a Task Force on community policing to find commonsense steps that can help us drive down crime and build up trust and cooperation between communities and police, who put their lives on the line every single day to help keep us safe. And I've met personally with rank and file officers to hear their ideas.

In May, this Task Force made up of police officers, activists, and academics proposed 59 recommendations: everything from how we can make better use of data and technology, to how we train police officers, to how law enforcement engages with our schools. And we've been working with communities across America to put these ideas into action.

Dozens of police departments are now sharing more data with the public, including on citations, stops and searches, and shootings involving law enforcement. We've brought together leaders from across the country to explore alternatives to incarceration. The Justice Department has begun pilot programs to help police use body cameras and collect data on the use of force. This fall, the Department will award more than \$160 million in grants to support law enforcement and community organizations that are working to improve policing. And all across the country—from States like Illinois and Ohio, to cities like Philadelphia, Boston, and Nashville—local leaders are working to implement the Task Force recommenda-

tions in a way that works for their communities.

So we've made progress. And we'll keep at it. But let's be clear: The issues raised over the past year aren't new, and they won't be solved by policing alone. We simply can't ask our police to contain and control issues that the rest of us aren't willing to address as a society. That starts with reforming a criminal justice system that too often is a pipeline from inadequate schools to overcrowded jails, wreaking havoc on communities and families all across the country. So we need Congress to reform our Federal sentencing laws for nonviolent drug offenders. We need to keep working to help more prisoners take steps to turn their lives around so they can contribute to their communities after they've served their time.

More broadly, we need to truly invest in our children and our communities so that more young people see a better path for their lives. That means investing in early childhood education, job training, pathways to college. It means dealing honestly with issues of race, poverty, and class that leave too many communities feeling isolated and segregated from greater opportunity. It means expanding that opportunity to every American willing to work for it, no matter what ZIP Code they were born into.

Because, in the end, that's always been the promise of America. And that's what I'll keep working for every single day that I'm President. Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:10 a.m. on August 7 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on August 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 14, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 15.