

The bill also fails to adopt many essential defense reforms, including to force structure, weapons systems, and military health care. Our defense strategy depends on investing every dollar where it will have the greatest effect. My Administration's proposals will accomplish this through critical reforms that divest unneeded force structure, slow growth in compensation, and reduce wasteful overhead. The restrictions in the bill would require the Department of Defense to retain unnecessary force structure and weapons systems that we

cannot afford in today's fiscal environment, contributing to a military that will be less capable of responding effectively to future challenges.

Because of the manner in which this bill would undermine our national security, I must veto it.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 22, 2015.

Remarks at the Democratic National Committee Women's Leadership Forum Annual Issues Conference October 23, 2015

The President. Hello, Democrats! Hello! Well——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you too. Thank you. All right, if you have a seat, have a seat. Some of you don't, so—[*laughter*]. It is so good to be with all of you. Now, look, I like being in a room of Democrats, generally. I especially like being in a room of Democratic women. [*Laughter*]

Let me begin by saying that nobody works harder to strengthen this party up and down the ballot, in all 50 States, than our chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz. And Debbie is—couldn't be here today because she's working to build up our party in Tennessee. She is relentless. She's got incredible partners in the CEO of the DNC, Amy Dacey—where's Amy? She's around here somewhere. Give Amy a big round of applause. She's working hard. And the Women's Leadership Forum cofounders, Cynthia Friedman and Carol Pinsky.

So it is good to see all of you. Many of you have been friends for a long time, and then, there are some of you who were 4 when I—[*laughter*—first ran for the Presidency. She's all, like, no, I was 5. [*Laughter*] The point, though, is, is that all of you are working hard to make sure that our party and our country moves forward.

And for the younger people here—let me refresh your memory—when we came togeth-

er 7 years ago, we did so not just to elect a President, but to reaffirm our faith in that most fundamental, basic American ideal that people who love this country can change it. A lot of you were involved in that movement. A lot of you have stayed involved ever since. And that faith sometimes has been tested: by war and recession and by politics and by obstruction and by a lot of cynics who said it was foolish for us to keep believing, that it was naive for us to keep on trying. But thanks to folks like you, thanks to Americans like you, this country is moving forward.

I mean, just think about the path we've traveled. What——

[*At this point, a baby cried out.*]

Yes! Yes. [*Laughter*] When I took office, we were losing 800,000 jobs a month, unemployment rate was on its way to 10 percent. Today, during the course of the longest streak of job growth on record, our businesses have created 13.2 million new jobs; unemployment is now at 5.1 percent.

When I took office, more than 15 percent of Americans went without the security of health insurance. Today, we've covered another 17 million Americans. For the first time on record, more than 90 percent of Americans have coverage. And for everybody who already had coverage, now insurance companies can't

discriminate because of a preexisting condition or charge women more just for being a woman.

When I took office, we were hopelessly addicted to foreign oil. We've cut our oil imports by half. We have doubled the production of clean energy, tripled the amount of wind power we generate; 20 times more solar energy is now created than when I came into office. And all that is generating good jobs that can't be outsourced and helping the environment.

When I took office, our influence around the world was at a nadir, our standing was diminished. Today, America is leading the world in confronting new threats, making sure Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon. America is leading the world in global action on climate change. America is leading the world to write smarter and stronger trade rules for the 21st century. We've begun a new chapter of engagement with the Cuban people. We have brought thousands of our brave troops home to be with their brave families.

So we've made incredible progress on just about every front. You can't find a part of our economic life where we haven't seen significant progress. But we've come here today because we know we still got work to do. We can't just be complacent. We can't rest on our laurels. When cynics told us we couldn't change this country, they were wrong. But we know we've still got work to do.

Marriage equality is now a reality in all 50 States. But we've still got work to do to make sure that our LGBT community is getting fair treatment on the job. High school graduation rates are up, and college graduation rates are up. But we still have to help young people be able to go to college without burdening—being burdened by a mountain of debt. Manufacturing is up. But we still have to do more to make sure that we're training our folks to get these new manufacturing jobs. Our deficits are down. But we've got to make sure that we are making the investments that we need to grow in the future. Our carbon pollution is down. But we're not moving as fast as we need to control climate change. Teen pregnancy rates are down. But we've got a lot of folks who are attacking the right of women just to have basic

health care in this country and to be able to make decisions about reproductive freedom without having some Member of Congress or some Governor or some other elected official try to intrude.

Now, the point is, overall, though, we're making enormous progress. And it does make you wonder, why is it that Republican politicians are so down on America? [Laughter] Have you noticed that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I mean, they are gloomy. [Laughter] They're like Grumpy Cat. [Laughter] Everything is terrible, according to them. We're doomed! [Laughter] I mean, I know it's political season, but you listen to them, and they've constructed this entire separate reality. It's like the "Twilight Zone." [Laughter] And according to their story, their narrative, everything was terrific back in 2008—[laughter]—when unemployment was skyrocketing and uninsured rates were rising and folks were losing their homes and their jobs and we were engaged in two wars and bin Laden was still at large. If you were listening to them, those were like the good old days. [Laughter] The golden years. And then, I came in, and the Democrats came in—[applause]—no, but according to them, that's when everything all went to heck. [Laughter]

Which is strange. I mean, it's a hard argument to make. [Laughter] There was an article, I think, in the New York Times today, or maybe it was yesterday, where they pointed out that it's very hard for them to make the arguments they make about tax cuts for the wealthy and doing the same stuff that they've been promoting and trying to eliminate regulations on the big banks and all that when the empirical evidence shows that when Democrats control the White House and we've got a Democratic Congress, the economy does better; and when they're in charge, it does worse. [Laughter]

I mean, you just look at the facts. Don't take my word for it. Go back, take a look at, all right, here's Bill Clinton's Presidency, and then, there's Bush Presidency, and then, there's my Presidency, and take a look. [Laughter]

And you've got to feel bad for the fact checkers for the Republicans because they've

got to spend hours trying to keep up with some of the crazy stuff that their candidates are claiming. And the reason they have to make up stuff is because they don't have a record to run on. They're offering the same policies that caused so many problems in the first place. They ran on them in 2008. They ran on them in 2012. They're running on them now: more tax cuts for the folks at the very top. Although there is no economic evidence to show that that would grow the economy, they say that's going to grow the economy. Nobody believes it, no economists think it—[laughter]—but they insist on it.

Fewer investments in things like education, even though there's no evidence that that would actually improve the lives of the American people. There's a lot of evidence it would make it worse. They want to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which I know is a shocking development. [Laughter] Kick millions of hard-working Americans off their health insurance. They've been promising since we passed the Affordable Care Act that they would replace it with something better, except they can't come up with anything except to just have people uninsured.

They want to gut Wall Street reform and risk another crisis by letting the big banks run wild. They want to strip away regulations on polluters, saying that these are job killers, despite the fact, as I already pointed out—did I point out that job growth happens under Democratic administrations and was worse under their administrations? [Laughter]

And they even deny that the planet is getting warmer and that our climate is more dangerous. And this is despite evidence to the contrary. They are fighting tooth and nail to unravel new rules on power plants to protect the air that our kids breathe and reduce harmful carbon emissions. And I think what—the way they approach climate change is a good illustration of the problems that they're having. [Laughter]

Now, let's just take an example. If you went to 100 doctors, and 99 of them said you are really sick—[laughter]—you've got, let's say, high cholesterol—what would you do? Would you say those 99 doctors are crazy and part of a

wild-eyed socialist plot to prevent you from eating cheese? [Laughter] Or would you say, you know what, I'll bet those doctors know what they're talking about; I've got to modify my diet a little bit.

I mean, we laugh, but this—that's essentially how they're approaching this existential threat to our future. And the truth is, a majority of Republican voters disagree with their own party on this. Washington Republicans are alone on their own shrinking island. [Laughter]

So the point is, look, number one, we've got a lot of things to feel good about in this country. And it's a shame when politicians spend all their time trying to make people feel bad or, more typically, trying to make them feel scared, talking down the country all the time because it serves your politics. We don't have time for that. We've got more work to do. And Democrats are the one with the right ideas and the right plans to get the job done. We've got an optimistic vision about where this country can go—if—if the politics of obstruction and fearmongering are set aside. And if we start working together as a country, there's no problem we can't solve.

You've heard from some of our outstanding candidates. I'm going to be supporting whoever the nominee is, and I am confident—[laughter]—what are you laughing about? [Laughter] We've got some great candidates. But when you watched the debate between the Democrats, it was logical and civil, and people didn't agree with everything, but they weren't just saying crazy stuff. [Laughter] And they weren't dividing the country into "us" and "them" and tapping into people's worst impulses. It made me proud because it said that we've got a party that's inclusive and wants everybody to join and get involved and showed that we can disagree without being disagreeable.

As Democrats, our economic plans would actually grow the economy for everybody, not just for folks at the top. We should not even be thinking about something as ridiculous as shutting down our Government over Planned Parenthood. We should be talking about opening up new opportunities, investing in our schools, rebuilding the infrastructure that creates jobs,

investing in the research that alleviates hunger or cures cancer once and for all, like my Vice President Joe Biden said.

The—as Democrats, we’re spending time thinking about the concrete challenges that families face. So we have family leave plans that would actually guarantee family leave. We have plans to raise people’s wages rather than trying to suppress people’s wages. Our plans make sure that women are paid fairly for doing the same work as men, which is why we vote for, not against, a law that would make sure women are paid fairly for doing the same work as men.

As Democrats, our plans to combat climate change actually recognize the existence of climate change. [Laughter] And we see—and it’s not just a matter of trying to solve a problem—avert danger, it’s we see opportunity and jobs in moving to a clean energy economy. We want America to be out front. We embrace our responsibility to leave our kids with a safe, prosperous, habitable planet.

As Democrats, we’re proud that our plans to fix our broken immigration system are not rooted in anti-immigrant sentiment. They’re rooted in what we know to be our own immigrant stories. We understand that America’s greatness doesn’t come from building walls, it comes from building up opportunity.

Now, the good news is that there’s a broad consensus within our party about what needs to happen. And what’s also good news is, the majority of the American people agree with us. But there’s a danger coming up, and it’s something that we’re going to have to address, and that is complacency and cynicism.

A lot of times, it seems like our politics don’t reflect the common sense and decency that we see in our neighbors and our communities, in our friends. And it gets frustrating. We’ve got a system that too often rewards division and polarization and short-term thinking, and it rewards people for saying the most outrageous things, even though everybody knows they’re not true—[laughter]—but we think of it as entertainment somehow. And so attention-grabbing and controversy is rewarded, rather than folks who are rolling up their sleeves and deal-

ing with sometimes really complicated issues that don’t lend themselves to a sound bite.

And so people get cynical. And sometimes, folks just throw up their hands and say Washington doesn’t work, a plague on both your houses, everybody is dysfunctional. [Laughter]

Your job is to not succumb to that. Your job, more importantly, is to convince your friends and your neighbors and your communities, your States not to succumb to that. We can’t afford that. We’ve got too much work to do. Our system only works when we realize that government is not some alien thing; government is not some conspiracy or plot; it’s not something to oppress you. Government is us in a democracy. Government is us. The most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. It’s you.

And this has been the premise of my politics since we got to know each other, since I started running. [Laughter] I always have to remind people—when I ran for office, I didn’t say, “I’ve got this, go home.” [Laughter] I didn’t say, “Yes, I can.” I said, “Yes, we can.” I said, “Yes, we can.” Yes, we can. “We”—we, the people. Yes, we can.

Audience members. Si, se puede!

The President. Si, se puede.

So, moving forward, getting our unfinished business done does not depend on me, or Congress or the Democratic President that we intend to elect next year alone. It depends on all of us. It depends on what we, the people, do together.

And that’s why I’m so glad to see these young people here. Because I want you—I want the young people here to poke and prod and remind us, who are getting gray hair—I want you to remind us of that sense of possibility.

Audience member. I will. [Laughter]

The President. If you care about all the things that we fight for, you’re going to have to be active. You’re going to have to be involved. You’re going to have to be passionate. And it’s not just going to be at events like this. This is easy: coming to a fancy ballroom and schmoozing and listening to the President. [Laughter] We need you to go out and organize. We need

you to go out and mobilize. We need you to knock on doors. We need you to work on referendums and ballot initiatives. We need you to work at the local level and at the State level. We need you to inform people. You need to involve people. You need to turn them out to vote.

We've got to make sure that your friends across the country know where their leaders stand. And if they don't know, then inform them and make sure they're doing the right thing and hold them accountable. And if they're not doing the right thing, we've got to vote them out.

So, Democrats, we are at our best and America is at its best when we assume the best in others instead of the bad, when we're willing to try and recognize our own struggles and fears and hopes in other people. When we see some kid struggling to pay for college, we have to feel like that's our kid, or I remember how I had to struggle. When you see an immigrant hoping to contribute, that's my parent or grandparent or great-grandparent. Right? When you see that African American denied the right to vote, you understand, my democracy is at stake when that happens. When a work-

er is denied a living wage or equal pay for her efforts, that hurts everybody.

Their stories may not be exactly like ours, but we're in the same fight. We care about the same things. We believe in each other. And that's what makes me proud to be a Democrat. We are right on most policy issues. Our arguments are the right ones. But at our core, what I'm really proud of is the fact that we believe in this country that everybody has a fair shot, that everybody has got to be able to get ahead. That we've got a responsibility to uphold those highest ideals, to fight for everybody who hasn't had the same chances that we have. And leave a country to our kids where no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try.

That's what we stand for as Democrats. That's what we stand for as Americans. That's what's at stake in next year's election. That's why I need you to go out and get busy and get to work.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. at the Grand Hyatt Washington hotel.

Statement on the Resignation of General John R. Allen as Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL and the Appointment of Brett H. McGurk as Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL

October 23, 2015

I offer my profound gratitude to General John Allen as he prepares to depart his role of Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL next month. Thirteen months ago, I asked General Allen once again to postpone his well-earned retirement from government service, including nearly 38 years in the Marines, where he served our country in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond. I gave him an enormously complex assignment: to build from conception a robust international coalition that would undertake a wide range of political, diplomatic, military, economic, and

other efforts to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL.

General Allen has met that challenge with tremendous ability and courage. Thanks in large part to General Allen's tireless work, today the United States is leading a 65-member global coalition that is rolling back ISIL's territorial gains in Iraq and Syria, advising and assisting Iraqi security forces, constricting ISIL's financing, interdicting the flow of foreign fighters, helping stabilize liberated communities, and countering ISIL's heinous message. American leadership of this coalition is making the world a safer place, and we have been fortunate