

law enforcement, high-tech leaders, communities, faith leaders, and citizens. But we've got to keep on building up trust and cooperation that helps communities inoculate themselves from the kind of propaganda that ISIL is spewing out, preventing their loved ones—especially young people—from succumbing to terrorist ideologies in the first place.

And finally, one of our greatest weapons against terrorism is our own strength and resilience as a people. Now, that means staying vigilant. If you see something suspicious, say something to law enforcement. It also means staying united as one American family, remembering that our greatest allies in this fight are each other, Americans of all faiths and all backgrounds. And when Americans stand together, nothing can beat us.

Most of all, we cannot give in to fear or change how we live our lives, because that's what terrorists want. That's the only leverage that they have. They can't defeat us on a battlefield, but they can lead us to change in ways that would undermine what this country is all about. And that's what we have to guard against. We have to remind ourselves that when we stray—stay true to our values, nothing can beat us.

Statement on United States Policy Toward Cuba *December 17, 2015*

One year ago, I announced that after more than 50 years, America would change its relationship with Cuba and put the interests of the people of both countries before the outdated ways of the past. Since then, we have taken important steps forward to normalize relations between our countries: reestablishing diplomatic relations and opening Embassies; facilitating greater travel and commerce; connecting more Americans and Cubans; and promoting the free flow of information to, from, and within Cuba. We are advancing our shared interests and working together on complex issues that for too long defined—and divided—us. Meanwhile, the United States is in a stronger position to engage the people and governments of our hemi-

So anyone trying to harm Americans need to know—they need to know that we're strong and that we're resilient, that we will not be terrorized. We've prevailed over much greater threats than this. We will prevail again.

So I want to once again thank all of you at NCTC and every one of your home agencies across our entire Government for your extraordinary service. I want every American to know—as you go about the holidays, as you travel and gather with family and the kids open their presents, and as you ring in the new year—that you've got dedicated patriots working around the clock all across the country to protect us all. Oftentimes, they're doing so by sacrificing their own holidays and their own time with families. But they care about this deeply, and they're the best in the world. And for that, we're very grateful.

Thank you, everybody. Happy holidays.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:58 p.m. at the National Counterterrorism Center. In his remarks, he referred to Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, suspected perpetrators of the terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, CA, on December 2. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

sphere. Congress can support a better life for the Cuban people by lifting an embargo that is a legacy of a failed policy.

Today, the Stars and Stripes again fly over our Embassy in Havana. Today, more Americans are visiting Cuba and engaging the Cuban people than at any time in the last 50 years. We continue to have differences with the Cuban Government, but we raise those issues directly, and we will always stand for human rights and the universal values that we support around the globe. Change does not happen overnight, and normalization will be a long journey. The last 12 months, however, are a reminder of the progress we can make when we set the course toward a better future.

Over the next year, we will continue on this path, empowering Cubans and Americans to lead the way.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

The President's News Conference December 18, 2015

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. Clearly, this is not the most important event that's taking place in the White House today. There is a screening of "Star Wars" for Gold Star families and children coming up. So I'll try to be relatively succinct. Let me say a few words about the year behind us and the year ahead, and then I'll take a few questions.

As I look back on this year, one thing I see is that so much of our steady, persistent work over the years is paying off for the American people in big, tangible ways. Our early actions to rescue the economy set the stage for the longest streak of private sector job growth on record, with 13.7 million new jobs in that time. The unemployment rate has been cut in half, down to 5 percent. And most importantly, wages grew faster than at any time since the recovery began. So, over the course of this year, a lot of the decisions that we made early on have paid off.

Years of steady implementation of the Affordable Care Act helped to drive the rate of the uninsured in America below 10 percent for the first time since records were kept on that. Health care prices have grown at their lowest level in five decades, 17 million more Americans have gained coverage, and we now know that 6 million people have signed up through healthcare.gov for coverage beginning on January 1—600,000 on Tuesday alone. New customers are up one-third over last year. And the more who sign up, the stronger the system becomes. And that's good news for every American who no longer has to worry about being just one illness or accident away from financial hardship.

On climate, our early investment in clean energy ignited a clean energy industry boom. Our actions to help reduce our carbon emissions brought China to the table. And last week, in Paris, nearly 200 nations forged an

historic agreement that was only possible because of American leadership.

Around the world—from reaching the deal to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon to reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba, to concluding a landmark trade agreement that will make sure that American workers and American businesses are operating on a level playing field and that we, rather than China or other countries, are setting the rules for global trade—we have shown what is possible when America leads.

And after decades of dedicated advocacy, marriage equality became a reality in all 50 States.

So I just want to point out, I said at the beginning of this year that interesting stuff happens in the fourth quarter, and we are only halfway through.

I do want to thank Congress for ending the year on a high note. I got to sign an education bill that is going to fix some of the challenges that we had with No Child Left Behind and promises to invest more in high-quality early childhood education. We signed a transportation bill that, although not as robust as I think we need, still allows States and local governments to plan and actually get moving, putting people back to work rebuilding our roads and our bridges. We got Ex-Im Bank back to work supporting American exports.

And today they passed a bipartisan budget deal. I'm not wild about everything in it—I'm sure that's true for everybody—but it is a budget that, as I insisted, invests in our military and our middle class, without ideological provisions that would have weakened Wall Street reform or rules on big polluters.

It's part of an agreement that will permanently extend tax credits to 24 million working families. It includes some long-sought wins like strengthening America's leadership at the