

It was a reminder of what's good in this country. And I hope that's something that gives all Americans a sense of pride and a sense of hope as we go into our celebrations of our faith and our families and our country. All right?

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 p.m. in a classroom at Indian Springs High School.

The President's Weekly Address *December 19, 2015*

Hi, everybody. It's the most wonderful time of the year, not just for spreading holiday cheer, but also for list makers. You've got wish lists, Santa's lists, and of course, a blizzard of year-in-review lists. So I decided to get in on the action.

As a nation, we face big challenges. But in the spirit of 2015 retiree David Letterman, here—in no particular order—are my top 10 things that happened in 2015 that should make every American optimistic about 2016.

Number ten: the economy. Over the past 12 months, our businesses have created 2.5 million new jobs. In all, they've added 13.7 million new jobs over a 69-month streak of job growth. And the unemployment rate has fallen to 5 percent, the lowest it's been in almost 8 years.

Number nine: More Americans are getting health coverage. The rate of uninsured in America dropped below 10 percent for the first time ever. In all, 17.6 million people and climbing have gained coverage as the Affordable Care Act has taken effect. And don't forget, you can still sign up through January 31 at healthcare.gov.

Number eight: America's global leadership on climate change. Last week, in Paris, nearly 200 countries came together to set the course for a low-carbon future. And it was only possible because America led with clean energy here at home and strong diplomacy around the world.

Number seven: progress in the Americas. We turned the page on an outdated, half-century old policy by reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba and reopening Embassies in both our countries, allowing us to build greater ties between Americans and Cubans.

Number six: preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. We succeeded in forging a strong deal to stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. In fact, Iran has already dismantled thousands of centrifuges that enrich uranium.

Number five: standing strong against terrorism. Even as we continue to grieve over the attack in San Bernardino, we are leading a global coalition and hitting ISIL harder than ever. In Syria and Iraq, ISIL is losing territory, and we're not going to stop until we destroy this terrorist organization.

Number four: a 21st-century trade deal that makes sure our businesses can sell goods made in America across the Asia-Pacific. The Trans-Pacific Partnership is the strongest, most proworker, proenvironment trade agreement in our history. And it means that America—not China, not anyone else—will write the rules of the global economy for the century ahead.

Number three: a pair of Christmas miracles in Washington. This week, Congress passed a bipartisan budget that invests in middle class priorities, keeps our military the strongest in the world, and takes the threat of shutdowns and manufactured crises off the table for 2016. Plus, I signed a bipartisan education bill into law to help our students graduate prepared for college and their future careers.

Number two: Love won. No matter who you are, here in America, you're free to marry the person you love, because the freedom to marry is now the law in all 50 States.

And the number-one reason I'm optimistic going into 2016: It's you, the American people. All of this progress is because of you: because of workers rolling up their sleeves and getting the job done and entrepreneurs starting new businesses; because of teachers and health

workers and parents, all of us taking care of each other; because of our incredible men and women in uniform, serving to protect us all; because when we're united as Americans, there's nothing that we cannot do.

That's why it's has been a good year. And it's why I'm confident we'll keep achieving big things in the new year. So happy holidays, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:25 p.m. on December 17 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on December 19. In the address,

the President referred to David M. Letterman, former host, CBS's "Late Show With David Letterman." He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; H.R. 2029, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, which was approved December 18 and assigned Public Law No. 114–113; and S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act, which was approved December 10 and assigned Public Law No. 114–95. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 19.

Statement on the Persecution of Christians

December 23, 2015

During this season of Advent, Christians in the United States and around the world are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. At this time, those of us fortunate enough to live in countries that honor the birthright of all people to practice their faith freely give thanks for that blessing. Michelle and I are also ever-mindful that many of our fellow Christians do not enjoy that right and hold especially close to our hearts and minds those who have been driven from their ancient homelands by unspeakable violence and persecution.

In some areas of the Middle East where church bells have rung for centuries on Christmas Day, this year they will be silent; this silence bears tragic witness to the brutal atrocities

committed against these communities by ISIL.

We join with people around the world in praying for God's protection for persecuted Christians and those of other faiths, as well as for those brave men and women engaged in our military, diplomatic, and humanitarian efforts to alleviate their suffering and restore stability, security, and hope to their nations. As the old Christmas carol reminds us:

The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

The President's Weekly Address

December 25, 2015

The President. Merry Christmas, everybody! This is one of our favorite times of year in the Obama household, filled with family and friends, warmth and good cheer. That's even true when I spend all night chasing Bo and Sunny away from the cookies we leave for Santa.

It's also my favorite weekly address of the year, because I'm joined by a special holiday guest star: Mrs. Obama.

The First Lady. Merry Christmas, everyone. Here at the White House, we've spent the past month helping everyone get into the holiday spirit.