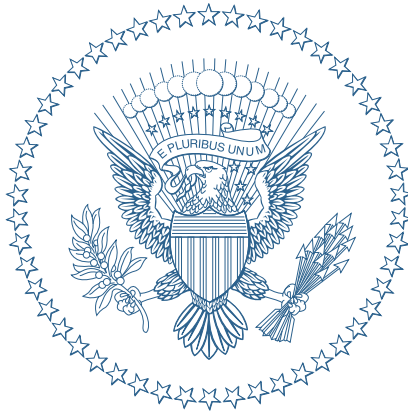


PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2015

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK II—JULY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2015

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Foreword

The second half of 2015 was a time of real progress in the lives of our citizens. The end of the year marked the strongest 2 years of private-sector job creation since the end of the last century—an achievement reflected in the unemployment rate, which held steady at 5 percent, and in what continued to be the longest streak of job growth on record. For the first time ever, more than 9 in 10 Americans had health insurance, including more than 17 million who had gained coverage thanks to the Affordable Care Act. And here at home and around the world, we led the effort to ensure a fairer, cleaner, and safer world for our children. As we prepared to turn the page on yet another chapter of extraordinary change, I looked toward the final full year of my Presidency feeling more hopeful than ever about America's promise.

In early November, I signed a bipartisan budget agreement that reflects our values, grows our economy, creates jobs, and keeps our people safe. The following month, I signed a tax and budget agreement that permanently extended important tax credits for working families, supported small businesses and companies investing in innovation, and made a landmark investment in clean energy. In December, I also signed a bipartisan education bill, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—that will help ensure every student is prepared to succeed in the 21st-century economy. Designed to replace a law that too often fell short in considering the needs of communities, ESSA establishes a new Federal-State partnership to focus on our national goal of ensuring all students graduate prepared for college and future careers, reduces unnecessary standardized tests, lays the foundation to expand access to high-quality preschools, and reaffirms our belief in the idea that education is a civil right that should be available to all our children—no matter their race or income or station in life.

During the summer, I became the first sitting President to visit a Federal prison—El Reno Federal Penitentiary in Oklahoma. My goal was to get a firsthand look at the challenges and opportunities we face in our criminal justice system. I met with six inmates in custody for drug offenses. Their stories deepened my own understanding about how we can make our criminal justice system fairer, smarter, and more effective, and make sure those who have paid their debt to society can earn a second chance. State legislatures across America are working more urgently on these issues, and my own Administration also drove progress in this area. We took steps toward “banning the box” for competitive service jobs at Federal agencies, announcing an intent to remove the question about having criminal records from job applications so that those who may have made a mistake have a chance to serve their fellow citizens. We also began a review of the overuse of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons. And because reform requires our addressing the long history of inequity in our country's criminal justice system, we continued to bring attention to the fact that, for too long, boys and young men of color have experienced being treated differently under the law. Justice means making sure every child knows that they are special and important and that their lives matter.

While we worked to improve life for our citizens here at home, we also joined with our partners around the world to expand prosperity and possibility. In the fall, 12 nations came together to advance the Trans-Pacific Partnership—a trade deal that would reflect our country's values, preserve our environment, set high standards for protecting workers, and enable America to rewrite the rules of global trade. The members of the agreement represent nearly 40 percent of the world's GDP, and the deal would help America's businesses sell our own goods and services around the world and help more American workers compete and win. As we sought to extend our reach in the Asia-Pacific, we also explored new frontiers, strengthening our commitment to discovery that has always fueled our Nation's progress. At the height of summer, NASA's New Horizons Spacecraft achieved a milestone on its nearly decade-long journey: it reached Pluto—a previously uncharted area of space—and sent high-resolution pictures of the icy mass back to us here on earth.

We also suffered extraordinary loss. Throughout the second half of the year our country experienced shootings at a military recruiting center in Chattanooga, a community college in Oregon, and a Planned Parenthood center in Colorado. Abroad, our oldest ally, France, again experienced an

outrageous attempt to terrorize its citizens—brutal attacks that killed over 100 people. Paris’s resolve was a testament to the values that will endure far beyond the hateful vision of the perpetrators of evil. Weeks later, America, experienced an attack on our own homeland, when two radicalized individuals shot 14 Americans in San Bernardino, California. This incident, yet another in the heartbreaking series of shootings that have plagued our Nation for far too long, demanded that we reflect on our own society and recommit ourselves to do all we can to keep our people safe.

The United States continued to lead the global coalition in our mission to defeat the terrorist group ISIL, hitting them harder than ever. And as the Syrian civil war continued to force families from their homes and seek refuge across the world, the United States increased the number of refugees we welcomed within our borders, because in the faces of suffering families, our nation of immigrants sees ourselves.

Extraordinary successes abroad helped pave the way for a more peaceful and sustainable future for generations to come. After 2 years of negotiations, we, along with our international partners, achieved a comprehensive, long-term deal with Iran that will prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon. This deal was an exemplary demonstration of the power diplomacy has to bring about real and meaningful change, cutting off every pathway for Iran to secure a nuclear weapon and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons in the region. To build on the progress we had made toward normalizing our relationship with Cuba, I announced that the United States would formally reestablish diplomatic relations—a historic step marked by the reopening of our embassy there and the Stars and Stripes flying over Havana for the first time in more than 50 years. And in December, leaders from nearly 200 nations came together in Paris to reach an agreement that reduces global carbon pollution and sets the world on a course to a low-carbon future. The Paris Agreement reaffirms the truth that with American commitment and leadership and collective action from the international community, we can solve the problem of climate change.

Reflecting on the year behind us, it was clear we had many reasons to feel optimistic about the direction our country was headed. As we enter 2016, I am ready to make use of every remaining minute of my Presidency, and I remain confident that the year ahead will hold continued, meaningful progress.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be Barack Obama's signature, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a circular loop and a long horizontal stroke.

Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period July 1–December 31, 2015. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless otherwise indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the printed Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the online Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compilation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Also included in the printed edition are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of John Hyrum Martinez, Director of the Publications and Services Division, Office of the Federal

Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit, Kimberly Tilliman, Supervisor. The Chief Editor of this book was Joseph K. Vetter; the Managing Editor was Joshua H. Liberatore, assisted by Amelia E. Otovo.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Publishing Office under the direction of Hugh N. Halpern, Director.

Oliver A. Potts
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

Contents

Foreword . . . v

Preface . . . vii

Cabinet . . . xi

Public Papers of Barack Obama,
July 1–December 31, 2015 . . . 857

Appendix A

Digest of Other White House Announcements . . . 1607

Appendix B

Nominations Submitted to the Senate . . . 1647

Appendix C

Checklist of White House Press Releases . . . 1657

Appendix D

Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register* . . . 1673

Subject Index . . . A-1

Name Index . . . B-1

Document Categories List . . . C-1

Cabinet

Vice President.....	Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Secretary of State.....	John F. Kerry
Secretary of the Treasury.....	Jacob J. Lew
Secretary of Defense.....	Ashton B. Carter
Attorney General.....	Loretta E. Lynch
Secretary of the Interior	Sarah M.R. “Sally” Jewell
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Penny S. Pritzker
Secretary of Labor.....	Thomas E. Perez
Secretary of Health and Human Services.....	Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.....	Julián Castro
Secretary of Transportation	Anthony R. Foxx
Secretary of Energy.....	Ernest J. Moniz
Secretary of Education.....	Arne Duncan
Secretary of Veterans Affairs.....	Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Homeland Security.....	Jeh C. Johnson
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Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.....	Regina McCarthy
United States Trade Representative.....	Michael B. Froman
Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Shaun L.S. Donovan
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Jason L. Furman

United States Permanent Representative to
the United Nations..... Samantha Power

Administrator of the Small Business
Administration..... Maria Contreras-Sweet

Administration of Barack Obama

2015

