

this year at Pearl Harbor. And it was on Pearl Harbor Day, and we really want to thank you. And it says on there, “For your great leadership, your service to our country, you’re truly a great role model for our young men.” We want them to be great leaders like you. And we thank you for everything you do for our country, and we welcome you to the ‘Nova nation with your Villanova jersey.

The President. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:23 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his re-

Remarks in Elkhart, Indiana June 1, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, hello, hello! Can everybody please give Kelly a big round of applause for the great introduction?

Oh, it is good to be back in Elkhart. Great to be back at Concord High School. Go Minutemen! I brought a couple of friends of with me: Your Senator, Joe Donnelly, is here; your mayor, Tim Neese, is here. I wanted to congratulate everyone graduating tomorrow. I just met a couple of the valedictorians, who seemed like outstanding young ladies. My older daughter Malia graduates next week. So if there are any parents here, I hope you can give me some pointers on how not to cry too much at the ceremony and embarrass her. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Carry some tissues!

The President. That’s what I’m going to do! If you’ve got a chair, sit down. Relax. I’m going to—I’ve got some stuff to say here. I—[*applause*].

Yes, so I’m not going to talk about the fact that my daughter leaving me is just breaking my heart. I’m not here to talk about that. I’m here to talk about the economy.

I don’t know that—if you’ve noticed, but this is an election year. [*Laughter*] And it’s a more colorful election season than most. It’s been a little unusual.

Audience member. One more term!

The President. No, I can’t do that. [*Laughter*] The Constitution prohibits it, but more importantly, Michelle prohibits it. [*Laughter*]

marks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; actor George T. Clooney; Daniel Ochefu, Kris Jenkins, Patrick Farrell, and Kevin Rafferty, forwards, Ryan Arcidiacomo and Henry Lowe, guards, and Roland Massimino, former head coach, Villanova University men’s basketball team; Marcus Paige, guard, University of North Carolina men’s basketball team; Felicia Jenkins, mother of Mr. Jenkins; former National Basketball Association players Christian D. Laettner and Charles Barkley; and 4-year-old Havertown, PA, resident Blaise Davis.

Now, one of the reasons we’re told this has been an unusual election year is because people are anxious and uncertain about the economy. And our politics are a natural place to channel that frustration. So I wanted to come to the heartland, to the Midwest, back to close to my hometown to talk about that anxiety, that economic anxiety, and what I think it means. And what I’ve got to say really boils down to two points, although I’m going to take a long time making these two points. [*Laughter*]

Number one, America’s economy is not just better than it was 8 years ago, it is the strongest, most durable economy in the world. That’s point number one.

Point number two: We can make it even stronger and expand opportunity for even more people. But to do that, we have to be honest about what our real challenges are, and we’ve got to make some smart decisions going forward.

Now, Elkhart is a good place to have this conversation, because some of you remember, this was the first city I visited as President. I had been in office just 3 weeks when I came here. We were just a few months into what turned out to be the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. Our businesses were losing 800,000 jobs a month. Our auto industry was about to go under. Our families were losing their savings and their health insurance, and as Kelly pointed out, they were in danger of los-

ing their homes. And Elkhart was hit harder than most. Unemployment here would peak at 19.6 percent. That means nearly one in five people here were out of work. And I told you then that I was going to have your back and we were going to work hard to bring this economy back.

So what's happened since then? Unemployment in Elkhart has fallen to around 4 percent. At the peak of the crisis, nearly 1 in 10 homeowners in the State of Indiana were either behind on their mortgages or in foreclosure; today, it's 1 in 30. Back then, only 75 percent of your kids graduated from high school; tomorrow 90 percent of them will. The auto industry just had its best year ever. And the "RV Capital of the World" is doing its part. The industry is set to ship nearly 400,000 RVs this year, which will be an alltime record.

So that's progress. And it's thanks to you: to the hard work you put in and the sacrifices you made for your families and the way that you looked out for each other. But we also wouldn't have come this far, Elkhart would not have come this far, if we hadn't made a series of smart decisions—my administration, a cooperative Congress—decisions we made together early on in my administration.

We decided to help the auto industry to restructure, and we helped families refinance their homes.

Audience member. Yes, you did!

The President. We decided to invest in job training so that folks who lost their jobs could retool. We decided to invest in things like high-tech manufacturing and clean energy and infrastructure so that entrepreneurs wouldn't just bring back the jobs that we had lost, but create new and better jobs, and folks who had lost work from the construction industry because the housing market had collapsed could go back to work rebuilding America.

And we can see the results not just here in Elkhart, but across the Nation. By almost every economic measure, America is better off than when I came here at the beginning of my Presidency. That's the truth. [*Applause*] That's true. It's true. It's true. Over the past 6 years, our businesses have created more than 14 mil-

lion new jobs. That's the longest stretch of consecutive private sector job growth in our history. We've seen the first sustained manufacturing growth since the 1990s. We cut unemployment in half, years before a lot of economists thought we could. We've cut the oil that we buy from foreign countries by more than half, doubled the clean energy that we produce. For the first time ever, more than 90 percent of the country has health insurance. So—[*applause*].

In fact, a poll that was out just last week says that two out of three Americans think their own family's financial situation is in pretty good shape. But we know a lot of people are still feeling stressed about their economic future. The pundits, they say one of the reasons the Republican Party has picked the candidate that it has—

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no booing. We're voting, we're not booing.

But if you watch the talking heads on TV, they'll say, the reason that folks are angry is because nobody has paid enough attention to the plight of working Americans in communities like these. That's what they say.

Now, look, I'm the first to admit my Presidency hasn't fixed everything. We've had setbacks. We've had false starts. We've, frankly, been stuck with a Congress recently that's opposed pretty much everything that we've tried to do. But I also know that I've spent every single day of my Presidency focused on what I can do to grow the middle class and increase jobs and boost wages and make sure every kid in America gets the same kind of opportunities Michelle and I did. I know that. I know that communities haven't been—communities like Elkhart haven't been forgotten in my White House. And the results prove that our focus has paid off. Elkhart proves it.

Now, where we haven't finished the job, where folks have good reason to feel anxious, is addressing some of the longer term trends in the economy—that started long before I was elected—that make working families feel less secure. These are trends that have been happening for decades now and that we've got to

do more to reverse. Let me be clear about what those are.

Despite the drop in unemployment, wages are still growing too slowly, and that makes it harder to pay for college or save for retirement. Inequality is still too high. The gap between rich and poor is bigger now than it's been just about any time since the 1920s. The rise of global competition and automation of more and more jobs; the race of technology—all these trends have left many workers behind, and they've let a few at the top collect extraordinary wealth and influence like never before. And that kind of changes our politics. So all these trends make it easy for people to feel that somehow the system is rigged and that the American Dream is increasingly hard to reach for ordinary folks. And there are plenty of politicians that are preying on that frustration for headlines and for votes.

Now, I am a politician for another 6 months or so, but I'm not running again.

Audience members. Aww.

The President. Yes. [Laughter]

Audience members. Four more years!

The President. Besides—no, look. Besides, while I may have won the State of Indiana just barely in 2008, I know I lost the vote in Elkhart. [Laughter] I definitely got whopped here in 2012. I know I don't poll all that well in this county. So I'm not here looking for votes.

I am here because I care deeply, as a citizen, about making sure we sustain and build on all the work that communities like yours have done to bring America back over these last 7½ years. And I came here precisely because this county votes Republican. [Laughter] That's one of the reasons I came here. Because if the economy is really what's driving this election, then it's going to be voters like you that have to decide between two very different visions of what's going to help strengthen our middle class. You're going to have to make that decision.

So let me be as straight as I can be about the choice of economic policies that you are going to face. And I'm going to start with the story that not every Republican, but most Republican candidates up and down the ticket are tell-

ing. And it goes something like this—and I think this is pretty fair, and if you don't, then you can look it up. So their basic story is: America's working class, America's middle class—families like yours—have been victimized by a big, bloated Federal Government run by a bunch of left-wing elitists like me. And the Government is taking your hard-earned tax dollars, and it's giving them to freeloaders and welfare cheats. And we're strangling business with endless regulations. And this Federal Government is letting immigrants and foreigners steal whatever jobs Obamacare hasn't killed yet. [Laughter]

Audience member. Don't believe it!

The President. No, no, look, I'm being serious here. I mean, that's the story that's been told. And I haven't turned on Fox News or listened to conservative talk radio yet today, but I've turned them on enough over these past 7½ years to know I'm not exaggerating in terms of their story. That's the story they tell. You can hear it from just about every Member of Congress on the other side of the aisle. And instead of telling you what they're for, they've defined their economic agenda by what they're against, and that's mainly being against me. And it's—and their basic message is antigovernment, anti-immigrant, antitrade, and, let's face it, it's antichange.

Audience member. Come on now!

The President. And look, a lot of people believe it. And if what they were saying were true, I suppose it would make sense to run on a platform of just rolling back everything we've done over these past 7½ years, and happy days would be here again. [Laughter] If what they were saying was true, then just being against whatever it is that we've done might make sense. But what they're saying isn't true. And if we're going to fix what's really wrong with the economy, we've got to understand that.

So let me just do some quick myth busting. [Laughter] And I'm going to start with the biggest myth, which is that the Federal Government keeps growing and growing and growing and wasting your money and giving your tax dollars to people who don't deserve it.

Now, here's the truth. You can look it up; these journalists here, they can do some fact checking. As a share of the economy, we spend less on domestic priorities outside of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—we spend less than we did when Ronald Reagan was President. When President Reagan or George W. Bush held this job, our deficits got bigger. When Bill Clinton and I have held this job, deficits have gotten smaller. Our deficits have not grown these past 7½ years, we've actually cut the deficit by almost 75 percent.

Moreover, there are fewer families on welfare than in the 1990s. Funding has been frozen for two decades. So there's not a whole bunch of giveaways going on right now. Aside from our obligation to care for the elderly and Americans with disabilities, the vast majority of people who get help from the Federal Government are families of all backgrounds who are working, striving to get back on their feet, striving to get back into the middle class. And sometimes, yes, their kids need temporary help from food stamps when mom and dad are between jobs. But look, these kids didn't cause the financial crisis. These kids aren't spending us into bankruptcy. They're not what's holding back the middle class. And by the way, neither is Obamacare.

Let's look at the numbers. Again, I just want to—I'm just giving facts here. I will have some opinions later, but right now I'm just giving facts. [Laughter] I signed the Affordable Care Act into law over 6 years ago. Since then, our businesses have created jobs every single month. We did this while covering 20 million Americans who didn't have health insurance; ending discrimination against preexisting conditions for everybody, including those who had health insurance; dramatically—[applause]—and dramatically slowing the rate at which health care costs were going up.

In the decade before Obamacare, employer-based premiums grew by an average of 8 percent a year. That meant you were paying that much more every year for health insurance. Last year, they grew by 4 percent, half as fast as they were growing. That doesn't mean you're happy about the 4 percent, but it wasn't

8. [Laughter] Today, the average family's health insurance premium is \$2,600 less than it would have been if premiums had kept on going up at the pace before Obamacare. And by the way, just for folks here in Indiana, last year, most Hoosiers who shopped around for Obamacare on healthcare.gov found plans that cost 75 bucks a month or less. For the millions of Americans who buy on healthcare.gov—they get tax credits to help them pay for it—the average price increase this year has been four bucks a month. It hasn't been a double-digit percentage hike. Four bucks a month.

But my bigger point is to bust this myth of crazy, liberal, Government spending. Government spending is not what is squeezing the middle class.

Myth number two is the notion that my administration has killed jobs through overregulation. And back in the sixties and the seventies, Government was adding all kinds of regulations: rules protecting workers' rights, rules protecting the environment. And these regulations to improve public health and safety, they didn't crush the economic growth that took place back in the sixties and the seventies, and they're not crushing economic growth now.

I've issued fewer regulations than my predecessor. I've issued fewer Executive orders than any two-term President since Ulysses S. Grant. That's a long time ago. The regulations that we have issued—rules to protect our air and our water, rules to keep families from getting cheated when buying a house or investing their savings—those rules have benefited our economy a lot more than they've cost. They've helped families, they've helped the middle class; they haven't hurt them.

Here's myth number three: Other countries are killing us on trade. Now, it is true that a lot of supporters of trade deals in the past sometimes oversold all the good that it was going to do for the economy. The truth is, the benefits of trade are usually widely spread. It's one of the reasons why you can buy that big, flat-screen TV for a couple hundred bucks—[laughter]—and why the costs of a lot of basic necessities have gone down. Some parts of the economy, like the agricultural sector or the

tech sector have really done well with trade. Some sectors and communities have been hurt by foreign competition.

And what's also true is, sometimes the pain of a plant closing here in America is magnified when you know that other countries are cheating. They're keeping American goods out of their markets; they're unfairly subsidizing their businesses to undercut our businesses. And a lot of the worst violators, they don't even have trade deals with us at all.

So what—here's what we've done. Over the past 7 years, we've brought more trade cases against other countries for cheating than anybody else. Every case that's been decided, America has won. That's what we've done: making sure that we've got a level playing field.

But the truth is, trade has helped our country a lot more than it's hurt us. Exports helped lead us out of the recession. Companies that export pay workers higher wages than folks who don't export. And anybody who says that somehow shutting ourselves off from trade is going to bring jobs back, they're just not telling the truth.

In fact, most of the manufacturing jobs that we lost over the past decade, they weren't the result of trade deals. They were the result of technology and automation that lets businesses make more stuff with fewer workers. If you go into an auto plant these days, used to need several thousand workers, now they need a thousand workers to produce the same number of cars, just because there are robots and there are machines that have replaced a lot of the work. That's true in offices too, by the way. Think about bank tellers, the last time you dealt with one of those, because now you've got ATM machines.

So we can't put technology back in a box any more than we can cut ourselves off from the global supply chain. All the RVs that are manufactured right here, I guarantee you, some of those parts came from someplace else. And then, we sell them back to other places—other parts of the world.

And no matter how many tariffs we're threatening to slap on other countries' goods, no matter how many trade wars we start saying

we're going to put in place, that's not going to help middle class families here. In fact, independent economists say a trade war would trigger another recession and cost millions of jobs. So when you hear somebody threatening to cut off trade and saying that that's standing up for American workers, that's just not true.

Here's the fourth myth: that immigrants are taking all of our jobs. Now I want to look—let's look at the numbers. Right now the number of people trying to cross our border illegally is near its lowest level in 40 years. [*Applause*] It's near its lowest level in 40 years. It's lower than when I came into office—than it was before I came into office, it's lower than during Ronald Reagan's time. It's true that new immigrants sometimes compete for service and construction jobs. But they also start about 30 percent of all new businesses in America.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. Everybody thinks that immigrants come here and then they're getting all this stuff from the government. Immigrants pay a lot more in taxes than they receive in services.

But most importantly, immigrants are not the main reason wages haven't gone up for middle class families. Those decisions are made in the boardrooms of companies where top CEOs are getting paid more than 300 times the income of the average worker. So deporting 11 million immigrants—not only is that a fantasy that would cost taxpayers billions of dollars and tear families apart and just, logistically, would be impossible. Even if it were possible, it wouldn't do anything to seriously help the middle class.

Audience member. The Donald is crazy! [*Laughter*]

The President. Mixing—so, so—now, what would help is if we fixed our immigration system the way I've proposed so that everybody plays by the rules, so that we've got strong border security. But we also are making sure that families who have been here, like, 10 years, 20 years, that they're out of the shadows, they're paying taxes, they're going through a background check. That would grow our economy faster. That would shrink our deficits further.

We just need a Congress that's willing to make it happen.

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. We need a Congress that's willing to make it happen.

So look, the—here's my main point: The primary story that Republicans have been telling about the economy is not supported by the facts. It's just not. They repeat it a lot—[laughter]—but it's not supported by the facts. But they say it anyway. Now, why is that? It's because it has worked to get them votes, at least at the congressional level.

Because—and here, look, I'm just being blunt with you. By telling hard-working, middle class families that the reason they're getting squeezed is because of some moochers at the bottom of the income ladder, because of minorities or because of immigrants or because of public employees or because of feminists—[laughter]—or because of—because poor folks who aren't willing to work, they've been able to promote policies that protect powerful special interests and those who are at the very top of the economic pyramid. That's just the truth.

I hope you don't mind me being blunt about this, but I've been listening to this stuff for a while now. [Laughter] And I'm concerned when I watch the direction of our politics. I mean, we have been hearing this story for decades: tales about welfare queens, talking about takers, talking about the "47 percent." It's the story that is broadcast every day on some cable news stations, on right-wing radio, it's pumped into cars and bars and VFW halls all across America and right here in Elkhart.

And if you're hearing that story all the time, you start believing it. It's no wonder people think big Government is the problem. No wonder public support for unions is so low. No wonder that people think that the deficit has gone up under my Presidency when it's actually gone down. No wonder that—they did a survey, a lot of White Americans think reverse discrimination is as big a problem as discrimination against minorities, even though Black unemployment is twice as high as White unemployment. And the typical Hispanic woman makes 55 cents for every dollar a White

man earns, and there are only a handful of women running Fortune 500 companies.

But that's the story that's been told. And I'm here to say, Elkhart, 7½ years since I first came here, we've got to challenge the assumptions behind this economic story. And the reason is, it has ended up dividing Americans who actually have common economic interests and should be working together for a better deal from the people who serve them. And it's made people cynical about government, and it's kept working families from pushing our political system to actually address our economic challenges in a realistic way. Families of all races and all backgrounds deserve higher wages. Families of all races and all backgrounds deserve quality health care and decent retirement savings. Every child in this country deserves an education that lets them dream bigger than the circumstances in which they're born.

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. You know, look, look—[laughter]. In today's economy, we can't put up walls around America. We're not going to round up 11 million people. We're not going to put technology back in the box. We're not going to rip away hard-earned rights of women and minorities and Americans with disabilities so that they're able to more fairly and fully participate in the workplace. These are permanent fixtures in our economy. And rolling them back will not help folks in Elkhart or anyplace else.

And if we're going to transform our politics so that they're actually responsive to working families and are actually growing the middle class, then we've got to stop pitting working Americans against each other. We're going to have to come together and choose a vision of America where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody does their fair share and everybody plays by the same set of rules. And that's the vision that made progress possible over these last 7 years. And that's what's going to lead us forward now.

Now, this isn't a State of the Union Address; I already gave my last one. [Laughter] But in the time remaining, I do want to offer some suggestions that I think would actually help

give everybody who works hard a fair shot at opportunity and security in today's economy. Yes—and you've heard some of these things before, but it's worth repeating because they're true.

Number one, let's get wages rising faster. Now, here's the good news: Wages are actually growing at a rate of about 3 percent so far this year. That's the good news. Working Americans are finally getting a little bigger piece of the pie. But we've got to accelerate that. That's why, for example, my administration recently took new action to help millions of workers finally collect the overtime pay that they have earned. That's going to help. But we should also raise the minimum wage high enough so that if somebody is working full time, they're not living in poverty. Some States, some cities have done it, but we need a national law. We should make sure women get equal pay for equal work. That's something we should all agree on. [Applause] That shouldn't be a partisan issue. That shouldn't be a partisan issue. Republicans got daughters too. [Laughter] They shouldn't want them to get paid less than somebody's boy for doing the same job. If you care about working families getting a bigger paycheck, then that's a clear choice for you right there.

We also need to give workers a bigger voice in the economy. Now, one of the reasons that wages have not grown faster over the last couple of decades is because some politicians, some businesses, some laws have undermined the ability of workers to bargain for a better deal, and that needs to change. We always talk about—folks talking about the good old days. Well, let me tell you something, in the good old days, 50 years ago, more than one in four American workers belonged to a union—one in four.

The reason all those manufacturing jobs that everybody wants to get back, the reason they paid well was because folks were unionized in those plants. And they not only negotiated for good benefits—good wages, but also good benefits, and they had a pension plan that they could count on. So it used to be one in four were members of unions. Today, it's about 1 in

10. And it's not a coincidence that as union membership shrank, inequality grew, and wages stagnated, and workers got a smaller share of the economic pie.

So I just want everybody to remember this: A lot of those good jobs people miss, a lot of those good manufacturing jobs that everybody is always talking about, those were union jobs. And when I—it's great to get all riled up about low wages and lousy workers' standards in others' countries, but let's get riled up about that stuff here too. America should not be changing our laws to make it harder for workers to organize, we should be changing our laws to make it easier and encourage new forms of worker organizations that can give them more of a voice and more of a say in the economy.

And by the way, I want to be clear: There are a lot of terrific business leaders who have figured out that doing right by their workers isn't just good for their workers, it's good for their bottom line, because that means they've got more customers. It means their communities are doing better. There are plenty of business owners right here in Elkhart who exhibited that spirit throughout the recession. So we should lift up good corporate citizens like that so that more businesses across America follow their lead. But that's priority number one: getting wages to grow faster.

Priority number two: We need to better prepare our children and our workers for the high-tech, high-wage jobs of tomorrow. Now, we actually know what works here, we just don't do it. We know early childhood education works. And we should invest in smart ways of doing it across the country, especially because child-care costs take up a huge share of a family budget. We know that we have to make college more affordable and job training more available. And one way to do that is to provide 2 years of community college for free for every responsible student. There are mayors and there are Governors who are already doing good work on these issues across party lines. They've shown the way. Now we need Congress to do the same.

Number three, one of the reasons wages grew so quickly in the fifties and the sixties and

the seventies is because we had a Government that put people to work building highways and building bridges and building airports and exploring new frontiers in space and science and investing in research and development. And it led to countless new discoveries and innovations, and it educated a new generation of workers with public colleges where tuition was low, and a GI bill.

And I just have to say, too often, Republicans in Congress are blocking investments like these for no other reason than this cult of small government that they keep repeating. But you know what, it's been a drag on the economy. It made us recover slower than we should have. It's been a drag on jobs. It's been a drag on wages. And it's penny wise and pound foolish, because if the economy is growing slower, you take in less tax dollars. You'd be better off putting people back to work. Then, they're paying taxes, the economy is getting stronger, and deficits can actually go down. We should be making smart investments that help us all succeed.

Fourth, in the new economy, we've got to make it easier for working Americans to save for retirement or bounce back from a lost job. Because let's be honest, most Americans don't have the same benefits package or job security as their Member of Congress. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying. They've got a pretty good deal.

That was part of what Obamacare is all about, right? What it did was fill in the gaps so that if you lost your job or you went back to school or you decided to start a new business, that you could go and compare and buy quality, affordable coverage and get a tax credit for it. And despite the predictions, it's working. And by the way, it would work ever better if we had more Governors and legislators willing to do what Mike Pence did, to his credit, and expand Medicaid. That was a decision that helped more than 300,000 Hoosiers.

So we need fewer folks in Congress who side with the special interests. We need more who are willing to work with us to lower health care costs, give us the funding we need to fight public health challenges like Zika and the opioid epidemic. Joe Donnelly is working on that diligently. You know? So those are things we

could get done that would relieve a lot of worry for a lot of families.

And then, we have to tackle retirement security. It—that's something that keeps a lot of people up at night. That's why we've taken actions already to make it easier for more workers to save through their jobs, to make sure that when you do save, you're getting advice that's not in Wall Street's best interest, but in your best interest.

But look, let's face it, a lot of Americans don't have retirement savings. Even if they've got an account set up, they just don't have enough money at the end of the month to save as much as they'd like because they're just barely paying the bills. Fewer and fewer people have pensions they can really count on, which is why Social Security is more important than ever. We can't afford to weaken Social Security, we should be strengthening Social Security. And not only do we need to strengthen its long-term health, it's time we finally made Social Security more generous and increased its benefits so that today's retirees and future generations get the dignified retirement that they've earned. And we could start paying for it by asking the wealthiest Americans to contribute a little bit more. They can afford it. I can afford it.

A fifth way to make the new economy work for everybody is actually to make sure trade works for us and not against us. Again, walling ourselves off from other countries, that's not going to do it. A lot of tough talk that doesn't mean anything is not going to do it. Here's what will make a difference: Making sure other countries raise their labor standards, raise their environmental standards to levels that we set. And that's what we did with this trade deal we call Trans-Pacific Partnership. We negotiated with 11 other countries. If you don't like NAFTA, this TPP trade deal overhauls NAFTA with enforceable, much stronger labor and environmental standards, which means that they won't undercut us as easily.

If you don't want China to set the rules for the 21st century—and they're trying—then TPP makes sure that we set the rules. So the choice is simple: If you want to help China,

then you shouldn't pass this trade deal that we negotiated. If you want to help America, you need to pass it. Because it's going to cut taxes that other countries put on our products. It raises other countries' standards to ours. That's how we're going to help middle class families. That's how we secure better wages for our workers. And that's how we compete on a level playing field, and when we're on a level playing field, America wins every time—every time.

I'm going to make one last suggestion, and that is making sure the economy works for everybody by strengthening, and not weakening, the rules that keep Wall Street in check and goes after folks who avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

Now, after the financial crisis, we passed the toughest Wall Street reforms in history. We passed the toughest Wall Street reforms in history, and by the way, the bank bailout that everybody was mad about? They had to pay back every dime, and they did, with interest. And then, we passed laws to make sure we didn't have something like that happen again. And they're making a difference. The biggest banks have to carry twice the amount of capital that they did before the crisis. That makes another crisis less likely. We've got new tools to guard against another "too big to fail" situation. We've put in place a new consumer watchdog that has already secured more than \$10 billion for families who were cheated by irresponsible lenders or irresponsible credit card practices.

And guess what? Since—ever since we passed this thing, the big banks—working with a lot of Members of Congress on the other side of the aisle—they have teamed up to try to roll back these rules every single year. Every year, they've been trying to roll them back. And the Republican nominee for President has already said he'd dismantle all these rules that we passed. That is crazy. *[Laughter]* Have we—let it—no, look, I mean, sometimes—I'll be honest with you, sometimes, I just don't get it. *[Laughter]* How is it that somebody could propose that we weaken regulations on Wall Street? Have we really forgotten what just happened 8 years ago? It hasn't been that long ago. And because of their reckless behavior, you got

hurt. And the notion that you would vote for anybody who would now allow them to go back to doing the same stuff that almost broke our economy's back makes no sense.

I don't care whether you're a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent, why would you do that? Less oversight on Wall Street would only make another crisis more likely. Letting credit card companies write their own rules, that's only going to hurt working families. It sure as heck wouldn't make the middle class more secure. How can you say you're for the middle class and then you want to tear down these rules?

We've also been cracking down on tax loopholes, then—like the ones that allow corporations to change their addresses; they say they're an overseas company, even though they're all located here, so that they don't have to pay taxes in America. We've cracked down on tax cheats who are trying to hide their wealth in offshore accounts. You don't get to avoid paying your taxes. Why should they?

But I've got to say, the folks on the other side of the aisle have opposed our efforts to close these loopholes. How do they explain it? When big corporations and wealthy individuals don't pay their fair share of taxes—and by the way, a lot of people do, so I'm not painting with a broad brush here, but there are a lot of folks who don't—when they don't pay their fair share of taxes, it means either you're paying more or it means we don't have enough revenue to support things like rebuilding our roads or funding our public universities, which means tuition goes up, and then you're trying to figure out how to pay for your kid's college education.

We should have closed these loopholes a long time ago, and Lord knows, I have tried every year in my budget. We should have used some of the savings that we get from them paying their fair share to give tax breaks that would actually help working families pay for childcare or would help you send your kids to college or would help you save for retirement.

The point is, if we want a strong middle class, our Tax Code should reflect that. My first term, we cut taxes by \$3,600 for the typical

middle class family. Middle class families have paid lower Federal income tax rates during my Presidency than during any other time since the 1950s—that's this big-spending, liberal, tax-and-spend Democrat. That's the truth. Look it up.

But the wealthiest Americans are still paying far lower rates than they used to. When I ran for office, I said we'd reverse the tax cuts that had been put in place by the previous President and Congress on—for wealthy individuals, and we did that. We asked them to pay the top rate they did under Bill Clinton, when the economy, by the way, was booming and we ran a surplus. They all said, this is going to be a disaster, and we're going to go into a recession. And we didn't.

But today, even as the top 1 percent is doing better than ever for all the reasons I talked about earlier, the Republican nominee for President's tax plan would give the top one-tenth of 1 percent—not the top 1 percent, the top one-tenth of 1 percent—a bigger tax cut than the 120 million American households at the bottom. It would explode our deficits by nearly \$10 trillion. I'm not making this up. [Laughter] You can look at the math. That will not bring jobs back. That is not fighting for the American middle class. That will not help us win. That is not going to make your lives better. That will help people like him. That's the truth.

So you have a choice to make, Elkhart. You do: between more or less inequality, between stacking the deck for the folks who are already doing great or making sure everybody has a chance to succeed. That's the economic choice you face. That's what's at stake in this election: two very different visions for our economy. I hope I've broken it down for you.

Audience members. You have!

The President. Now, let me say this: I understand that not everybody votes based on their economic interests. Not everybody votes just based on the economy. We're more than just a matter of dollars and cents. Some folks care deeply about our Second Amendment rights. Some folks care about marriage equality. Some folks care about abortion. Some folks are going

to vote based on national security or their worries about terrorism. They may think that we haven't done the right thing on any of those issues and that the Republicans have a better answer. We can have that debate. That's fine. Those are all issues very worthy of debate.

But if what you care about in this election is your pocketbook—[laughter]—if what you're concerned about is who will look out for the interests of working people and grow the middle class, if that's what you're concerned about—

Audience member. Michelle for President! [Laughter]

The President. —then the debate—then, if that's what you're concerned about—the economy—the debate is not even close. One path would lead to lower wages. It would eliminate worker protections. It would cut investments in things like education. It would weaken the safety net. It would kick people off health insurance. It would let China write the rules for the global economy. It would let Big Oil weaken rules that protect our air and water. It would let big banks weaken rules that protect families from getting cheated. It would cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans to historic lows. Those are the facts.

And I know it sounds like a strange agenda for politicians who are claiming to care about you and working families. But those are their plans. You can find it on their websites. And when I hear working families thinking about voting for those plans, then I want to have an intervention. [Laughter] I want you to just take a look at what you're talking about here.

And if you tell me, you know what, Mr. President, you may be right, but I just disapprove of what Democrats stand for on gay rights or on going after ISIL, then I'm fine. Okay, I hear you. The economy is not everything. If you tell me, you know what, you may be right, but I just believe as a matter of principle that government should be small and the wealthy, they work harder than everybody else and so they should be able to keep what they've got—all right, well, that's—you're making a philosophical argument. I've got you.

But don't think that actually—that this agenda is going to help you. It's not designed to

help you. And the evidence of the last 30 years, not to mention common sense, should tell you that their answers to our challenges are no answers at all.

Fortunately, there's another path that leads to more jobs and higher wages and better benefits and a stronger safety net and a fairer Tax Code and a bigger voice for workers and trade on our terms. And it will make a real difference for the prospects of working families and will grow the middle class.

So that's the choice you face, Elkhart. The ideas I've laid out today, I want to be clear: They're not going to solve every problem. They're not going to make everybody financially secure overnight. We're still going to be facing global competition. Trying to make sure that all our kids are prepared for the 21st-century workforce, that's a 20-year project, that's not a 2-year project. We're still going to have to make sure that we're paying for Social Security and Medicaid and Medicare as our populations get older. There are still going to be a bunch of issues out there.

But the agenda I'm putting forward will point us in the right direction. And the one thing I can promise you is if we turn against each other based on divisions of race or religion, if we fall for a bunch of okey-doke—[laughter]—just because it sounds funny or the tweets are provocative—[laughter]—then we're not going to build on the progress that we've started. If we get cynical and just vote our fears, or if we don't vote at all, we won't build on the progress that we've started.

We've got to come together around our common values: our faith in hard work, our faith in responsibility, our belief in opportunity

for everybody. We've got to assume the best in each other, not the worst. We've got to remember that sometimes, we all fall on hard times, and it's part of our job as a community of Americans to help folks up when they fall. Because whatever our differences, we all love this country. We all care about our children's futures. That's what makes us great. That's what makes us progress and become better versions of ourselves: because we believe in each other.

That's what's going to get us through our toughest moments. That's how we know something better is around the bend. There's going to be some setbacks along the way, but we know that our journey is not finished, and we know that with steady, persistent, collective effort, we're going to deliver a brighter day for our children and our children's children. That's what you proved, Elkhart, over these last 7 years. That's what you've shown America. Let's keep on showing it.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. at Concord Community High School. In his remarks, he referred to South Bend, IN, resident Kelly Rizzo, who wrote the President a letter after his visit to Elkhart on February 9, 2009, expressing her concerns about the economy; Abigail K. Alwine and Shannon Purcell, class of 2016 valedictorians, Concord Community High School; Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Gov. Michael R. Pence of Indiana. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at the PBS NewsHour's "Questions for President Obama" Town Hall Meeting in Elkhart

June 1, 2016

PBS NewsHour Coanchor and Managing Editor Gwen Ifill. Good evening. And welcome to Elkhart, Indiana, as we sit down with President Obama and the residents of this community to discuss their concerns, look back

on his time in office, and assess the feverish campaign to succeed him.

This marks the President's fifth visit to the once, and again, "RV Capital of the World," a small city where the unemployment rate hit