

the USC Shoah Foundation; Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Ron Dermer and his wife Rhoda P. Dermer; Nina Totenberg, legal affairs correspondent, NPR; Sens. Lamar A. Alexander, Jr., and Robert P. Corker, Jr.; Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie

Wiesel; Israel Meir Lau, chairman, Yad Vashem Council; and New York City resident Elizabeth Wilk, who sought shelter with Walery and Maryla Zbijewski in Warsaw, Poland, during the Nazi occupation and later emigrated to the U.S.

Remarks at the House Democratic Issues Conference in Baltimore, Maryland

January 28, 2016

President Obama. Thank you so much! Thank you! All right, everybody, sit down. Sit down. You're going to make me choke up. [Laughter]

Well, it's good to see you, Democrats. Everybody is looking good. To not only the Members, but the families and folks who are here, staff, everybody who does such hard work, it is wonderful to be with you again.

And I want to obviously start off by just thanking somebody who I believe will go down as one of the finest Democratic leaders and Speakers we've ever had, my dear friend, Nancy Pelosi—[applause]—who also has adorable grandchildren. I mean, it's hard to find more photogenic grandkids. [Laughter] I'm telling you, they look like they just jumped out of a magazine.

To the rest of the leadership—Steny, Jim, Xavier, so many others who have worked with the White House to make a profound difference in the lives of the American people—I am looking forward to 1 more year of hard work and fulfilling work. And I know that the Carolina and Colorado delegations may be a little distracted right now—[laughter]—by the Super Bowl and the bets that they are laying. If it's buffalo versus barbecue, I'm in. [Laughter] But I wish you guys all the luck, and I congratulate you on unbelievable championship games.

Audience member. Go Broncos!

The President. There you go.

Audience member. Roll Tide!

The President. She's still talking about Alabama. That was a couple weeks ago. [Laughter]

So I'm not going to speak long because I want to make sure that we have a chance for

Q&A, and I just had a long discussion with a lot of you and the American people in the State of the Union. Obviously, it is election season. The press has been focused on debates and divisions that they can drum up within the primary and within our party. I'm not worried, though, about this party staying united. The other side may have some stuff to work out,—[laughter]—but our trajectory is clear. And everyone's scouring my every word to find some deeper meaning, see if I'm trying to put my finger on the scales, so let me simplify things. Tonight I have an announcement to make about the Presidential race: Democrats will win in November, and we will have a Democratic President succeeding me. Just in case there's any confusion about that.

And the reason I can say that with confidence is because we focus on the things that matter in the lives of the American people. Think about the four questions that I posed during the State of the Union. How do we give everybody a fair shot at opportunity and security in this new economy? How do we harness the American spirit of innovation to solve some of our biggest challenges? How do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming the world's policeman? And how do we make sure that our politics reflect what's best in us, not what's worst?

Our party has the right answers to each of these questions. We've shown that during these past 7 years. As Democrats, we believe everybody who works hard should have a fair shot. Our policies rescued the economy from the worst crisis in generations. We have now seen the longest streak of private sector job

creation in our history, more than 14 million new jobs. The best 2 years of job growth since the last time a Democrat was in the White House. Nearly 18 million Americans newly covered by health insurance.

Sometimes, I get a little frustrated that we don't run back the tape to what the Republicans said back then. Because at each juncture, every single one of the steps we took, they said the opposite, wanted to go in a different direction, claimed that our policies would crush jobs and destroy the economy. Do people remember that?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. They said gas would be at \$6.50 a gallon—pull up the quotes. Right now it's around a buck-eighty. They said deficits would explode. We cut them by almost three-quarters. My opponent in the last election promised 6-percent unemployment by the end of 2016. We got it to 5 percent by the end of 2015. Our policies are the ones that worked.

So we can't let Republicans roll back this progress by letting big banks or Big Oil or hedge funds make their own rules at the expense of everybody else. We can't let attacks on collective bargaining go unanswered. We have to build on the progress we've made with education and training for jobs that pay a good wage, with benefits and protections, that make sure these jobs provide a basic measure of security.

And by the way, one of the things that I've talked about many of you—with many of you is the deepening problem in Puerto Rico that threatens the well-being of 3.5 million Americans. My administration has put forward a comprehensive proposal to give Puerto Rico the necessary tools to address its crisis, create a path to recovery. And the most urgent tool that we need right now, a comprehensive restructuring authority, costs taxpayers nothing and will help more Americans regain control of their own economic security. That's the kind of thing that Democrats believe in.

It's why we support a minimum wage. That's why we support paid leave. That's why we support making sure that working families, not folks who are doing just fine, have access to the

opportunities that the economy—this new economy is generating. And on the other side, other than some slogans, you do not hear a single policy that they're putting forward that you can say would help middle class families or help working class families. That's what this election is about.

As Democrats, we believe in science. I know it's a radical proposition. [*Laughter*] We believe in the power of American ingenuity and innovation. And over the past 7 years, our policies have helped put tens of thousands of Americans to work in clean energy jobs that pay better than average. We've been able to double the amount of clean energy that we generate. In some parts of the country, wind power, solar power are now cheaper than dirty fossil fuels. We've cut our oil imports by nearly 60 percent, and we've cut our total carbon pollution more than any other nation on Earth. That's what we've done.

So we can't let Republicans roll this progress back by giving fossil fuel companies the ability to run roughshod and destroy our environment for future generations. And rather than subsidize the past, we should be investing in the future and the incredible opportunities that come with it. That's what we're focused on, that's what all Democrats believe in.

As Democrats, our top national security priority and the thing that I think about every single day when I wake up is how do we protect the American people and keep them safe from terrorist attacks. And for more than a year, America has led a coalition of more than 60 countries to hunt down and destroy ISIL, including with nearly 10,000 airstrikes.

We're not going to build progress with a bunch of phony tough talk and bluster and over the top claims that just play into ISIL's hands. We're not going to strengthen our leadership around the world by allowing politicians to insult Muslims or pit groups of Americans against each other. That's not who we are. That's not keeping America safe.

Keeping America safe and strong and respected requires us using every element of our power. That's how we worked to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. And again, you will recall

that the other side was claiming this would never work, they were going to cheat. And yet, a few months later, we now know—have certified—that massive amounts of existing nuclear stockpiles and their infrastructure has been dismantled or shipped out.

And even those who were skeptical are now having to admit that, without firing a shot, we achieved something that all of us had an interest in and had been working on for years. That's how we stopped the spread of Ebola in West Africa: our leadership, our military, our public health workers, our scientists. That's why we're ending 50 years of failed policy by restoring diplomatic relations to Cuba. That is true strength and true leadership, and that's what we believe in.

And we believe that our politics should reflect what's best in us. You know, I'm not going to claim Democrats are perfect. I'm not going to claim that we're right on every single issue or we have a monopoly on wisdom. But I do know that we hold ourselves to a higher standard. We know that we've got to do better. But we believe that there are structural problems in our democracy that we can fix, that there's too much money in our politics, that a true democracy doesn't try to discourage people from voting, but in fact, tries to encourage people from voting and participating and making sure their voice is heard.

Because we believe that every vote and every voice matters—whether it's Black or White or Hispanic or Asian or Native American, gay, straight, people with disabilities—that everybody's voice matters, everybody's voice counts. That's what we fought for. That's why John Lewis is sitting here today.

We believe that no matter who you are, where you got your start, what your first name—what your last name is, what ZIP Code you were born in, that you deserve a shot at opportunity and success. That's what we believe. And we believe, yes, that government has a role to play in making that happen, to giving a hand up to people. If we stay true to those principles, our party is not just going to have a good year, America will have a good year. And

we'll have more good years after that, and we'll build for future generations to come.

During this election season, there is a lot of noise and a lot of talk about America in decline, and as I said at the State of the Union, I don't believe it, and the facts don't show it.

Audience member. That's right.

The President. We're doing a lot better than we were 7, 8 years ago, and we've got a long way to go, but the same approach that we've taken of listening to the daily struggles and hopes and aspirations of people and making sure those voices are represented in the corridors of power and making sure that the laws that we seek to pass are ones that are going to help them and not a bunch of special interests who are trying to either hang onto what they already got or get more that they don't need—that's what the Democratic Party stands for.

That's why I'm so proud to have worked with all of you. I've said this in interviews. Yes, Democrats aren't perfect, but you know, we are on the right side of this debate. And we're not cynical. We genuinely believe that everybody should get a shot because most of us had to struggle and work hard, and we watched our parents and our grandparents and others work hard. We believe in immigration reform because we remember the history of our own families coming to this country and how they were able to forge a better life. We care about health care because we remember what it was like for somebody in our family, if they didn't have health care and couldn't pay the bills and didn't get decent care. We care about the minimum wage because a bunch of us worked in minimum-wage jobs and remembered what it was like to try to scrimp and save. And we care about making sure college is affordable because a lot of us here benefited from loans and grants and support. Otherwise, we wouldn't have gotten an education, because we weren't born with a silver spoon. That's what we stand for, that's what we believe in.

I could not be prouder of the work this caucus has done. I could not be prouder of the partnership I've had with you. And I intend to spend every minute every day between now and January 20 of next year making sure that

your legacy continues, not just mine, because that's what the American people need. That's what they deserve. So let's get to work.

Thank you, everybody. All right. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:28 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Baltimore Inner Harbor hotel.

Remarks Commemorating the Seventh Anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act January 29, 2016

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much. I heard you all were in the house so I wanted to stop by. [*Laughter*]

We've got some important personages here, so let me just call them out. We've got Senator Amy Klobuchar. Where's Amy? There she is. Our outstanding Labor Secretary Tom Perez. The Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Jenny Yang, is here. One of my favorites, the outstanding Billie Jean King is in the house. And of course, Lilly Ledbetter is here. Lilly has just become a dear friend to our family, and I can tell you that she's beloved not just by us, but by all the staff that work with her. She's just terrific. As she just mentioned, she was by my side when I signed my first bill into law, the Lilly Ledbetter Pay Fair—Fair Pay Act. And I was looking at a picture of that wonderful event, and she looks the same. [*Laughter*] And I don't. [*Laughter*]

But while we've got a lot to celebrate that day, we knew that our work wasn't done. We knew we had a lot more to do to close the pay gap between men and women and ensure that no woman would ever face the kind of discrimination that Lilly faced on the job.

And everybody here knows the numbers, and many of you have experienced it. Today, women account for almost half of the workforce. But the typical woman who works full time still earns 79 cents for every dollar that the typical man does. The gap is even wider for women of color. The typical Black working woman makes only 60 cents. The typical Latino woman makes only 55 cents for every dollar

In his remarks, he referred to House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, Assistant Democratic Leader James E. Clyburn, and Democratic Caucus Chairman Xavier Becerra; former President William J. Clinton; and 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

a White man earns. And that's not right. We're talking about oftentimes folks doing the same job and being paid differently. And it means that women are not getting the fair shot that we believe every single American deserves.

It doesn't just offend our values. At a time when women are increasingly the breadwinners in our households, paying them less makes it harder for families to cover the necessities like childcare or health care, just to pay the bills. It makes it harder for a family to save, harder for families to retire. It means local businesses have customers with less money to spend. So it's not good for our communities. It's not good for our families. It's not good for our businesses. What kind of example does paying women less set for our sons and daughters?

So today we're taking one more step in the right direction. We are proposing to collect and report pay data by race, ethnicity, and gender from businesses with 100 employees or more. And the goal is to help businesses that are trying to do the right thing, like the ones here today, to get a clearer picture of how they can ensure their employees are being treated equally. A better picture of the data will also help us do a better job enforcing existing equal pay laws.

Now, this won't solve every problem. We've still got to get more women and girls into high-paying fields like science and technology, engineering and math. We've still got to make sure that women are not penalized or held back in the workplace simply for starting a family.