

The President's Weekly Address September 17, 2016

Hi, everybody. I've delivered a few hundred of these weekly addresses over the years, and you may have noticed a theme that pops up pretty often: The Republicans who run this Congress aren't doing their jobs. And guess what? Congress recently returned from a 7-week vacation, and they've only got 2 weeks left until their next one. But there's a lot of business they need to get done first.

First, even as we're seeing more and more Zika cases inside the United States, they've refused to fund our efforts to protect women and children by fighting Zika in a serious way.

Second, they still need to provide resources to help the people of Louisiana recover from last month's terrible floods and to help communities like Flint recover from their own challenges.

Third, they have made Merrick Garland, a Supreme Court nominee with more Federal judicial experience than any other in history, wait longer than any other in history for the simple courtesy of a hearing, let alone a vote, all because they want their nominee for President to fill that seat.

And there are plenty other bipartisan priorities they should finish this year as well: passing criminal justice reform; attacking the opioids epidemic; funding Joe Biden's Cancer Moonshot; finishing a transpacific trade agreement that will support American jobs and boost American wages; and passing a budget that will make sure all of America's priorities are fund-

ed without resorting to shutdown threats and last-minute gimmicks. And none of this list even includes some other big priorities that should get done. It's been almost a decade, for example, since Congress voted to raise the minimum wage.

None of these things should be controversial. All of it is within our reach. This is America; we can do anything. We just need a Congress that works as hard as you do. At the very least, we should expect that they should do their jobs and protect us from disease, help us recover from disaster, keep the Supreme Court above politics, and help our businesses grow and hire.

So, if any of these priorities matter to you, let your Congressperson know. And if they still refuse to do their jobs, well, you know what to do in November. Our Government only works as well as the people we elect. And that's entirely up to you.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:05 p.m. on September 16 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on September 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 17. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Phoenix Awards Dinner September 17, 2016

The President. Hello, CBC! Thank you, Don, for the great work you are doing and that kind introduction.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you too.

I want to thank the CBC Foundation, Chairman Butterfield, members of the Congressio-

nal Black Caucus, and the whole CBC family. It's always good to be with the "Conscience of Congress." I also want to congratulate tonight's honorees, beginning with Charlie Rangel, a founding member of the CBC, an outstanding public servant who as we just talked about, we'll be riding off into the sunset together;

Representative Marcia Fudge; Robert Smith; the Mother Emanuel family; and your Trailblazer Award recipient, my friend, a champion for change, Secretary Hillary Clinton.

Now, there's an extra spring in my step tonight. I don't know about you guys, but I am so relieved that the whole birther thing is over. [Laughter] I mean, ISIL, North Korea, poverty, climate change—none of those things weighed on my mind—[laughter]—like the validity of my birth certificate. [Laughter] And to think that with just 124 days to go under the wire, we got that resolved. [Laughter] I mean, that's a boost for me in the home stretch. In other breaking news, the world is round, not flat. [Laughter] Lord.

This is, of course, my last CBC dinner as President. Next time I show up, I have to buy a ticket. [Laughter]

Audience member. No, you don't!

The President. Now, don't get me wrong though. We've still got so much work to do, and we're sprinting all the way through the tape. But the days are winding down. I've noticed that whenever Michelle or I travel around the country, folks come up and they say, oh, we're so sad to see you go. And I really appreciate that. And Michelle says, "That's right." [Laughter] She gave a speech yesterday. A bunch of young people were chanting "Four more years," and she said, no, no, no. [Laughter] She's ready. [Laughter]

But we do want to take this opportunity just to say thank you; to say thank you for your support over the years, to say thank you for your friendship, to say thank you for your prayers. I mean, as I just look across this auditorium, there are so many people here who lifted us up, who steadied us when things got tough.

When we began this journey coming on 10 years now, we said this was not about us. It wasn't about me. It wasn't about Michelle. It wasn't just to be a Black President or the President of Black America. We understood the power of the symbol. We know what it means for a generation of children, of all races, to see folks like us in the White House. And as Michelle says, we've tried to be role models, not just for our own girls, but for all children, be-

cause we know they watch everything we do as adults. They look to us as an example. So we've taken that responsibility seriously. And I've been so blessed to have a wife and a partner on this journey who makes it look so easy and is so strong and so honest and so beautiful and so smart. But we're all—we're just thankful because you guys have lifted us up every step of the way.

Now, we know, however, that what matters most for our community is not just the symbol, not just having an African American President. It's having a President who's going to do his or her darnedest to make the right decisions and fight the right fights. And think about the fights that we've waged together these past 8 years. Together, we fought our way back from the worst recession in 80 years: turned an economy that was in free fall, helped our businesses create more than 15 million new jobs. We declared that health care is not a privilege for a few, but a right for everybody; secured coverage for another 20 million Americans, including another three million African Americans. Our high school graduation rate is at an alltime high, including for African American students. More African Americans are graduating from college than ever before.

Together, we've begun to work on reforming our criminal justice system: reducing the Federal prison population, ending the use of solitary confinement for juveniles, banning the box for Federal employers, reinvigorating the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, pushing to make sure police and communities are working together to make sure that our streets are safe and that our law is applied equally. We're giving opportunities for kids so that they don't get in the criminal justice system in the first place. And I want to thank all of you who've helped us reach nearly 250 "My Brother Keepers" communities across the country.

And just this week, we learned that last year, across every race and age group in America, incomes rose, and poverty fell. Folks' typical household incomes rose by about \$2,800, which is the fastest growth rate on record. Lifted 3.5 million people out of poverty, including

one million children, the largest 1-year drop in almost 50 years.

By so many measures, our country is stronger and more prosperous than it was 8 years ago. And none of it's been quick. None of it's been easy. None of it has come without a fight. And so much of our work remains unfinished. But then, we knew that we would not solve all of our challenges in one year or one term or even one Presidency, not even in one lifetime, because we understand better than anybody that this is the story of America, that the project of America is never finished. It is constantly a work in progress.

And what has always made us unique is our capacity to change: our conviction that change doesn't come from some ruler, but it comes from the bottom up, from us, from the actions we take, whether it's women seeking the right to vote, or a young John Lewis leading a mighty march in Selma. We do our part to slowly, steadily, make our Union a little bit more perfect. We know that. And that's what we've done these past 8 years. And now that's what we have to keep on doing.

You may have heard Hillary's opponent in this election say that there's never been a worse time to be a Black person. [*Laughter*] I mean, he missed that whole civics lesson about slavery and Jim Crow and—but we've got a museum for him to visit. So he can tune in. [*Laughter*] We will educate him. [*Laughter*]

He says we've got nothing left to lose, so we might as well support somebody who has fought against civil rights and fought against equality and who has shown no regard for working people for most of his life. [*Laughter*] Well, we do have challenges, but we're not stupid. We know the progress we've made, despite the forces of opposition, despite the forces of discrimination, despite the politics of backlash. And we intend to keep fighting against those forces.

When Governors refuse to expand Medicaid that hits the folks most in need, we'll fight.

Audience member. That's right!

The President. When folks block an increase to the minimum wage or refuse to expand paid family leave or won't guarantee equal pay for

equal work that hurts the pocketbooks of every family and African American families, we will fight. When we're not investing in the schools that our kids deserve, when one group of Americans is treated differently under the law, when there are those who somehow think it's wrong to make sure that folks have access to affordable housing or are unwilling to do what it takes to make sure our veterans get the benefits that they've earned or aren't helping to sign folks up for health insurance, we will not stop our march for justice. We will not stop pushing for the security and prosperity of all people. That doesn't stop with my Presidency. We're just getting started.

And when people—when across this country in 2016, there are those who are still trying to deny people the right to vote—

Audience member. That's right!

The President. We've got to push back twice as hard. Right now, in multiple States, Republicans are actively and opening—openly trying to prevent people from voting: adding new barriers to registration, cutting early voting, closing polling places in predominantly minority communities, refusing to send out absentee ballots, kicking people off the rolls, often incorrectly.

This should be a national scandal. We are—we were supposed to have already won that fight. We're the only advanced democracy in the world that is actively discouraging people from voting.

Audience member. That's right!

Audience member. It's a shame!

The President. It's a shame. And then they try to justify it by telling folks that voter fraud is rampant. Between 2000 and 2012, there were 10 cases of voter impersonation nationwide. Ten. People don't get up and say, I'm going to impersonate somebody and go vote. [*Laughter*] They don't do that.

Meanwhile, some of the same folks who are trying to keep you from voting turn a blind eye when hundreds of thousands of people are killed by guns. Imposing voter ID restrictions so that a gun license can get you on the ballot, but a student ID can't—apparently more afraid of a ballot than a bullet.

Audience member. Come on!

The President. So no, our work is not done. But if we are going to advance the cause of justice and equality and of prosperity and freedom, then we also have to acknowledge that even if we eliminated every restriction on voting, we would still have one of the lowest voting rates among free peoples.

Audience member. That's not good!

The President. That's not good. [Laughter] That is on us.

And I am reminded of all those folks who had to count bubbles in a bar of soap, beaten trying to register voters in Mississippi, risked everything so that they could pull that lever. So, if I hear anybody saying their vote does not matter, that it doesn't matter who we elect, read up on your history. It matters. We've got to get people to vote.

In fact, if you want to give Michelle and me a good sendoff—and that was a beautiful video—but don't just watch us walk off into the sunset, now. Get people registered to vote. If you care about our legacy, realize everything we stand for is at stake. All the progress we've made is at stake in this election. My name may not be on the ballot, but our progress is on the ballot. Tolerance is on the ballot. Democracy is on the ballot. Justice is on the ballot. Good schools are on the ballot. Ending mass incarceration, that's on the ballot right now.

And there is one candidate who will advance those things. And there's another candidate whose defining principle, the central theme of his candidacy, is opposition to all that we've done.

Audience member. That's right!

Audience member. Preach!

The President. There's no such thing as a vote that doesn't matter. It all matters. And after we have achieved historic turnout in 2008 and 2012, especially in the African American community, I will consider it a personal insult, an insult to my legacy, if this community lets down its guard and fails to activate itself in this election. You want to give me a good sendoff? Go vote! And I'm going to be working as hard as I can these next 7 weeks to make sure folks do.

Hope is on the ballot, and fear is on the ballot too. Hope is on the ballot, and fear is on the ballot too.

A few days ago, Michelle and my mother-in-law and the girls and I, we snuck over and got an early look at the new Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. We looked at the shackles that had been used to bring folks over. We saw the shacks where slaves had been trying to make a way out of no way. And then, with each successive level, we saw the unimaginable courage and the struggles and the sacrifices and the humor and the innovation and the hope that led to such extraordinary progress, even in our own lifetimes.

And it made us proud. Not because we had arrived, but because what a road we've had to travel. What a miracle that despite such hardship, we've been able to do so much. And I know everybody in this room understands that that progress is not inevitable. Its sustainment depends on us. It's not just a matter of having a Black President or First Lady. It's a matter of engaging all of our citizens in the work of our democracy.

It was that slave who said, you know what, despite the risk of a lash, I'm going to learn how to read. It's Harriet Tubman saying, despite the risk to my life, I'm going to free my people. It's Fannie Lou Hamer saying, despite the ostracism, the blowback, I'm going to sit down here in this convention hall, and I'm going to tell people what it's like to live the life I've lived. I'm going to testify to why change needs to come.

Audience member. That's right!

The President. It's a young John Lewis saying, I'm going to march despite those horses I see in front of me.

All those ordinary people, all those folks whose names aren't in the history book, they never got a video providing a tribute to them—that's why we're here. That's how progress is sustained. And then it's a matter of electing people to office who understand that story, who feel it in their hearts, in their guts, and understand that government can't solve all our problems but it can be a force for good.

To experience this incredible new monument, this museum, is to be reminded we're just a small part of a long chain, generation after generation, striving against the odds. What an inspiration they are. And what an inspiration all of you are, especially the young people who are here.

That's why I'm still fired up. [Laughter] That's why I'm still ready to go. And if you are too, if you're ready to continue this journey that we started, then join me. Register folks to vote. Get them to the polls. Keep marching. Keep fighting. Keep organizing. If we rise to this moment, if we understand this isn't the endpoint, this is the beginning, we're just getting going, we're just getting moving, then I have never been more optimistic that our best days are still ahead.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton in New York City *September 18, 2016*

Well, it is good to see all of you. Thank you so much. Danny, Audrey, thank you for your amazing hospitality. I appreciate your wonderful kids being here as well, and I know that since one of mine just left—[laughter]—that any time they come back is a good day. [Laughter] So I'm glad I could come up with an excuse.

Irving Harris, for those of you who don't know, was an amazing businessman and helped to change the landscape of philanthropy in Chicago. His incredible wife and dear friend, Joan, is here with us. And it is absolutely true that Irving, I won't say discovered me, but was willing to, I think, put a bet on me very early on in my career at a time when I was just getting started in politics. And he was somebody who nobody said a bad word about, because he was an example of somebody who did well and did good and cared deeply about making sure that he was giving back.

And one of the main areas that he focused on was early childhood education and how meaningful it could be if we were able to give every child early in life the kind of support that

Thank you for this incredible journey, CBC. God bless you. God bless this country that we love. We love you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:26 p.m. in Hall D at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to R. Donahue "Don" Peebles, chairman of the board of directors, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation; Rep. George K. Butterfield, Jr., in his capacity as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus; Robert F. Smith, founder, chairman, and chief executive officer, Vista Equity Partners; Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton; Republican Presidential nominee Donald J. Trump; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

they needed, that it would pay dividends for years to come. And not only did he give money, but he gave time, and he understood the subject matter, and he was passionate about it. And that passion was transferred to me and to a lot of other people in public service and in philanthropy. And so what a thrill it is to be able to be with his family all these years later and remember him. He was a great, great man. So we're really proud of him.

Now, to the matter at hand, there's an election coming up. [Laughter] And because this is an intimate group, I want to spend most of our time in conversation, but let me just say a few things at the top.

It is a cliché that every election is the most important election of our lifetime. This time it's true. [Laughter] They're all important, and I'm a big believer that the project of America, the project of democracy, is never finished; that it is a constant process of us together, reimagining what might be, figuring out how we can work together to make this country a little more just, a little more fair, a little more prosperous, a little more secure.