

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2014*

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Senior Advisers To Discuss Ebola Preparedness and Containment Efforts and an Exchange With Reporters**  
*December 12, 2014*

*Federal Budget Legislation*

*The President.* Well, let me start by saying a few words about the bill that was passed last night to keep the Government open and make sure that our agencies are funded until the fall of next year.

This, by definition, was a compromise bill. This is what's produced when you have the divided Government that the American people voted for. There are a bunch of provisions in this bill that I really do not like. On the other hand, there are provisions in this bill and the basic funding within this bill that allows us to make sure that we continue on the progress in providing health insurance to all Americans; to make sure that we continue with our efforts to combat climate change; that we're able to expand early childhood education that is making a meaningful difference in communities all across the country; that allows us to expand our manufacturing hubs that are contributing to the growth of jobs and the progress that we've seen in our economy over the last couple of years.

And so, over all, this legislation allows us to build on the economic progress and the national security progress that is important. Had I been able to draft my own legislation and get it passed without any Republican votes, I suspect it would be slightly different. [*Laughter*] That is not the circumstance we find ourselves in. And I think what the American people very much are looking for is some practical governance and the willingness to compromise; that's what this bill reflects. So I'm glad it passed the House, and I'm hopeful that it will pass the Senate.

One of the things that was very important in this legislation was, it allowed us the funding that's necessary to battle ISIL, to continue to support our men and women in uniform. We've put a lot of burdens on our Defense Department and our Armed Services over the last year, some of which were anticipated, some of which were not. And this gives our military, as well as our other agencies, the ability to plan over the next year with some stability.

*Ebola Preparedness and Containment Efforts*

Which brings me to the topic of this meeting here today. This bill also contains the necessary funding to continue to make progress on our fight against Ebola both at home and abroad. I know that after a frenzy of news reports for several weeks, Ebola has faded from the headlines. On the other hand, although we have not seen an additional case here in the United States, I have always said that we have to make sure we're prepared here at home and we will not have defeated this disease until we have defeated it where it is most prevalent, and that is in West Africa.

And so I'm going to be hearing about the progress that's been made here in the United States in making sure that our hospitals are properly prepared, that our outstanding health workers are properly trained, and that we have facilities that are regionally dispersed to accommodate the periodic Ebola cases that we may continue to see in the United States until we've eradicated the disease in West Africa. It also allows us to make some progress on our efforts to develop a vaccine.

I was at the NIH a while back—some of you were with me—to see the significant progress and some promising pathways that we're taking with respect to vaccine development, and this legislation allows us to continue with that progress.

It also allows us to continue to do the work that is necessary in West Africa. Because of the remarkable response of our agencies, our military, our health workers, we have been able to take the lead in Liberia and to start bending the curve so that we're on a pathway to defeating the disease in Liberia. But we've still got a lot of work to do. And in two neighboring countries, Guinea and Sierra Leone, we've still got significant problems. Sierra Leone, in particular, we're still seeing an uptick in cases rather than the kind of declining case numbers that we'd like to see.

We know now what we knew in the fight against Ebola in previous epidemics, and that is that if we successfully isolate patients, if we're able to contact trace who has been in contact with somebody with the disease, if we're able to improve on things like burial practices, that we can slowly shrink and ultimately eliminate the disease. That is beginning to take root in Liberia, but we've still got a lot more work to do in these other countries.

Fortunately, we continue to see extraordinary efforts by our health care workers and volunteers from around the world. Here in the United States, we have seen people who are making enormous sacrifices, being separated from their families, in order to deal with this devastating disease. I was very pleased to see Time magazine identify those health workers on the front lines in the fight against Ebola as "Persons of the Year." I can't think of a better choice, because the courage, skill, professionalism that they display every single day makes me very proud.

And our American health workers have done a great job, but we want to make sure to give credit to the other countries that are participating in this coalition. We led it, we moved it, we are the most aggressive and out front in getting things done, but we couldn't be doing this alone. And so we've seen participation from countries and allies all across the globe. And we've got to make sure that we stay on top of this.

So I want to thank Congress for including that in the legislation. I'm going to hear reports about lessons learned over the last several weeks, what's worked, what hasn't. We'll continue to make adjustments over time. We have put in place the infrastructure, thanks to the outstanding work of our Armed Services, to get supplies and workers in and out, to be able to medevac those health care workers who end up contracting the disease, making sure that they have decent treatment.

But we've got to stay on this. This is not a problem that is going to go away anytime soon. And until we have snuffed out the last case of Ebola in West Africa, there's always the prospect and, in fact, likelihood that it spreads and could end up coming back to the United States.

So we've got a lot more work to do, just because it's not in the headlines, and that's what this meeting is about. I want to thank everybody here who's been doing a great job on it.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

### *The President's Health*

Q. How's your throat? How is the reflux?

*The President.* You know, actually, I am doing fine. That was a classic example of, if it weren't for the press pool, nobody would know about it. [*Laughter*]

Q. We did a good job, huh?

*The President.* There's got to be something better to cover than the President's sore throat.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:58 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 83; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Ebola preparedness and containment efforts, meeting with senior advisers; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Subjects:* Africa : West Africa, Ebola epidemic, response and containment efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Budget, Federal : Appropriations :: Consolidated; Congress : Bipartisanship; Diseases : Ebola, domestic response and containment efforts; Health and Human Services, Department of : Institutes of Health, National; Health and medical care : Research and development; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Legislation, proposed : "Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015"; Liberia : U.S. assistance.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201400921.