

**Remarks on the National Economy and an Exchange With Reporters**  
*May 6, 2016*

*The President.* All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Seven years ago, in April of 2009, our economy lost nearly 700,000 jobs, and the unemployment rate hit 9 percent on its way to 10 percent.

Seven years later, in April 2016, our economy added 160,000 new jobs. That makes April the 74th consecutive month of private sector job growth in America. Over that record streak of job growth, our businesses have created 14.6 million new jobs in all. Wages have been rising at an annual rate of more than 3 percent this year.

So the unemployment rate [economy]<sup>\*</sup> has been growing, unemployment has been falling, and wages have been rising. But the global economy, as many people here are aware, is not growing as fast as it should be. You're still seeing lagging growth in places like Europe, Japan, and now China. Here in the United States, there are folks out there who are still hurting. And so we've got to do everything we can to strengthen the good trends and to guard against some dangerous trends in the global economy. And if the Republican Congress joined us to take some steps that are pretty common sense, then we could put some additional wind at the backs of working Americans.

To create new jobs, they should invest in our infrastructure: our roads, our bridges, our schools, our water mains. Some of you joined me when I went to Flint this week. It was a great example of the kind of work that is out there to be done. And we could be putting people all across this country back to work, with huge multiplier effects across the economy, if we started investing in the infrastructure that will make us more productive.

To reward some of the hardest working people in America, Congress should raise the minimum wage. This is something that would not only help those individuals who are getting a bigger paycheck, but it also means they're spending more, and that would be a boost to business.

To level the playing field for American workers and crack down on unfair foreign competition, they should pass smart new trade agreements.

And Congress should reform our Tax Code to promote growth and job creation, which includes closing wasteful loopholes and simplifying the Tax Code for everybody.

Now, I've been talking about this for a while. Only Congress can fully close the loopholes that wealthy individuals and powerful corporations all too often take advantage of, often at the expense of middle class families. If they're getting out of paying their fair share of taxes, that means that the rest of us have to shoulder that burden. And I've put forward plans repeatedly to do exactly that: close loopholes, make sure that everybody is paying their fair share, which would not only give people greater confidence in the system, but would be good for our economy. It would make sure that families and small businesses, who don't have fancy lawyers and fancy accountants, are being treated the same as big corporations who do.

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<sup>\*</sup> White House correction.

I think it's fair to say the Congress will not act on a big tax reform plan before the election that would shut down some of these loopholes. But what my administration has been doing is to look for steps that we can take on our own to make the tax system fairer.

In recent months, we've seen just how big a problem corruption and tax evasion have become around the globe. We saw what happened with the release of the Panama Papers, and we've seen the degree to which both legal practices of tax avoidance that are still unfair and bad for the economy, as well as illegal practices that, in some cases, involve nefarious activities continue to exist and to spread. So combating this kind of tax evasion and strengthening the global financial system have been priorities of mine since I took office. And they're part of our broader, ongoing efforts to make sure the rules aren't rigged and our economy works for everybody.

Let me give you an example. Here at home, we've made our Tax Code fairer and asked the wealthiest Americans to start paying their fair share. And last month, the Treasury Department took action to prevent more corporations from taking advantage of a tax loophole that let them shift their address abroad just to avoid paying taxes in America, taxes that they rightfully owe.

We've taken several steps to make sure that our law—our tax laws are enforced, including leading efforts to crack down on offshore evasion. And as a result, thousands of individuals have come forward to disclose offshore accounts and pay the taxes that they owe, along with interest and penalties.

Today we're building on those efforts. And I'm—I believe that you've heard from Treasury, but I wanted to amplify what they've told you in detail. Number one, we are requiring banks and other financial institutions to know, verify, and report who the real people are behind shell corporations that set up accounts at those institutions. One of the main ways that companies avoid taxes, or wealthy individuals avoid taxes, is by setting up a bunch of shell corporations and making it harder to trace where monies are flowing and what taxes are owed. We're saying to those financial institutions, you've got to step up and get that information.

Second, we're plugging a gap in our tax rules that foreigners can exploit to hide their assets to evade taxes. The Treasury Department and the IRS are issuing a proposed rule to make sure foreigners cannot hide behind anonymous shell companies formed inside the United States.

Now, these actions are going to make a difference. They will allow us to continue to do a better job of tracking financial flows and making sure that people are paying the taxes that they owe, rather than using shell corporations and offshore accounts to avoid doing the things that ordinary Americans, hard-working Americans are doing every day, and that's making sure that they're paying their fair share.

Having said that, we're not going to be able to complete this job unless Congress acts as well. So I'm calling on Congress to pass new legislation that requires all companies formed inside the United States to report information about their real owners to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. That's going to help law enforcement better investigate and prevent financial crimes. I'm calling on Congress to provide the Justice Department with additional tools to investigate corruption and money launderers. And I'm calling on the Senate—in particular, Senator Rand Paul, who's been a little quirky on this issue—to stop blocking the implementation of tax treaties that have been pending for years. And these treaties actually improve law enforcement's ability to investigate and crack down on offshore tax evasion. And I'm assuming that's not something that he's in favor of.

So we're going to need to cooperate internationally because tax evasion, tax avoidance, money laundering—these things are all taking place in a global financial system, and if we can't cooperate with other countries it makes us harder for us to crack down.

If we can combine the actions that we're taking administratively with the new tools that I'm asking Congress to provide the Justice Department and Treasury, these actions will prevent tax evasion, they'll prevent money laundering, they'll prevent terrorist financing. And they'll, most importantly, uphold a fundamental principle of our economy: In America, no matter how wealthy or powerful, you should play by the same set of rules as everybody else.

All right. Thanks. I'm going to take a couple questions. With that, let's see, go ahead, Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters]. Since you're now the incoming president of the White House Correspondents' dinner. [Laughter]

### *2016 Presidential Election*

Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. President, what's your reaction to Donald Trump becoming the presumptive nominee of the Republican Party this week? And given the delegate math, do you think it's time for Bernie Sanders to step aside on the Democratic race?

*The President.* Well, with respect to the Republican process and Mr. Trump, there's going to be plenty of time to talk about his positions on various issues. He has a long record that needs to be examined, and I think it's important for us to take seriously the statements he's made in the past.

But most importantly—and I speak to all of you in this room as reporters, as well as the American public—I think—I just want to emphasize the degree to which we are in serious times and this is a really serious job. This is not entertainment. This is not a reality show. This is a contest for the Presidency of the United States.

And what that means is that every candidate, every nominee needs to be subject to exacting standards and genuine scrutiny. It means that you've got to make sure that their budgets add up. It means that if they say they've got an answer to a problem, that it is actually plausible and that they have details for how it would work. And if it's completely implausible and would not work, that needs to be reported on. And the American people need to know that. If they take a position on international issues that could threaten war or has the potential of upending our critical relationships with other countries or would potentially break the financial system, that needs to be reported on.

And the one thing that I'm going to really be looking for over the next 6 months is that the American people are effectively informed about where candidates stand on the issues, what they believe, making sure that their numbers add up, making sure that their policies have been vetted and that candidates are held to what they've said in the past.

And if that happens, then I'm confident our democracy will work. And that's true whether we're talking about Mr. Trump or Ms. Clinton or Bernie Sanders or anybody else. But what I'm concerned about is the degree to which reporting and information starts emphasizing the spectacle and the circus, because that's not something we can afford. And the American people, they've got good judgment, they've got good instincts, as long as they get good information.

All right?

Q. And on Sanders dropping out?

*The President.* I think on the Democratic side, let's let the process play itself out. You mentioned the delegate math. I think everybody knows what that math is. I think Senator Sanders has done an extraordinary job raising a whole range of issues that are important to Democratic voters as well as the American people, generally. And I know that at some point there's going to be a conversation between Secretary Clinton and Bernie Sanders about how we move towards the convention.

The good news is that despite the fact that during the course of primaries everybody starts getting a little chippy—I've been through this, it's natural, sometimes even more with the staffs and supporters than with the candidates themselves—the good news is, is that there's a pretty strong consensus within the Democratic Party on the vast majority of issues.

There's some disagreement about tactics. There's some disagreement about political strategy or policy nuance. But both Secretary Clinton and Bernie Sanders believe that every American should have health care. So do I. Both candidates believe that we should be raising the minimum wage. Both candidates believe that we should invest in our infrastructure and put more people back to work. Both candidates believe that we should pass a comprehensive immigration reform policy that makes sure we're enforcing laws and improving our legal immigration system and making sure our borders are secure, but also that we continue to enjoy the incredible boost that we get from attracting talent from all around the world. Both candidates agree that we should be prudent in terms of how we use our military and that we should care for our veterans when they come home.

So if you look at 95 percent of the issues, there's strong agreement there. You don't see the same kinds of divisions between the two Democratic candidates that remain that you've been seeing in some of the Republican debates.

Yes.

### *2016 Presidential Election*

Q. Mr. President, what did Speaker Ryan's comments tell you about the state of the Republican Party? And how would you advise your fellow Democrats, who appear to have to now run against Donald Trump, as to how they can win in November?

*The President.* Well, I think you have to ask Speaker Ryan what the implications of his comments are. There is no doubt that there is a debate that's taking place inside the Republican Party about who they are and what they represent.

Their standard bearer at the moment is Donald Trump. And I think not just Republican officials, but more importantly, Republican voters are going to have to make a decision as to whether this is the guy who speaks for them and represents their values.

I think Republican women voters are going to have to decide, is that the guy I feel comfortable with in representing me and what I care about. I think folks who, historically, have been concerned about making sure that budgets add up and that we are responsible stewards of Government finances have to ask, does Mr. Trump's budgets work. Those are going to be questions that Republican voters, more than Republican officials, have to answer.

And as far as Democrats, I think we run on what we're for, not just on what we're against. For the last 7½ years, we've been pretty clear about what we believe will help working families who are struggling out there. And although it has been difficult to get through Republican Congresses to get those things done, the truth is, is that they continue to be prescriptions that would really help people.

Making sure that families get paid sick leave and family leave and early childhood education, that would help families. Raising the minimum wage would help a lot of people. Rebuilding infrastructure would put back to work a whole bunch of guys in hardhats and gals in hardhats that need to work. And those are good jobs that can't be exported. Now is the time to do it.

So I want Democrats to feel confident about the policy prescriptions we're putting forward, and the contrast, I think, will be pretty clear. I'll leave it up to the Republicans to figure out how they square their circle.

All right. I'm going to take two more questions. Yes, go ahead.

*Republican Presidential Candidate Donald J. Trump/2016 Presidential Election*

Q. Mr. President, what's your message to Democratic voters who have yet to cast their vote, who may be hesitant to vote for the Democratic frontrunner because of the ongoing e-mail scandal and investigation? And also, did you see Donald Trump's taco bowl tweet, and your thoughts on it?

*The President.* I have no thoughts on Mr. Trump's tweets. As a general rule, I don't pay attention to Mr. Trump's tweets. And I think that will be true, I think, for the next 6 months. So you can just file that one. [*Laughter*]

In terms of the Democratic vote coming up, I'm going to let the voters cast their ballots and not try to meddle in the few primaries that are remaining. Let the process play itself out. We'll know soon enough. It's not going to be that much longer.

David [David Nakamura, Washington Post].

*Washington, DC, Metrorail System/Infrastructure/2016 Presidential Election*

Q. I just wanted to ask you one on infrastructure. Not long before your nuclear summit where you had 50 world leaders here, the DC Metro was closed for over 24 hours.

*The President.* Right.

Q. You, at the White House Correspondents' dinner, made note that you'll soon be, sort of, a more ordinary District resident. I'm wondering what that says that the Nation's Capital, their own Metro system was closed for 24 hours and is having a number of safety-related problems. And what can your administration do, if Republicans are standing in the way of an infrastructure bill, specifically for the DC Metro, to potentially provide more funding or any more support for such a critical service?

*The President.* Well, first of all, I know this is a somewhat self-interested question, I assume, because a bunch of folks here take the Metro. [*Laughter*] But it is just one more example of the underinvestments that have been made.

Look, the DC Metro, historically, has been a great strength of this region, but over time, we underinvested in maintenance and repair. And the steps that are being taken now I'll refer to the Department of Transportation. And—but I can say that obviously safety comes first, and we want to make sure that if there are safety concerns that they're addressed.

The broader issue, though, is we've got bridges, we've got roads, we have ports, we have airports, we have water mains and pipes—as we saw in Flint—that suffer from neglect. And in many parts of the country, we're still relying on systems that were built 30, 50, in some cases, 100 years ago. And the reason we've been neglecting them is not because we don't know how

to fix them. It's not because people haven't been aware of the need. We've known for years now that we're a trillion or 2 trillion dollars short in terms of necessary infrastructure repair.

I talked about this when I came into office and sought to do more in terms of investing in our Nation's infrastructure. The problem we have is that the Republican Congress has been resistant to really taking on this problem in a serious way. And the reason is, is because of an ideology that says government spending is necessarily bad.

And I addressed this when I was in Flint. That mindset, that ideology has led to us not investing in those things that we have to do together. As you point out, this Metropolitan area, the Nation's Capital, economically, is actually doing really well. But it doesn't matter much — how big your paycheck is if you've been taking the Metro and suddenly it's shut down for a month. And now you're stuck in traffic trying to drive to work instead.

You can't build your own Metro system. You can't build your own highway. You can't build your own airport. And so we have a specific problem with underinvesting in infrastructure. Now is the time, by the way, for us to do so. Interest rates are so low, and there are so many contractors and construction workers that are underemployed at the moment that you can actually get jobs done on time, on schedule. It would give a boost to our overall economy, because we know that when we spend a dollar in infrastructure, then we actually get a bigger bang for the buck in terms of the economy overall.

Surrounding businesses, suppliers, food trucks—everybody does better. And it gives a huge boost to the economy, and it lasts for a long time. Think about the investments we made in things like the Hoover Dam or the Golden Gate Bridge or Metro. It's a good thing to do. And it, historically, was not, and should not be, partisan. But if we have a mindset that says whatever government is doing must be bad, then these are going to be the results.

And it's going to continue to get worse. It's already tough in poorer communities, like Flint. But we're seeing these kinds of infrastructure problems spring up in communities all across the country. And it doesn't distinguish by race or by region. Everybody needs roads. Everybody needs airports.

So, hopefully, this will prompt a conversation. The last thing I'm going to say about this: This is a good example of making sure that the candidates are speaking to this issue as you go into the Presidential election. I've put forward very specific proposals for how I would pay for additional infrastructure investment. The numbers add up. And so the question is, how do the remaining candidates for the Presidency intend to tackle this? How do Members of Congress intend to tackle this? What's the Republican agenda for infrastructure? Do they have one? How do they pay for it? Do they pay for it by cutting Medicare or Medicaid? If they do, that needs to be fleshed out. And the consequences for working families needs to be explained.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:16 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Economy, national; Interviews With the News Media : Exchange with reporters :: White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Paul, Rand; Ryan, Paul D.; Sanders, Bernard; Trump, Donald J.

*Subjects:* Budget, Federal : Infrastructure spending and investment; Business and industry : Corporate inversions; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Congress : House of Representatives :: Speaker; District of Columbia : Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro); Economy, national : Household income and wages; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Early childhood education programs; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Labor issues : Minimum wage; Labor issues : Paid family and sick leave; Taxation : Overseas tax havens, efforts to combat; Taxation : Tax avoidance, efforts to combat; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Treasury, Department of : Corporate inversion schemes, regulation; Treasury, Department of the : Financial Crimes Enforcement Network; Veterans : Benefits; White House Correspondents' Association.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201600299.