

rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas and start rewarding businesses that create jobs here in America. And Congress should send me that kind of tax reform right away.

Another thing we're doing is to make it easier for companies like Boeing to sell their products all over the world, because more exports mean more jobs. Two years ago, I set a goal of doubling U.S. exports over 5 years. And we're on track to meet that goal, ahead of schedule.

We have a big opportunity right now to build not only an economy that will help us succeed today, but an economy that will help our kids and their kids succeed tomorrow. We know what we need to do. We need to strengthen American manufacturing. We need to invest in American-made energy and new skills for American workers. And above all, we need to renew the values that have always made this country great: hard work, fair play, shared responsibility.

We can do this. Ask the folks in Everett. Right here, a few years ago, the first Dreamliner took off on its maiden trip. Thousands of employees came to watch. One was an executive office administrator named Sharon O'Hara. And as Sharon saw that first plane take flight—a result of so much hard work—she got goose bumps. In her words, she said, “We said we would do it, and we did.” That's the story of America. We said we would do it, and we did. That's the can-do spirit that makes us who we are. We've seen challenging times before. But we always emerge from them stronger. And that's what we're going to do again today.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12:30 p.m. on February 17 at the Boeing Co. production facility in Everett, WA, for broadcast on February 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 17, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 18.

## Remarks on Payroll Tax Cut and Unemployment Insurance Legislation February 21, 2012

Hello! Good to see everybody. Please, have a seat. Have a seat. Good morning. I want to thank all of you for coming.

I want to thank my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden, who is here today, and members of my administration for joining us. But most of all, I want to thank the men and women who are standing with me today, as well as all the Americans who made their voices heard during the debate about extending the payroll tax cut and unemployment insurance.

We are here because of you. This got done because of you. Because you called, you e-mailed, you tweeted your Representatives, and you demanded action. You made it clear that you wanted to see some common sense in Washington. And because you did, no working American is going to see their taxes go up this year. That's good news. Because of what you did, millions of Americans who are out there still looking for work are going to continue to get help with unemployment insurance. That's

because of you. I called on—[applause]—that's worth applauding as well.

You'll remember, I called on Congress to pass this middle class tax cut back in September as part of my broader jobs plan. And for the typical American family, it is a big deal. It means \$40 extra in their paycheck. And that \$40 helps to pay the rent, the groceries, the rising cost of gas, which is on a lot of people's minds right now. LaRonda Hill—right here—told us how \$40 covers the water bill for a month. So this tax cut makes a difference for a lot of families. You can get back over here, Joe. [Laughter] And more people spending more money means more businesses will be able to hire more workers and the entire economy gets another boost just as the recovery is starting to gain some steam.

So Congress did the right thing here. They listened to the voices of the American people. Each side made a few compromises. We passed some important reforms to help turn

unemployment insurance into reemployment insurance so that more people get training and the skills they need to get back in a job. We passed an initiative that will create jobs by expanding wireless broadband and ensuring that first-responders have access to the latest life-saving technologies. And we've got some first-responders here. We're very grateful for the work that they do.

So, in the end, everyone acted in the interests of the middle class and people who are striving to get into the middle class through hard work. And that's how it should be. That's what Americans expect, and that's what Americans deserve.

Now my message to Congress is: Don't stop here. Keep going. Keep taking the action that people are calling for to keep this economy growing. This may be an election year, but the American people have no patience for gridlock and just a reflexive partisanship and just paying attention to poll numbers and the next election instead of the next generation and what we can do to strengthen opportunity for all Americans. Americans don't have the luxury to put off tough decisions, and neither should we. There's a lot more we can do—and there's plenty of time to do it—if we want to build an economy where every American has a chance to find a good job that pays well and supports a family.

For example, Congress needs to pass my plan to help responsible homeowners save about \$3,000 a year by refinancing their homes, their mortgages, at historically low rates. We're doing what we can administratively to provide some Americans that opportunity. I want all Americans to have that opportunity, and we need Congress to act to do it.

Congress needs to step up and support America's small businesses and especially companies that want to export. It's time we stop rewarding businesses that send jobs overseas, start rewarding companies right here that want to create jobs in the United States and sell to other countries as opposed to exporting jobs to other countries. That's what we need to do. Congress can act on that.

Congress needs to make the Buffett rule a reality. This is common sense. If you make more than a million dollars a year—make more than a million dollars a year—you should pay a tax rate of at least 30 percent. And if you do that, that means that if you make less than \$250,000 a year, like 98 percent of Americans do, you shouldn't see your taxes go up. And we won't be adding to the deficit.

These are things we can do today. It shouldn't be that difficult. Now, whenever Congress refuses to act, Joe and I, we're going to act. In the months to come, wherever we have an opportunity, we're going to take steps on our own to keep this economy moving. Because we've got a choice right now. We can either settle for a country where a few people are doing very well and everybody else is having to just struggle to get by, or we can build an economy where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is taking responsibility and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. And that's the economy that I want.

We still have some struggles out there. We're coming out of the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes. We've got a long way to go before every single person who's looking for a job can find a job. But where we stand now looks a lot different than where we stood a few years ago. Over the last 23 months, businesses have created 3.7 million new jobs. Manufacturers are hiring for the first time since the 1990s. The auto industry is back on top. Our recovery is gaining steam. Our economy is getting stronger. So we're headed in the right direction. And the last thing we should do is turn around and go back to the policies that weren't working in the first place.

That's why it's so important for us to stay focused and Congress to continue to do the things that the American people want to see done in order to improve the economy. We've got to build an economy that is built on American manufacturing and American-made energy and is improving the skills and capacity of American workers. We've got to make sure that when we think about energy, that we're fueling America by homegrown and alternative

energy sources that make us more secure and less dependent on foreign oil. When we think about skills for American workers, we got to make sure that everybody has the opportunity not only for 4-year colleges, but also 2-year colleges, the community colleges that Dr. Jill Biden is doing such a great job promoting all across the country.

We've put forward plans on each of these areas that can make a huge difference. But most of all, we've got to have a return to some home-spun American values: hard work, fair play, shared responsibility. That's who we are as a people.

And the reason I'm so confident in our future is because the folks who are standing with me today, some of the folks who are in the audience, because of all the families and workers and small-business owners and students and seniors that I've met over the last few weeks and that I've met during the course of my political career. When times are tough, Americans don't give up. They push ahead. They do

whatever it takes to make their lives better, their communities, better and their countries better.

And with or without Congress, every day I'm going to be continuing to fight with them. I do hope Congress joins me. Instead of spending the coming months in a lot of phony political debates, focusing on the next election, I hope that we spend some time focusing on middle class Americans and those who are struggling to get into the middle class. We've got a lot more work to do. Let's do it.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thanks for the great job you did. Appreciate you, proud of you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Biden.

## Remarks at PBS's "In Performance at the White House: Red, White, and Blues" February 21, 2012

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. That sounded pretty good. [Laughter] I might try that instead of ruffles and flourishes. [Laughter]

Well, first of all, I want to wish everybody a happy Mardi Gras. I hear Trombone Shorty brought some beads up from New Orleans. And I see that we've got some members of our Cabinet here. We've got some Members of Congress. And we have elected officials from all across the country.

One of the things about being President—I've talked about this before—is that some nights when you want to go out and just take a walk, clear your head, or jump into a car just to take a drive, you can't do it. Secret Service won't let you. And that's frustrating. But then there are other nights where B.B. King and Mick Jagger come over to your house to play for a concert. So I guess things even out a little bit. [Laughter]

In 1941, the folklorist Alan Lomax traveled throughout the Deep South, recording local musicians on behalf of the Library of Congress. In Stovall, Mississippi, he met McKinley Morganfield, a guitar player who went by the nickname Muddy Waters. And Lomax sent Muddy two pressings from their sessions together, along with a check for \$20.

Later in his life, Muddy recalled what happened next. He said: "I carried that record up to the corner, and I put it on the jukebox. Just played it and played it and said, I can do it." I can do it. In many ways, that right there is the story of the blues.

This is music with humble beginnings, roots in slavery and segregation, a society that rarely treated Black Americans with the dignity and respect that they deserved. The blues bore witness to these hard times. And like so many of the men and women who sang them, the blues refused to be limited by the circumstances of their birth.