

class in history. That's how young people beat back the billy clubs and the dogs and the fire hoses to make sure that race was no longer a barrier to what you can become in this country.

Change is hard, but it's possible. I've seen it. I've lived it. And if you want to end the cynicism and the game-playing and the point-scoring here in Washington, then this is the election to send a message that you refuse to back down, you will not give up. You intend to keep hoping. You intend to keep fighting for the change that we talked about, the change that we believe in.

I said in 2008—I warned you all, I said—I said I'm not a perfect man; I said I won't be a perfect President. But I promised you—I promised you this. I made a commitment to you, and I've kept this commitment. I will always tell you what I think. I always will tell you where I stand. And I wake up every single day thinking about you and fighting for you and

trying to figure out how can we make sure that everybody has access to the American Dream.

And if you stick with us, if you keep pushing, if we just keep on going through the setbacks, through the tough times, if you keep reaching for a vision of America that I know you still hold in your hearts, then change will continue to come. And this election may be harder than the last one, but I promise you we will finish what we started in 2008. We're going to keep on. We will press forward. We will remind the world once more why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

Let's get to work. Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:16 p.m. at the Capital Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Patrick H. Gaspard, executive director, Democratic National Committee; Lise Clavel, Virginia State director, Obama for America; and Richard A. Cordray, Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

## Remarks at the Environmental Protection Agency *January 10, 2012*

Thank you, EPA! Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. It is wonderful to see you. It is great to see you. Thank you, thank you.

Now, everybody can have a seat. I know Lisa is making you guys all stand up. [*Laughter*] But you can all relax.

It is wonderful to be here with all of you. Thank you so much for all the great work you do. I want to first acknowledge your outstanding Administrator, Lisa Jackson. She has done an extraordinary job leading this agency. But here's what I want all of you to know: Not only is she good on policy, not only is she tough and able to present the EPA's mission so effectively to the public, but she also has your back. She is an advocate on behalf of all the people who work so hard here at the EPA. And so you should know that your boss loves you, even if she doesn't always show it—I don't know. [*Laughter*]

The main reason I'm here is simple: I just want to say thank you. I want to say thank you

to each and every one of you, because the EPA touches on the lives of every single American every single day. You help make sure that the air we breathe, the water we drink, the foods we eat are safe. You protect the environment not just for our children, but their children. And you keep us moving towards energy independence.

And it is a vital mission. Over the past 3 years, because of your hard work, we've made historic progress on all these fronts. Just a few weeks ago, thanks to the hard work of so many of you, Lisa and I were able to announce new commonsense standards to better protect the air we breathe from mercury and other harmful air pollution. And that was a big deal. And part of the reason it was a big deal was because, for over 20 years, special interest groups had successfully delayed implementing these standards when it came to our Nation's power plants. And what we said was: Enough; it's time to get this done.

And because we acted, we're going to prevent thousands of premature deaths, thousands of heart attacks and cases of childhood asthma. There are families that are going to be directly impacted in a positive way because of the work that you do. Because you kept fighting—and some of you have been fighting this fight for a long time, long before I was here, and long before Lisa was here. And so your tenacity and stick-to-it-ness is making a difference.

Because of you, across the board, we're cutting down on acid rain and air pollution. We're making our drinking water cleaner and safer. We're creating healthier communities. But that's not all. Safeguarding our environment is also about strengthening our economy. I do not buy the notion that we have to make a choice between having clean air and clean water and growing this economy in a robust way. I think that is a false debate.

Think about it. We established new fuel economy standards, a historic accomplishment that is going to slash oil consumption by about 12 billion barrels, dramatically reduces pollution that contributes to climate change, and saves consumers thousands of dollars at the pump, which they can then go spend on something else.

As part of the Recovery Act, you cleaned up contaminated sites across the country, which helped to rid neighborhoods of environmental blight while putting Americans back to work.

We don't have to choose between dirty air and dirty water or a growing economy. We can make sure that we are doing right by our environment and, in fact, putting people back to work all across America. That's part of our mission.

When we put in place new commonsense rules to reduce air pollution, we create new jobs building and installing all sorts of pollution-control technology. When we put in place new emissions standards for our vehicles, we make sure that the cars of tomorrow are going to be built right here in the United States of America, that we're going to win that race. When we clean up our Nation's waterways, we generate more tourists for our local communi-

ties. So what's good for the environment can also be good for our economy.

Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't going to be some tensions. That doesn't mean that there aren't going to be legitimate debates that take place. That doesn't mean that it's not important for every single one of us to think about how can we make sure that we are achieving our goals in the smartest way possible, in the most efficient ways possible, in the least bureaucratic ways possible, in the clearest ways possible. That's also part of our mission.

There's not a Federal agency that can't get better and be smarter in accomplishing our mission, and we have an obligation every single day to think about how can we do our business a little bit better. How can we make sure the taxpayers are getting every dime's worth that they're paying in order to achieve these important common goals that we have?

But I believe we can do it, and you've shown me that we can do it over these last 3 years. So I could not be prouder of the work that you all do every single day as Federal employees. I know the hours can be long. I know that sometimes spending time getting these policies right means less time at home than you'd like, and you're missing birthday parties, or you're missing a soccer game, and the spouse is not happy with you. I know a little bit about that sometimes. *[Laughter]* I know these jobs are demanding.

But I also know what compelled you to enter public service in the first place, and that's the idea that you could make a difference, that you could leave behind a planet that is a little cleaner, a little safer than the one we inherited.

And I have to tell you that part of why I get excited when I see some of the work that you're doing is because our next generation is so much more attuned to these issues than I was when I was growing up. I can tell you when I sit down and I talk to my kids, probably the area where they have the most sophisticated understanding of policy is when it comes to the environment. They understand that the decisions we make now are going to have an impact on their lives for many years to come. And their instincts are right. So your mission is vital.

And just think of what this agency has been able to do over the last four decades. There's so many things we now take for granted. When I hear folks grumbling about environmental policy, you almost want to do a "Back to the Future"—[*laughter*]*—*kind of reminder of folks of what happens when we didn't have a strong EPA. The year before President Nixon created the EPA, the Cuyahoga River was so dirty from industrial pollution and oil slicks that it literally caught on fire. In my hometown, the Chicago River could—you probably could not find anything alive in there—[*laughter*]*—*four decades ago. Now it's thriving, to the benefit of the city. Today, because of your work, 92 percent of Americans have access to clean water that meets our national health standards.

Before the EPA was created, our cars were spewing harmful lead pollution into the air,

with all sorts of impacts, especially on children. Today, because of your work, air pollution is down by more than half and lead pollution is down more than 90 percent from a generation ago.

So, all of you, and all of those who served before you, have made a difference. Our environment is safer because of you. Our country is stronger because of you. Our future is brighter because of you. And I want you to know that you've got a President who is grateful for your work and will stand with you every inch of the way as you carry out your mission to make sure that we've got a cleaner world.

So thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:51 p.m. in the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium.

## Remarks at a White House Forum on Insourcing American Jobs January 11, 2012

Thank you, everybody. Please, please have a seat. Thank you. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. And, Tim, thank you for that introduction.

I could not have enjoyed more the meeting that I had this morning, because what these companies represent is a source of optimism and enormous potential for the future of America. What they have in common is that they're part of a hopeful trend: They are bringing jobs back to America.

You've heard of outsourcing. Well, these companies are insourcing. These companies are choosing to invest in the one country with the most productive workers, the best universities, and the most creative and innovative entrepreneurs in the world, and that is the United States of America. [*Applause*] That's worth applauding.

That's exactly the kind of commitment to country that we need, especially right now, when we're in a make-or-break moment for the middle class and those aspiring to get in the middle class here in the United States.

All across this country, I meet folks who grew up with a faith that in America hard work paid off and responsibility was rewarded and anybody could make it if they tried, no matter where you came from, no matter what you looked like, no matter how you started out. Those are the values that my grandparents and my mother taught me. Those are the values that built the best products and the strongest economy and the largest middle class that the world has ever known.

I think we understand that over the last few decades, that bargain has eroded for too many Americans. The economy has changed rapidly. And for many, that change has been painful. Factories where people thought they would retire packed up and went overseas, where labor costs were cheaper.

At the same time, we live in a global economy, and as other countries grow and develop middle classes of their own, of course global companies are going to pursue those markets and employ workers and make investments all over the world.