

Civil Uses of Nuclear Energy is submitted to Congress, the President shall provide to the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report on the progress of negotiations on a new civil nuclear cooperation agreement.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable NANCY PELOSI, Democratic Leader:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, January 28, 2014.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House, H-232, United States Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: Pursuant to Section 4(b) of House Resolution 5, 113th Congress, I am pleased to appoint the following members to the House Democracy Partnership:

- The Honorable David E. Price of North Carolina
 - The Honorable Lois Capps of California
 - The Honorable Sam Farr of California
 - The Honorable Keith Ellison of Minnesota
 - The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard of California
 - The Honorable Susan Davis of California
 - The Honorable Gwen Moore of Wisconsin
 - The Honorable Jim McDermott of Washington
 - The Honorable Dina Titus of Nevada
- Thank you for your attention to these appointments.

Sincerely,

NANCY PELOSI,
Democratic Leader.

□ 1715

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. After consultation among the Speaker and the majority and minority leaders, and with their consent, the Chair announces that, when the two Houses meet tonight in joint session to hear an address by the President of the United States, only the doors immediately opposite the Speaker and those immediately to his left and right will be open.

No one will be allowed on the floor of the House who does not have the privilege of the floor of the House. Due to the large attendance that is antici-

pated, the rule regarding the privilege of the floor must be strictly enforced. Children of Members will not be permitted on the floor. The cooperation of all Members is requested.

The practice of purporting to reserve seats prior to the joint session by placement of placards or personal items will not be allowed. Chamber Security may remove these items from the seats. Members may reserve their seats only by physical presence following the security sweep of the Chamber.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 8:35 p.m. for the purpose of receiving in joint session the President of the United States.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 18 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 2041

JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS PURSUANT TO HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 75 TO RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 8 o'clock and 41 minutes p.m.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms, Ms. Kathleen Joyce, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate, who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The joint session will come to order.

The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort the President of the United States into the Chamber:

- The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR);
- The gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY);
- The gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN);
- The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD);
- The gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. JENKINS);
- The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOX);
- The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI);
- The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER);
- The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN);
- The gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA);
- The gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY);
- The gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL); and
- The gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of

that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort the President of the United States into the House Chamber:

- The Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID);
- The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN);
- The Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER);
- The Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY);
- The Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET);
- The Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW);
- The Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH);
- The Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL);
- The Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN);
- The Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE);
- The Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT); and
- The Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO).

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador Hershey Kyota of the Republic of Palau.

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court.

The Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 9 o'clock and 10 minutes p.m., the Sergeant at Arms, the Honorable Paul D. Irving, announced the President of the United States.

The President of the United States, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and stood at the Clerk's desk.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, I have the high privilege and the distinct honor of presenting to you the President of the United States.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The PRESIDENT. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans:

Today in America, a teacher spent extra time with a student who needed it, and did her part to lift America's graduation rate to its highest levels in more than three decades.

An entrepreneur flipped on the lights in her tech startup, and did her part to

add to the more than 8 million new jobs our businesses have created over the past 4 years.

An autoworker fine-tuned some of the best, most fuel-efficient cars in the world, and did his part to help America wean itself off foreign oil.

A farmer prepared for the spring after the strongest 5-year stretch of farm exports in our history. A rural doctor gave a young child the first prescription to treat asthma that his mother could afford. A man took the bus home from the graveyard shift, bone-tired but dreaming big dreams for his son. And in tight-knit communities all across America, fathers and mothers will tuck in their kids, put an arm around their spouse, remember fallen comrades, and give thanks for being home from a war that, after 12 long years, is finally coming to an end.

Tonight, this Chamber speaks with one voice to the people we represent: it is you, our citizens, who make the state of our Union strong.

Here are the results of your efforts: the lowest unemployment rate in over 5 years. A rebounding housing market. A manufacturing sector that's adding jobs for the first time since the 1990s. More oil produced at home than we buy from the rest of the world—the first time that's happened in nearly 20 years. Our deficits—cut by more than half. And for the first time in over a decade, business leaders around the world have declared that China is no longer the world's number one place to invest; America is.

That's why I believe this can be a breakthrough year for America. After 5 years of grit and determined effort, the United States is better positioned for the 21st century than any other nation on Earth.

The question for everyone in this Chamber, running through every decision we make this year, is whether we are going to help or hinder this progress. For several years now, this town has been consumed by a rancorous argument over the proper size of the Federal Government. It's an important debate—one that dates back to our very founding. But when that debate prevents us from carrying out even the most basic functions of our democracy—when our differences shut down government or threaten the full faith and credit of the United States—then we are not doing right by the American people.

As President, I am committed to making Washington work better and rebuilding the trust of the people who sent us here. And I believe most of you are too.

Last month, thanks to the work of Democrats and Republicans, Congress finally produced a budget that undoes some of last year's severe cuts to priorities like education. Nobody got everything they wanted, and we can still do more to invest in this country's future while bringing down our deficit in a balanced way, but the budget compromise should leave us freer to focus

on creating new jobs, not creating new crises.

In the coming months, let's see where else we can make progress together. Let's make this a year of action. That is what most Americans want—for all of us in this Chamber to focus on their lives, their hopes, their aspirations; and what I believe unites the people of this Nation, regardless of race or region or party, young or old, rich or poor, is the simple, profound belief in opportunity for all—the notion that, if you work hard and take responsibility, you can get ahead in America.

Let's face it. That belief has suffered some serious blows. Over more than three decades, even before the Great Recession hit, massive shifts in technology and global competition had eliminated a lot of good, middle class jobs and weakened the economic foundations that families depend on.

Today, after 4 years of economic growth, corporate profits and stock prices have rarely been higher, and those at the top have never done better, but average wages have barely budged. Inequality has deepened. Upward mobility has stalled. The cold, hard fact is that, even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by, let alone to get ahead, and too many still aren't working at all.

So our job is to reverse these trends. It won't happen right away, and we won't agree on everything; but what I offer tonight is a set of concrete, practical proposals to speed up growth, strengthen the middle class, and build new ladders of opportunity into the middle class. Some require congressional action, and I am eager to work with all of you; but America does not stand still, and neither will I, so wherever and whenever I can take steps without legislation to expand opportunity for more American families, that is what I am going to do.

As usual, our First Lady sets a good example. Michelle's Let's Move partnership with schools, businesses, and local leaders has helped bring down childhood obesity rates for the first time in 30 years, and that is an achievement that will improve lives and reduce health care costs for decades to come. The Joining Forces alliance that Michelle and Jill Biden launched has already encouraged employers to hire or train nearly 400,000 veterans and military spouses. Taking a page from that playbook, the White House just organized a College Opportunity Summit where already 150 universities, businesses, and nonprofits have made concrete commitments to reduce inequality and access to higher education and to help every hard-working kid go to college and succeed when they get to campus. Across the country, we are partnering with mayors, Governors, and State legislatures on issues from homelessness to marriage equality.

The point is there are millions of Americans outside of Washington who

are tired of stale political arguments and are moving this country forward. They believe and I believe that, here in America, our success should depend not on accident of birth but the strength of our work ethic and the scope of our dreams. That is what drew our forebears here. It is how the daughter of a factory worker is CEO of America's largest automaker, how the son of a barkeeper is Speaker of the House, how the son of a single mom can be President of the greatest Nation on Earth.

Now, opportunity is who we are, and the defining project of our generation must be to restore that promise.

We know where to start: the best measure of opportunity is access to a good job. With the economy picking up speed, companies say they intend to hire more people this year, and over half of big manufacturers say they are thinking of in-sourcing jobs from abroad.

So let's make that decision easier for more companies. Both Democrats and Republicans have argued that our Tax Code is riddled with wasteful, complicated loopholes that punish businesses investing here and reward companies that keep profits abroad. Let's flip that equation. Let's work together to close those loopholes, end those incentives to ship jobs overseas, and lower tax rates for businesses that create jobs right here at home.

Moreover, we can take the money we save with this transition to tax reform to create jobs rebuilding our roads, upgrading our ports, unlogging our commutes because, in today's global economy, first-class jobs gravitate to first-class infrastructure. We will need Congress to protect more than 3 million jobs by finishing transportation and waterways bills this summer—that can happen—but I will act on my own to slash bureaucracy and streamline the permitting process for key projects so we can get more construction workers on the job as fast as possible.

We also have the chance right now to beat other countries in the race for the next wave of high-tech manufacturing jobs. My administration has launched two hubs for high-tech manufacturing—in Raleigh, North Carolina, and in Youngstown, Ohio—where we have connected businesses to research universities that can help America lead the world in advanced technologies. Tonight, I am announcing we will launch six more this year. Bipartisan bills in both Houses could double the number of these hubs and the jobs they create. So get those bills to my desk. Put more Americans back to work.

Let's do more to help the entrepreneurs and small business owners who create most new jobs in America. Over the past 5 years, my administration has made more loans to small business owners than any other, and when 98 percent of our exporters are small businesses, new trade partnerships with Europe and the Asia-Pacific will help them create even more jobs. We need to work together on tools like

bipartisan trade promotion authority to protect our workers, protect our environment, and open new markets to new goods stamped “Made in the USA.” Listen, China and Europe aren’t standing on the sidelines, and neither should we.

We know that the Nation that goes “all in” on innovation today will own the global economy tomorrow. This is an edge America cannot surrender. Federally funded research helped lead to the ideas and inventions behind Google and smartphones, and that is why Congress should undo the damage done by last year’s cuts to basic research—so we can unleash the next great American discovery. There are entire industries to be built based on vaccines that stay ahead of drug-resistant bacteria or paper-thin material that is stronger than steel, and let’s pass a patent reform bill that allows our businesses to stay focused on innovation, not costly and needless litigation.

Now, one of the biggest factors in bringing more jobs back is our commitment to American energy. The all-of-the-above energy strategy I announced a few years ago is working, and today, America is closer to energy independence than we have been in decades.

One of the reasons why is natural gas. If extracted safely, it is the bridge fuel that can power our economy with less of the carbon pollution that causes climate change. Businesses plan to invest almost \$100 billion in new factories that use natural gas. I will cut red tape to help States get those factories built and put folks to work, and this Congress can help by putting people to work building fueling stations that shift more cars and trucks from foreign oil to American natural gas.

Meanwhile, my administration will keep working with the industry to sustain production and job growth while strengthening protection of our air, our water, and our communities. And while we are at it, I will use my authority to protect more of our pristine Federal lands for future generations.

It is not just oil and natural gas production that’s booming. We are becoming a global leader in solar, too. Every 4 minutes, another American home or business goes solar, every panel pounded into place by a worker whose job cannot be outsourced. Let’s continue that progress with a smarter tax policy that stops giving \$4 billion a year to fossil fuel industries that don’t need it so that we can invest more in fuels of the future that do.

And even as we have increased energy production, we have partnered with businesses, builders, and local communities to reduce the energy we consume. When we rescued our automakers, for example, we worked with them to set higher fuel-efficiency standards for our cars. In the coming months, I will build on that success by setting new standards for our trucks so we can keep driving down oil imports and what we pay at the pump.

Taken together, our energy policy is creating jobs and leading to a cleaner, safer planet. Over the past 8 years, the United States has reduced our total carbon pollution more than any other nation on Earth. But we have to act with more urgency because a changing climate is already harming Western communities struggling with drought and coastal cities dealing with floods. That’s why I directed my administration to work with States, utilities, and others to set new standards on the amount of carbon pollution our power plants are allowed to dump into the air.

The shift to a cleaner energy economy won’t happen overnight, and it will require some tough choices along the way. But the debate is settled. Climate change is a fact. And when our children’s children look us in the eye and ask if we did all we could to leave them a safer, more stable world, with new sources of energy, I want us to be able to say, yes, we did.

Finally, if we are serious about economic growth, it is time to heed the call of business leaders, labor leaders, faith leaders, and law enforcement and fix our broken immigration system. Republicans and Democrats in the Senate have acted. I know that Members of both parties in the House want to do the same.

Independent economists say immigration reform will grow our economy and shrink our deficit by almost \$1 trillion in the next two decades. And for good reason. When people come here to fulfill their dreams—to study, invent, and contribute to our culture—they make our country a more attractive place for businesses to locate and create jobs for everybody. So let’s get immigration reform done this year. Let’s get it done. It’s time.

The ideas I have outlined so far can speed up growth and create more jobs. But in this rapidly changing economy, we have to make sure that every American has the skills to fill those jobs.

The good news is, we know how to do it. Two years ago, as the auto industry came roaring back, Andra Rush opened up a manufacturing firm in Detroit. She knew that Ford needed parts for the best-selling truck in America, and she knew how to make those parts. She just needed the workforce.

So she dialed up what we call an American Job Center—places where folks can walk in to get the help or training they need to find a new job, or a better job. She was flooded with new workers. And today, Detroit Manufacturing Systems has more than 700 employees.

What Andra and her employees experienced is how it should be for every employer—and every job seeker. So tonight, I have asked Vice President BIDEN to lead an across-the-board reform of America’s training programs to make sure they have one mission: train Americans with the skills employers need and match them to good jobs that need to be filled right now. That means

more on-the-job training and apprenticeships that set a young worker on a trajectory for life. It means connecting companies to community colleges that can help design training to fill their specific needs. And if Congress wants to help, you can concentrate funding on proven programs that connect more ready-to-work Americans with ready-to-be-filled jobs.

I am also convinced we can help Americans return to the workforce faster by reforming unemployment insurance so that it is more effective in today’s economy. But first, this Congress needs to restore the unemployment insurance you just let expire for 1.6 million people.

Let me tell you why.

Misty DeMars is a mother of two young boys. She had been steadily employed since she was a teenager. She put herself through college. She had never collected unemployment benefits—but she had been paying taxes.

In May, she and her husband used their life savings to buy their first home. A week later, budget cuts claimed the job she loved. Last month, when their unemployment insurance was cut off, she sat down and wrote me a letter—the kind I get every day.

“We are the face of the unemployment crisis,” she wrote. “I am not dependent on the government . . . Our country depends on people like us who build careers, contribute to society . . . care about our neighbors . . . I am confident that in time I will find a job . . . I will pay my taxes, and we will raise our children in their own home in the community we love. Please give us this chance.”

Congress, give these hardworking, responsible Americans that chance. Give them that chance. Give them the chance. They need our help right now, but more important, this country needs them in the game. That’s why I’ve been asking CEOs to give more long-term unemployed workers a fair shot at new jobs, a new chance to support their families. And, in fact, this week many will come to the White House to make that commitment real. Tonight, I ask every business leader in America to join us and do the same, because we are stronger when America fields a full team.

Of course, it’s not enough to train today’s workforce. We also have to prepare tomorrow’s workforce by guaranteeing every child access to a world-class education.

Estiven Rodriguez couldn’t speak a word of English when he moved to New York City at age 9. But last month, thanks to the support of great teachers and an innovative tutoring program, he led a march of his classmates through a crowd of cheering parents and neighbors from their high school to the post office where they mailed off their college applications. And this son of a factory worker just found out he’s going to college this fall.

Five years ago, we set out to change the odds for all our kids. We worked

with lenders to reform student loans; and, today, more young people are earning college degrees than ever before. Race to the Top, with the help of Governors from both parties, has helped States raise expectations and performance. Teachers and principals in schools from Tennessee to Washington, D.C., are making big strides in preparing students with the skills for the new economy, problem-solving, critical thinking, science, technology, engineering, math.

Now, some of this change is hard. It requires everything from more challenging curriculums and more demanding parents to better support for teachers and new ways to measure how well our kids think, not how well they can fill in a bubble on a test. But it is worth it, and it is working.

The problem is, we're still not reaching enough kids, and we're not reaching them in time, and that has to change.

Research shows that one of the best investments we can make in a child's life is high-quality early education. Last year, I asked this Congress to help States make high-quality pre-K available to every 4-year-old; and as a parent, as well as the President, I repeat that request tonight. But in the meantime, 30 States have raised pre-K funding on their own. They know we can't wait. So just as we worked with States to reform our schools, this year we'll invest in new partnerships with States and communities across the country in a race to the top for our youngest children. And as Congress decides what it's going to do, I'm going to pull together a coalition of elected officials, business leaders, and philanthropists willing to help more kids access the high-quality pre-K that they need. It is right for America. We need to get this done.

Last year, I also pledged to connect 99 percent of our students to high-speed broadband over the next 4 years. Tonight, I can announce that, with the support of the FCC and companies like Apple, Microsoft, Sprint, and Verizon, we've got a down payment to start connecting more than 15,000 schools and 20 million students over the next 2 years, without adding a dime to the deficit.

We're working to redesign high schools and partner them with colleges and employers that offer the real-world education and hands-on training that can lead directly to a job and career. We're shaking up our system of higher education to give parents more information and colleges more incentives to offer better value, so that no middle class kid is priced out of a college education. We're offering millions the opportunity to cap their monthly student loan payments to 10 percent of their income, and I want to work with Congress to see how we can help even more Americans who feel trapped by student loan debt. And I'm reaching out to some of America's leading foundations and corporations on a new initiative to help more young men of color facing especially tough odds to stay on track and reach their full potential.

The bottom line is, Michelle and I want every child to have the same chance this country gave us; but we know our opportunity agenda won't be complete, and too many young people entering the workforce today will see the American Dream as an empty promise, unless we also do more to make sure our economy honors the dignity of work, and hard work pays off for every single American.

Now, today, women make up about half our workforce; but they still make 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is wrong and, in 2014, it's an embarrassment. Women deserve equal pay for equal work. She deserves to have a baby without sacrificing her job. A mother deserves a day off to care for a sick child or a sick parent without running into hardship. And you know what? A father does too. It is time to do away with workplace policies that belong in a "Mad Men" episode. This year, let's all come together, Congress, the White House, businesses from Wall Street to Main Street, to give every woman the opportunity she deserves, because I believe when women succeed, America succeeds.

Now, women hold a majority of lower-wage jobs, but they're not the only ones stifled by stagnant wages. Americans understand that some people will earn more money than others, and we don't resent those who, by virtue of their efforts, achieve incredible success. That's what America's all about. But Americans overwhelmingly agree that no one who works full-time should ever have to raise a family in poverty.

In the year since I asked this Congress to raise the minimum wage, five States have passed laws to raise theirs. Many businesses have done it on their own. Nick Chute is here today with his boss, John Sorrano. John's an owner of Punch Pizza in Minneapolis, and Nick helps make the dough. Only now, he makes more of it. John just gave his employees a raise, to 10 bucks an hour, and that's a decision that has eased their financial stress and boosted their morale.

Tonight, I ask more of America's business leaders to follow John's lead. Do what you can to raise your employees' wages. It's good for the economy. It's good for America.

To every mayor, Governor, State legislator in America, I say, you don't have to wait for Congress to act. Americans will support you if you take this on. And as the Chief Executive, I intend to lead by example. Profitable corporations like Costco see higher wages as the smart way to boost productivity and reduce turnover. We should too.

In the coming weeks, I will issue an executive order requiring Federal contractors to pay their federally funded employees a fair wage of at least \$10.10 an hour—because if you cook our troops' meals or wash their dishes, you should not have to live in poverty.

Of course, to reach millions more, Congress does need to get onboard.

Today, the Federal minimum wage is worth about 20 percent less than it was when Ronald Reagan first stood here. TOM HARKIN and GEORGE MILLER have a bill to fix that by lifting the minimum wage to \$10.10. It is easy to remember—10, 10. This will help families. It will give businesses customers with more money to spend. It does not involve any new bureaucratic program. So join the rest of the country. Say "yes." Give America a raise. Give them a raise.

There are other steps we can take to help families make ends meet, and few are more effective at reducing inequality and helping families pull themselves up through hard work than the earned income tax credit. Right now, it helps about half of all parents at some point. Think about that. It helps about half of all parents in America at some point in their lives. But I agree with Republicans like Senator RUBIO that it doesn't do enough for single workers who don't have kids. So let's work together to strengthen the credit, reward work, and help more Americans get ahead.

Let's do more to help Americans save for retirement. Today, most workers don't have a pension. A Social Security check often isn't enough on its own. And while the stock market has doubled over the last 5 years, that doesn't help folks who don't have 401(k)s.

That is why tomorrow, I will direct the Treasury to create a new way for working Americans to start their own retirement savings: MyRA. It is a new savings bond that encourages folks to build a nest egg. MyRA guarantees a decent return with no risk of losing what you put in. And if this Congress wants to help, work with me to fix an upside-down Tax Code that gives big tax breaks to help the wealthy save but does little to nothing for middle class Americans.

Offer every American access to an automatic IRA on the job so they can save at work, just like everybody in this Chamber can. And since the most important investment many families make is their home, send me legislation that protects taxpayers from footing the bill for a housing crisis ever again and keeps the dream of homeownership alive for future generations.

One last point on financial security. For decades, few things exposed hard-working families to economic hardship more than a broken health care system. And in case you haven't heard, we are in the process of fixing that.

A preexisting condition used to mean that someone like Amanda Shelley, a physician assistant and single mom from Arizona, couldn't get health insurance. But on January 1, she got covered. On January 3, she felt a sharp pain. On January 6, she had emergency surgery. Just 1 week earlier, Amanda said, that surgery would have meant bankruptcy. That is what health insurance reform is all about, the peace of mind that, if misfortune strikes, you don't have to lose everything.

Already, because of the Affordable Care Act, more than 3 million Americans under age 26 have gained coverage under their parents' plans. More than 9 million Americans have signed up for private health insurance or Medicaid coverage—9 million.

And here is another number: zero. Because of this law, no American—none, zero—can ever again be dropped or denied coverage for a preexisting condition like asthma or back pain or cancer. No woman can ever be charged more just because she is a woman. And we did all this while adding years to Medicare's finances, keeping Medicare premiums flat, and lowering prescription costs for millions of seniors.

Now, I do not expect to convince my Republican friends on the merits of this law, but I know that the American people are not interested in refighting old battles. So, again, if you have specific plans to cut costs, cover more people, and increase choice, tell America what you would do differently. Let's see if the numbers add up. But let's not have another 40-something votes to repeal a law that is already helping millions of Americans like Amanda. The first 40 were plenty. We all owe it to the American people to say what we are for, not just what we are against.

And if you want to know the real impact this law is having, just talk to Governor Steve Beshear of Kentucky who is here tonight. Now, Kentucky is not the most liberal part of the country. That is not where I got my highest vote totals. But he is like a man possessed when it comes to covering his Commonwealth's families. "They are our neighbors and our friends," he said. "They are people we shop and go to church with, farmers out on the tractors, grocery clerks. They are people who go to work every morning praying they don't get sick. No one deserves to live that way."

Steve's right. And that's why, tonight, I ask every American who knows someone without health insurance to help them get covered by March 31. Help them get covered. Moms, get on your kids to sign up. Kids, call your mom and walk her through the application. It will give her some peace of mind—plus, she'll appreciate hearing from you.

After all, that's the spirit that has always moved this Nation forward. It's the spirit of citizenship, the recognition that through hard work and responsibility we can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as one American family to make sure the next generation can pursue its dreams as well.

Citizenship means standing up for everyone's right to vote. Last year, part of the Voting Rights Act was weakened, but conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats are working together to strengthen it. And the bipartisan commission I appointed, chaired by my campaign lawyer and Governor Romney's campaign lawyer, came to-

gether and has offered reforms so that no one has to wait for more than a half hour to vote. Let's support these efforts. It should be the power of our vote, not the size of our bank account, that drives our democracy.

Citizenship means standing up for the lives that gun violence steals from us each day. I have seen the courage of parents, students, pastors, and police officers all over this country who say "we are not afraid," and I intend to keep trying, with or without Congress, to help stop more tragedies from visiting innocent Americans in our movie theaters, in our shopping malls, or schools like Sandy Hook.

Citizenship demands a sense of common purpose, participation in the hard work of self-government, an obligation to serve our communities. And I know this Chamber agrees that few Americans give more to their country than our diplomats and the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

Tonight, because of the extraordinary troops and civilians who risk and lay down their lives to keep us free, the United States is more secure. When I took office, nearly 180,000 Americans were serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, all our troops are out of Iraq. More than 60,000 of our troops have already come home from Afghanistan. With Afghan forces now in the lead for their own security, our troops have moved to a support role. Together with our allies, we will complete our mission there by the end of this year, and America's longest war will finally be over.

After 2014, we will support a unified Afghanistan as it takes responsibility for its own future. If the Afghan Government signs a security agreement that we have negotiated, a small force of Americans could remain in Afghanistan with NATO allies to carry out two narrow missions: training and assisting Afghan forces, and counterterrorism operations to pursue any remnants of al Qaeda. For while our relationship with Afghanistan will change, one thing will not: our resolve that terrorists do not launch attacks against our country.

The fact is that danger remains. While we have put al Qaeda's core leadership on a path to defeat, the threat has evolved as al Qaeda affiliates and other extremists take root in different parts of the world. In Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, and Mali, we have to keep working with partners to disrupt and disable those networks. In Syria, we'll support the opposition that rejects the agenda of terrorist networks. Here at home, we'll keep strengthening our defenses and combat new threats like cyberattacks. And as we reform our defense budget, we'll have to keep faith with our men and women in uniform and invest in the capabilities they need to succeed in future missions.

We have to remain vigilant. But I strongly believe our leadership and our security cannot depend on our out-standing military alone. As Com-

mander in Chief, I have used force when needed to protect the American people, and I will never hesitate to do so as long as I hold this office. But I will not send our troops into harm's way unless it is truly necessary, nor will I allow our sons and daughters to be mired in open-ended conflicts. We must fight the battles that need to be fought, not those that terrorists prefer from us—large-scale deployments that drain our strength and may ultimately feed extremism.

So, even as we actively and aggressively pursue terrorist networks—through more targeted efforts and by building the capacity of our foreign partners—America must move off a permanent war footing. That's why I have imposed prudent limits on the use of drones, for we will not be safer if people abroad believe we strike within their countries without regard for the consequence. That's why, working with this Congress, I will reform our surveillance programs, because the vital work of our intelligence community depends on public confidence, here and abroad, that the privacy of ordinary people is not being violated.

And with the Afghan war ending, this needs to be the year Congress lifts the remaining restrictions on detainee transfers and we close the prison at Guantanamo Bay—because we counter terrorism not just through intelligence and military actions but by remaining true to our constitutional ideals and setting an example for the rest of the world.

You see, in a world of complex threats, our security and our leadership depends on all elements of our power, including strong and principled diplomacy. American diplomacy has rallied more than 50 countries to prevent nuclear materials from falling into the wrong hands and allowed us to reduce our own reliance on Cold War stockpiles. American diplomacy, backed by the threat of force, is why Syria's chemical weapons are being eliminated, and we will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future the Syrian people deserve—a future free of dictatorship, terror, and fear.

As we speak, American diplomacy is supporting Israelis and Palestinians as they engage in the difficult but necessary talks to end the conflict there; to achieve dignity and an independent state for Palestinians, and lasting peace and security for the State of Israel—a Jewish State that knows America will always be at their side.

And it is American diplomacy, backed by pressure, that has halted the progress of Iran's nuclear program—and rolled back parts of that program—for the very first time in a decade. As we gather here tonight, Iran has begun to eliminate its stockpile of higher levels of enriched uranium. It is not installing advanced centrifuges. Unprecedented inspections help the world verify, every day, that Iran is not building a bomb. And with our allies

and partners, we are engaged in negotiations to see if we can peacefully achieve a goal we all share: preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

These negotiations will be difficult. They may not succeed. We are clear-eyed about Iran's support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, which threaten our allies, and we are clear about the mistrust between our nations, mistrust that cannot be wished away. But these negotiations don't rely on trust; any long-term deal we agree to must be based on verifiable action that convinces us and the international community that Iran is not building a nuclear bomb. If John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan could negotiate with the Soviet Union, then surely a strong and confident America can negotiate with less powerful adversaries today.

The sanctions that we put in place helped make this opportunity possible. But let me be clear: if this Congress sends me a new sanctions bill now that threatens to derail these talks, I will veto it. For the sake of our national security, we must give diplomacy a chance to succeed. If Iran's leaders do not seize this opportunity, then I will be the first to call for more sanctions and stand ready to exercise all options to make sure Iran does not build a nuclear weapon. But if Iran's leaders do seize the chance—and we will know soon enough—then Iran could take an important step to rejoin the community of nations, and we will have resolved one of the leading security challenges of our time without the risks of war.

Finally, let's remember that our leadership is defined not just by our defense against threats, but by the enormous opportunities to do good and promote understanding around the globe—to forge greater cooperation, to expand new markets, to free people from fear and want. And no one is better positioned to take advantage of those opportunities than America.

Our alliance with Europe remains the strongest the world has ever known. From Tunisia to Burma, we are supporting those who are willing to do the hard work of building democracy. In Ukraine, we stand for the principle that all people have the right to express themselves freely and peacefully and have a say in their country's future. Across Africa, we are bringing together businesses and governments to double access to electricity and help end extreme poverty. In the Americas, we are building new ties of commerce, but we are also expanding cultural and educational exchanges among young people. And we will continue to focus on the Asia-Pacific, where we support our allies, shape a future of greater security and prosperity, and extend a hand to those devastated by disaster—as we did in the Philippines, when our marines and civilians rushed to aid those battered by a typhoon, and who were greeted with words like, "We will never forget your kindness," and, "God bless America."

We do these things because they help promote our long-term security, and we do them because we believe in the inherent dignity and equality of every human being, regardless of race or religion, creed or sexual orientation. And next week, the world will see one expression of that commitment when Team USA marches the red, white, and blue into the Olympic Stadium and brings home the gold.

My fellow Americans, no other country in the world does what we do. On every issue, the world turns to us, not simply because of the size of our economy or our military might—but because of the ideals we stand for and the burdens we bear to advance them.

No one knows this better than those who serve in uniform. As this time of war draws to a close, a new generation of heroes returns to civilian life. We will keep slashing that backlog so our veterans receive the benefits they have earned and our wounded warriors receive the health care—including the mental health care—that they need. We will keep working to help all of our veterans translate their skills and leadership into jobs here at home, and we will all continue to join forces to honor and support our remarkable military families.

Let me tell you about one of those families I have come to know.

I first met Cory Remsburg, a proud Army Ranger, at Omaha Beach on the 65th anniversary of D-day. Along with some of his fellow Rangers, he walked me through the program. He was a strong, impressive young man with an easy manner. He was sharp as a tack. We joked around and took pictures, and I told him to stay in touch.

A few months later, on his 10th deployment, Cory was nearly killed by a massive roadside bomb in Afghanistan. His comrades found him in a canal, face down, under water, shrapnel in his brain.

For months, he lay in a coma. The next time I met him, in the hospital, he couldn't speak; he could barely move. Over the years, he has endured dozens of surgeries and procedures and hours of grueling rehab every day.

Even now, Cory is still blind in one eye. He still struggles on his left side. But slowly, steadily, with the support of caregivers like his dad, Craig, and the community around him, Cory has grown stronger. Day by day, he has learned to speak again and stand again and walk again—and he is working toward the day when he can serve his country again.

"My recovery has not been easy," he says. "Nothing in life that's worth anything is easy."

Cory is here tonight; and like the Army he loves, like the America he serves, Sergeant First Class Cory Remsburg never gives up, and he does not quit.

My fellow Americans, men and women like Cory remind us that America has never come easy. Our freedom, our democracy, has never been easy.

Sometimes we stumble; we make mistakes; we get frustrated or discouraged. But for more than 200 years, we have put those things aside and placed our collective shoulder to the wheel of progress—to create and build and expand the possibilities of individual achievement; to free other nations from tyranny and fear; to promote justice and fairness and equality under the law, so that the words set to paper by our Founders are made real for every citizen. The America we want for our kids—a rising America where honest work is plentiful and communities are strong; where prosperity is widely shared and opportunity for all lets us go as far as our dreams and toil will take us—none of it is easy.

But if we work together, if we summon what is best in us, the way Cory summoned what was best in him, with our feet planted firmly in today but our eyes cast towards tomorrow, I know it is within our reach.

Believe it.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

At 10 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m., the President of the United States, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet; the Chief Justice of the United States and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court; the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

The SPEAKER. The Chair declares the joint session of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly, at 10 o'clock and 27 minutes p.m., the joint session of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I move that the message of the President be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered printed.

The motion was agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. WESTMORELAND (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of medical reasons.

Mr. RUSH (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for January 27 through January 29 on account of attending to family acute medical care and hospitalization.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.