

democratic and free market principles. Ukraine made a significant step toward achieving these goals when it adopted its first democratic constitution in 1996. But under the Yanukovich Administration, the basic liberties of the Ukrainian people have been trampled. Recent elections have fallen short of international standards, and the government has used the courts to neutralize opposition leaders, sending former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko to prison for 7 years on trumped-up, politically motivated charges. Meanwhile, President Yanukovich continues to pursue closer ties with Russia, in spite of the Ukrainian people's clear preference for closer ties with Europe.

In addition to the moral imperative we have to support basic human rights, the United States must also recognize that Ukraine—with a population of 45 million and a territory comparable in size to that of France—occupies a unique, sensitive, and strategically important position between Russia and our NATO allies Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. The future of Ukraine will be determined by what happens in the days ahead, and it will have a direct bearing on U.S. interests for years to come.

On occasion, protesters have clashed with police, with reports of many injuries and several deaths. Although recent reports from Kiev indicated that protesters had seized the Ukrainian Justice Ministry, they voluntarily gave up the building to avoid creating difficulties in negotiations between the Ukrainian Government and the opposition. Opposition leaders have said they will continue pressing for democratic concessions, including free and fair elections and the abolition of sweeping new antiprotest laws. Their efforts to avoid violent confrontation should be encouraged, and their valid demands supported.

It is imperative that the United States send an unequivocal message to the Ukrainian people that we support their efforts to restore democracy and the rule of law. At the same time, we must make clear to President Yanukovich that the only hope for a strong, peaceful, and independent Ukraine lies in building ties with Europe, the United States, and other freedom-loving countries around the world.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

VERMONT ESSAY WINNERS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD finalist essays written by Vermont High School students as part of the Fourth Annual State of the Union Essay contest conducted by my office. These 7 finalists were selected from over 380 entries.

The essays follow:

RAIHAN KABIR, SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 12 (FINALIST)

How a country collects and allocates its resources takes precedence in outlining the

foundation of equality and general welfare. We as individuals rely on a revenue of both incomes and loans, which makes for a crude economic model of spending. This holds true for our government. As the nation dives deeper into debt and countries around the world experience protests and riots over austerity measures, it is clear that additional tax dollars are necessary to reduce debt, support society, and give rise to the economy.

Tax increases will put the definition of taxation back into its actuality. The United States tax rates are theoretically graduated by income level, meaning that lower income ranges pay a lower rate than higher income ranges. However, those in a higher tax bracket often have more deductions to further equalize their effective rate with that of the middle or lower brackets. A decline in tax rates for the most wealthy is a disproportionate advantage for the already financially capable members of our society, which further instigates the income disparities that threaten our democratic ideals. The top percent of Americans possesses more wealth than the entire bottom 90 percent; the 400 wealthiest Americans have a greater combined net worth than the entire bottom 150 million; and yet, everyone is paying a similar effective rate. Not everyone is currently contributing their fair share to society, and living in a nation with the largest amount of debt in the world, this matter of fact is unacceptable. Tax increases will make the theory of taxes a reality and restore economic equality.

Though our current fiscal path is unstable, increasing taxes will reduce national debt and put us on the right track back to recovery. With a 16 trillion dollar debt that is rising at the rate of 6 billion dollars a day (4 million dollars every minute), every family in America would owe about \$50,000 to various countries around the world if the burden trickled down to the general public. When the government needs money, it sells treasury bills (similar to savings bonds) to investors, who cash them in after an average of ten years for the original amount plus interest. Though a certain amount of debt is arguably helpful for the economy, consistently high deficits force the government to offer higher, more appealing interest rates; investors eventually realize that the country is unlikely to pay back the money it borrows and they stop lending, which crushes the economy, as most recently witnessed in Greece. Our current national debt is greater than the economies of the United Kingdom, Australia, and China, combined. Stopping this vicious economic cycle requires less foreign-reliance and more self-sustenance, which is feasible if and only if we increase taxes.

Tax increases will ensure the funding and availability of certain social programs and necessary expenditures on infrastructure without the need to excessively issue bonds. Taxes currently fund public services of insurance, such as Social Security and Medicare, of welfare, such as the Pell Grant and Food Stamp programs, and of infrastructure, such as the scholastic and interstate highway systems. Nobel laureate of economics Paul Krugman affirms a current necessity for increased taxes in his following statement:

[Regarding] proposals to raise the age of Medicare eligibility to 67 . . . outlays would fall only by \$125 billion over the next decade . . . and even when fully phased in, this partial dismantling of Medicare would reduce the deficit only about a third as much as could be achieved with higher taxes on the very rich . . . don't believe anyone who claims otherwise.

Taxes pay for important programs that go unpaid by spending cuts. The Bureau of Economic Statistics reports that the average

standard of living, determined by comparing adjusted incomes and poverty rates, has increased in years with a higher annual budget and decreased in years on the contrary. According to the New York Times and the Board of Economic Advisors, there is a direct correlation between the amount of money provided to the government in the national budget and the quality of life in the United States, as determined by the rate of poverty. This makes logical sense; our standard of life escalates as we make fiscal contributions to society. Yet we continue to have the lowest tax rate in the world. Taxes are imposed so that roads get fixed, so we get an education, and so people don't invade our country. Taxes are imposed to protect our rights. The government imposes taxes on us for our own benefit, and by raising them, we will improve the living conditions and quality of life in America.

Tax increases will lead to economic growth and prosperity. In 1990 and again in 1993, President Clinton enacted deficit-reduction legislation that raised taxes for high income taxpayers; as a result, economic growth and job creation were strong. Within this period of a sensational economy, capital gain rates were cut, and there was a 20% increase in job availability for a total of 21 million new jobs. However, after the Bush Tax Cuts of 2001 and the Bush Recession, job growth lagged behind GDP growth, there was 0% net job growth, and with continuous population growth, there were record high unemployment rates. Tax increases have helped society and the economy in the past, and they will help again.

In any case of regulatory action, the value to be upheld is the quality of life. By reducing debt, supporting society, and giving rise to the economy, the nation will better ensure a standard of well-being for its citizens. The government of these United States is to assure life, liberty, health, and happiness, in our pursuit of the American dream. Lincoln said it best in his Gettysburg Address: "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." The prioritization of tax increases over spending cuts is essential to future policy in the United States of America to sustain the American public.

FIONA HIGGINS, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 12 (FINALIST)

There are many issues facing the United States. Personally, I believe one of the most critical domestic issues is reproductive rights.

Every step back to pre-Roe v. Wade is sensationalized in the media, and rightfully so. The issue is much more far reaching than pro-life versus pro-choice; it is both a human rights issue and an economic issue.

Firstly, it is a human rights issue. It is a matter of women having control over their own decisions, their bodies, and their lives. Western women strive to liberate women who they view as oppressed, but these same western women don't realize that their freedoms are also disappearing. Women and men alike have the right to decide what happens to their bodies. Restricting access to contraception and health services violates this human right for both genders.

Secondly, it is an economic issue. Children cost money. When parents cannot support their family, they are prone to apply for welfare and other government programs that were put in place to help low-income families. These programs are needed, but the federal government could decrease the need and the cost of these programs if it focused on education and access to contraception. In low-income neighborhoods, people are often not able to access contraception. This takes

away lower-income women's autonomy as well as perpetuating the cycle of poverty. If there were more accessible systems in place, these systems (rather than chance) would help families plan for the future, and allow them to decide to have children (rather than chance). In addition, a decreased level of government spending would curb the growth of the debt, which would aid the struggling economy.

A woman rarely thinks to herself, "I'd like to have an abortion instead of using contraceptives this time." That is lunatic. Abortions happen out of necessity. If they were illegal or severely restricted, women would still get them, but the procedures would be unsafe and deadly. If members of Congress truly want to protect the unborn and create a diminished welfare-dependent state, they must focus on education and accessibility; this strategy will also lower government spending in the long run.

Instead of going backwards, the United States should be moving forwards. Members of Congress must recognize that women have an inalienable right to privacy with regard to their bodies, a right that we should not have to fight for. Education and access to contraceptives needs to be more widespread, thereby improving our dire economic situation and our quality of life.

OWEN DEFFNER, THETFORD ACADEMY, GRADE 7
(FINALIST)

2013, America has had quite a year, with many ups and downs. Everything from the government shut down, to what I'd call: an official economic recovery. We have witnessed a terrible civil war in Syria where tremendous bloodshed has occurred. America has hosted many natural disasters too, everything from intensely cold temperatures to violent tornadoes. In these tragic times America has stepped up its game and delivered, helping our neighbors when they are struggling. This is the America that our allies look up to; the friendly, hospitable, welcoming America that we all contribute to every single day. Let's keep that good, positive America in our hearts this year.

11 million people are in America illegally. These people have come to this great nation in search of a better life. These people are trying to achieve the American dream. Immigrants are trying to send money home to their family in another country, some are trying to provide for their family here in the US. All the while they are constantly worried that our government will deport them back to their home country. This is not right, it's not okay that we don't welcome them into our nation. I want the path to citizenship easier for them so that they can get what they wanted to get by coming here. Let's be a bit more hospitable to people who are just trying to help their family.

Our status on the issue of the environment is not looking up. America has the great opportunity to help lead the fight against climate change. America must set high standards concerning the environment so that other countries will follow to help reduce the risk of the world's surface covered in water. Inside America to confront this issue head on we need to educate Americans on what is okay and not okay to recycle and how to compost or break down food into soil for our farms and gardens. This is a plan that will work and that we must initiate this year.

Our country is very behind on a major issue. America's education system is well behind many other well developed global powers. We need to fix that issue from the bottom up starting in our pre and elementary schools, with more emphasis on math and science. At higher levels, more affordable college and university opportunities for the lower and middle-class. We need to invest

more time and education in our education and we need to now!

All of these ideas I am proposing are simple and should be easy to carry out with a bit of willingness from both parties. I am not asking to overhaul anything just some easy doable requests that all of us can help to accomplish. America should look to the future, to the next generation growing into adulthood. Let's get back on track for these young men and women who have high hopes for themselves and their country.

EMILY MARTIN, VERGENNES UNION HIGH
SCHOOL, GRADE 10 (FINALIST)

The United States of America is an amazing country to call home. However, in the modern day we as a nation face problems that challenge our ingenuity and integrity. The world today is one of war, whether that is physical, or political. We struggle to find resources to continue on living the way we have for as long as we can remember, yet forget that the earth which we walk on is a fragile one. The United States is no exception. We often find ourselves between a rock and a hard place; dealing with complex issues such as health care for all, or additional billions of dollars in debt; the Continuation of fighting a war which is not ours, or withdrawing our troops and allowing innocent people to face an uncertain future. Spend billions in foreign oil to keep companies in business, or convert to clean energy and watch the economy crumble. The list of hard choices goes on and on. The reality is, we no longer live in a time when decisions are cut and dry and each decision resonates into our future with force.

As a nation, we face an increasingly unpredictable future, and without reassurance of our outcome, fear can cause bitterness and ignorance. Education, the economy, politics, and the fate of an ever-changing climate put an enormous amount of stress on us a people. There is no certain cure for the issues we deal with a nation, but the first step towards solution and unification. As a country, it's time that we put aside our grudges, opinions, and preferences and work as a whole to support America's path towards growth, safety, security and stability. The United States of America has been a country that others look to as a role model and to some as a beacon of freedom and safety. We have more than ourselves to work for; there are millions of people around the world who rely on our help and support. We need to shed the selfish shells, and work as a people, not as a political party or organization. Whether you are a Republican, Democrat, and Libertarian it doesn't matter, because America is your home, and at the end of the day we all have to learn to coexist and benefit from each other's support. This is how we will help to secure America's future, America's education, industry and healthcare. Unification is the first step towards solution.

If we need reminding of the impact of dissention and fracturing of our political system, the Civil War looms in the hearts and from the pages of our history, when compromise not only failed, but conversation stopped. The State of the Nation in America is painful obvious even to the young people and the children. If we don't remember how to talk to each other, work together and accomplish the majority rule established as a framework in the US Constitution, we stand to lose more than a budget. We stand to lose our democracy.

NICK MAJESKI, WOODSTOCK UNION HIGH SCHOOL,
GRADE 11 (FINALIST)

Bribes from Fast Food: A State of Corruption

In the year 2014, the union is majorly corrupt; the country is run by a capitalist

nightmare of over-powerful healthcare, tobacco, and food industries. From their very beginnings at the turn of twentieth century, the fast food industry has steadily become more and more powerful and influential. Spawning from this growth in influence, the union has steadily declined into a state of corruption at the hands of the fast industry, with these major food chains bribing government workers in high positions.

Government agencies controlling food, such as the FDA, USDA, and EPA may have been created with good intentions, but when a higher up does not believe they are being paid enough money for their job, they are known to be tempted to accept bribes and submit to being the puppets of fast food corporations, looking to exploit their power to lower the standards of their products. An article on Naturalnews.com explained how, in a survey given to workers at the FDA and USDA, one fourth of the survey takers admitted to have changed policies for corporate gain. On one hand this is not morally right both in the way that our government officials—who were elected by the people—are accepting bribes, and also that they are changing policies allowing even less healthy food that causes diseases—more money to health care; another corrupt industry in the United States.

Corrupt FDA, USDA, and EPA fat-cats obviously do not want to break their ties with fast food puppeteers; this brings more corruption directly into the government organizations themselves. In the Naturalnews.com article the writer explains that many innocent workers at organizations like the FDA and USDA are demoted or even fired for trying to do their job and not keeping their mouths shut about corruption they have witnessed. The higher-ups in charge of these huge organizations influence immoral decisions that bring dirty money to their own pockets; they change state standards to very low standards and do not require food companies to tell customers when the food was made, processed or cooked.

Despite all this—mostly widely known information—this corruption is still going on and growing. According to Fastfoodnationhonorsproject.weebly.com ties between congress and fast food are too strong to vote against certain policies. This means that the way to lower corruption in the food industry would have to be to take direct action.

Despite knowledge of corruption being well known in America- Supersize Me is a mainstream movie- there is not very much motivation to stop bribes from the food industry. This is a problem that should not only be addressed, but worked towards solving as well.

HOLLY THAYER, MILTON HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 12
(FINALIST)

My fellow Americans, I stand here before you to evaluate the state of our great nation. Over the past year our economy has risen as the Gross National Product increased 4.1% in the third quarter, and the National Deficit went down \$1.8 Billion. As of November, the national unemployment rate has dropped to 7% and personal income has risen, proving that our nation is moving out of the recession, and America is once again becoming a nation of economic growth and wealth.

2013 saw an increase in revolutions around the world, from Syria to Egypt, many countries around the world are experiencing the same revolution the United States and our ancestors endured in order to gain our individual freedoms. Through the government and all of our national forces, we must work together to give aid in the form of resources and money, to assist the new governments that are the result of these revolutions, and ensure that there is smooth turn over of

power. The United States must also create a coalition of our allies, along with the United Nations, to create an agreement that delegates the responsibilities and costs of helping these nations form new governments, and ensures that the re-created states are not intruding on an individual's human rights.

The production of Genetically Modified Organisms, GMOs, that are then placed in processed foods or on crops and used as an insecticide, have created a serious health risk for myself, and all my fellow Americans. It has been proven that GMOs can lead to serious health issues and impose high health risks. We must work together with the agricultural farmers and corporations that use GMO's to research the other options that these businesses have in order to ensure plant safety, without endangering the public health at the same time. Then we must create a grant program that would give states and localities money to allocate to farmers and organizations that agree to not use GMOs. For companies that still use GMOs, we must toughen the regulations on the use of them, through only allowing a regulated amount to be present in foods, and make it mandatory that this presence is labeled on every package of a product.

Educated masses lead to innovations and improvements in every aspect of life. Currently, around 30% of Americans have obtained a college degree. In order to have an educated citizenry, we need to make federal aid for students planning on going to college more available. To do this, we need to restructure the system that is used to disperse federal financial aid. If we create a formula, based on family income, and reduce the importance and use of merit based scholarships, while increasing the use of incentive programs, then allocate the money based on this system, we could effectively make financial aid more available and abundant, and therefore increase the percentage of Americans who have a college degree, creating an educated citizenry.

Thank you, God Bless America.

DELANEY SPINK, SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 12 (FINALIST)

I can't claim to know a lot about politics. In fact, I make a point to stay as uninvolved in it as possible. In a nutshell, all I know is that Obama is our president, and that I should never bring up politics with my grandfather, unless I'm willing to spend the next three or four hours listening to him denounce every decision our government has made since the 1920's. When our class was told we had to write this essay, my first thought was, "I have no idea what the state of our union is. How am I supposed to write about how to fix it?"

I'd bet that every single other student in my classroom was having the same thought, save the one or two kids that are really into politics, and, as we all know, are going to win this competition. This got me thinking, and I've come to a conclusion. The problem with our country is that not enough young people know what the problem is. Ironic, isn't it?

When I think of our government, I think of old white men. Now, I know this is a very stereotypical generalization that I'm making. Women are getting involved, and, hey, our president is black. We seem to be doing better, based on the limited information that I have. But, whether they're diverse or not, the people making decisions for our country are old. This isn't entirely a bad thing; older people have more experience, confidence, and knowledge. All I'm saying is that that wisdom needs to be balanced with the fresh perspectives of our country's younger generations. Younger people need to start getting

more excited about politics, myself included. We need to start looking at it as an exciting opportunity to change what we think should be changed, instead of as a boring subject that our uncles argue about over Thanksgiving dinner.

Now, I know there are probably many kids out there that are interested in politics. That's great, but I also know that the vast majority of kids, like myself, are simply uninterested. The solution lies with us, and we need to motivate ourselves. It can't come from the adults. If this essay somehow makes it to anyone important, please don't take this as a sign that you need to launch a national "Politics are Cool, Yo!" campaign. It won't work. It needs to be started by the kids. We need to start clubs, be in our school governments, or even just watch the news.

I don't have a perfect solution, seeing as I am, for now, one of the aforementioned uninterested students. But, I know this: If politics can become more accessible to young people in any way, shape, or form, we will take notice, and, eventually, get involved. It's our country too. We want to be just as involved as Grandpa Bill and Senator Sanders. One of us just needs to lead the way. ●

TEXT OF A PROPOSED THIRD AMENDMENT TO THE AGREEMENT FOR CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY—PM 28

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Third Amendment to the Agreement for Co-operation Between the United States of America and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (the "Amendment"). I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Amendment, and an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Amendment. (In accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-277), a classified annex to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately.) The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretaries of State and Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed. An addendum to the NPAS pursuant to section 102A of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 403-1), as amended, is being submitted separately by the Director of National Intelligence.

The proposed Amendment has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

Pursuant to the proposed Amendment, the Agreement for Co-operation Between the United States of America and the International Atomic Energy Agency, signed at Vienna May 11, 1959, as amended and extended February 12, 1974, and January 14, 1980 (the "Agreement"), would continue to provide a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with the IAEA and facilitate our mutual objectives related to nonproliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The primary purposes of the Agreement are to enable exports from the United States of nuclear material and equipment to IAEA Member States for research reactors and, in certain cases, for power reactors, and to enable transfers from the United States of small samples of nuclear material to the IAEA for safeguards and research purposes.

Under the proposed Amendment, the term of the Agreement will be extended an additional 40 years for a total term of 95 years.

The Agreement permits the transfer of material, equipment (including reactors), and facilities for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It does not permit transfers of Restricted Data, sensitive nuclear facilities, or major critical components of such facilities, or, unless specifically provided for in a supply agreement or an amendment thereto, transfers of sensitive nuclear technology. In the event of termination of the Agreement, key nonproliferation conditions and controls continue with respect to material, equipment, and facilities subject to the Agreement.

A more detailed discussion of the IAEA's nuclear nonproliferation and peaceful uses activities is provided in the NPAS and in a classified annex to the NPAS submitted to you separately.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested agencies in reviewing the proposed Amendment to the Agreement and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the Amendment and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 b., the 60 days of continuous session