

The President's Weekly Address

June 19, 2010

At this moment, our Nation is facing a host of big and difficult challenges. And more than anything else, what's required to meet those challenges right now is a sense of cooperation and common purpose among our leaders. What we need is a willingness in Washington to put the public's interests first, a willingness to score fewer political points so that we can start solving more problems.

That's why I was disappointed this week to see a dreary and familiar politics get in the way of our ability to move forward on a series of critical issues that have a direct impact on people's lives.

In the United States Senate, we have legislation that would boost our economic recovery and help Americans who've been affected by the worst recession in generations. We've certainly made progress since we were losing 750,000 jobs per month around the time I took office. Our economy is growing again, and we've added jobs for 5 straight months, but there are still millions of Americans out of work and millions more who are struggling to pay the bills. The legislation in the Senate right now would extend unemployment benefits to those workers who lost their job through no fault of their own. It would provide relief to struggling States that would help save the jobs of thousands of teachers and cops and firefighters. There are also provisions in this legislation that would extend the tax credit for first-time homebuyers as well as tax cuts to keep research and development jobs here in the United States.

Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in the Senate won't even allow this legislation to come up for a vote. And if this obstruction continues, unemployed Americans will see their benefits stop, teachers and firefighters will lose their jobs, families will pay more for their first home.

All we ask for is a simple up-or-down vote. That's what the American people deserve. Just like they deserve an up-or-down vote on legislation that would hold oil companies accountable for the disasters they cause, a vote that's also being blocked by the Republican leadership in the Senate. Right now the law places a \$75 million cap on the amount oil companies must pay to families and small businesses who suffer economic losses as a result of a spill like the one we're witnessing in the Gulf Coast. We should remove that cap. But the Republican leadership won't even allow a debate or a vote.

And as we speak today, 136 men and women who I've nominated for key positions in the Federal Government are still awaiting a vote on the floor of the Senate. All are highly qualified. Very few are controversial. The vast majority already have support from both parties. But most of them are seeing their nominations intentionally delayed by Republican leaders or even blocked altogether. They cannot get a vote. What this means is that, at a moment when our country is facing so many challenges, a time when we need all hands on deck, we can't get the qualified people we need to start the jobs they were appointed to do.

Look, the nature of our democracy is that we'll always have disagreements and debates, even heated ones. That's healthy, and it's important. But let's argue over genuine differences, over ideas and policies. And let's go into those debates with an open mind, a willingness to find

common ground, and a conviction that, in the end, one way or another, we'll have a vote to decide them.

Next week, I'll be meeting with a bipartisan group of Senators to discuss how we can transition away from our dependence on fossil fuels and embrace a clean energy future. I don't expect that we'll agree on a solution right away. In fact, I know that there will be plenty of disagreement and different ideas. But at least it shows that Republicans and Democrats can still sit down together in an attempt to tackle the big challenges facing our Nation.

I know the political season's upon us in Washington, but gridlock as a political strategy is destructive to the country. Whether we are Democrats or Republicans, we've got an obligation that goes beyond caring about the next election. We have an obligation to care for the next generation. So I hope that when Congress returns next week, they'll do so with a greater spirit of compromise and cooperation. America will be watching.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:10 p.m. on June 18 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on June 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 18 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

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