

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2011*

**Remarks at Johnson Controls, Inc., in Holland, Michigan**  
*August 11, 2011*

*The President.* Thank you! Thank you, everybody. Please, please have a seat.

Hello, Johnson Controls! It is good to be back in Holland, Michigan. A couple people I want to thank. In particular, your CEO Steve Roell is here. Steve. And sitting next to him, one of my favorite people and one of the finest Senators in the country, Carl Levin is in the house.

So I just had a chance to see what you guys are doing in this plant. It is very impressive. Elizabeth was giving me the tour, and she was very patient with me. And I think I understood about half of what she said. [*Laughter*]

At a time when Americans are rightly focused on our economy, when Americans are asking about what's our path forward, all of you here at Johnson Controls are providing a powerful answer. This is one of the most advanced factories in the world. You're helping America lead in a growing new industry. You're showing us how we can come back from the worst recession that we've had in generations and start making things here in America that are sold all around the world.

And that's why I'm here today. I've said it before, I will say it again: You cannot bet against the American worker. Don't bet against American ingenuity. The reason a plant like this exists is because we are a country of unmatched freedom, where groundbreaking ideas flourish. We've got the finest universities, the finest technical schools, the most creative scientists, the best entrepreneurs, all of which is why we are home to the world's most dynamic and successful businesses, large and small.

And that's why even in these difficult times, there is not a single country on Earth that wouldn't trade places with us. Not one. We've got to remember that.

But we also know that we face some tough challenges right now. You know what they are. You live them every day in your communities, in your families. You know too many people who are out of work or struggling to get by with fewer shifts or fewer customers. Paychecks aren't big enough. Costs are too high. And even though the economy has started growing again since the recession started in 2007, the fact is, it's not growing fast enough.

Now, some of what we're facing today has to do with events beyond our control. As the economy was improving and improving through 2009, 2010, the beginning of this year, suddenly, it was hit with the unrest in the Middle East that helped send gas prices through the roof. Europe is dealing with all sorts of financial turmoil that is lapping up on our shores. Japan's tragic earthquake hurt economies around the globe, including ours, cut off some supply chains that were very important to us. And all of this has further challenged our economy. And as we've seen, it's playing out in the stock market, wild swings, up and down, and it makes folks nervous. And it affects the savings of families all across America.

Now, challenges like these—earthquakes, revolutions—those are things we can't control. But what we can control is our response to these challenges. What we can control is what happens in Washington. Unfortunately, what we've seen in Washington the last few months has been the worst kind of partisanship, the worst kind of gridlock, and that gridlock has

undermined public confidence and impeded our efforts to take the steps we need for our economy. It's made things worse instead of better.

So what I want to say to you, Johnson Controls, is: There is nothing wrong with our country. There is something wrong with our politics. There's something wrong with our politics that we need to fix.

We know there are things we can do right now that will help accelerate growth and job creation, that will support the work going on here at Johnson Controls, here in Michigan, and all across America. We can do some things right now that will make a difference. We know there are things we have to do to erase a legacy of debt that hangs over the economy. But time and again, we've seen partisan brinksmanship get in the way, as if winning the next election is more important than fulfilling our responsibilities to you and to our country. This downgrade you've been reading about could have been entirely avoided if there had been a willingness to compromise in Congress. See, it didn't happen because we don't have the capacity to pay our bills, it happened because Washington doesn't have the capacity to come together and get things done. It was a self-inflicted wound.

That's why people are frustrated. Maybe you hear it in my voice; that's why I'm frustrated. Because you deserve better. You guys deserve better.

All of you, from the CEO down, are working hard, taking care of your kids or your parents, maybe both. You're living within your means. You may be trying to save for your child's college education or saving for retirement. You're donating to the church or the food pantry. You're trying to help the community. You're doing your part. You're living up to your responsibilities. It's time for Washington to do the same, to match your resolve and to match your decency and to show the same sense of honor and discipline. That is not too much to ask. That's what the American people are looking for.

And if that can happen, we know what's possible. We know what we can achieve. Look at this factory. Look what's happening in Holland, Michigan. Every day, hundreds of people are going to work on the technologies that are helping us to fight our way out of this recession. Every day, you're building high-tech batteries so that we lead the world in manufacturing, the best cars and the best trucks. And that just doesn't mean jobs in Michigan. You're buying equipment and parts from suppliers in Florida and New Mexico and Ohio and Wisconsin and all across America.

So let's think about it, what made this possible? The most important part is you: your drive, your work ethic, your ingenuity, your management. The grit and optimism that says, "We've got an idea for a new battery technology or a new manufacturing process, and we're going to take that leap, and we're going to make an investment. And we're going to hire some folks, and we're going to see it through." That's what made it possible.

But what also made this possible are the actions that we took together, as a nation, through our government, the fact that we were willing to invest in the research and the technology that holds so much promise for jobs and growth, the fact that we helped create together the conditions where businesses like this can prosper.

That's why we're investing in clean energy. That's why I brought together the world's largest auto companies who agreed, for the first time, to nearly double the distance their cars can go on a gallon of gas. That's going to save customers thousands of dollars at the pump. It's going to cut our dependence on foreign oil. It's going to promote innovation and jobs, and it's going to mean more groundbreakings and more jobs posting for companies like Johnson

Controls. And that's how America will lead the world in automotive innovation and production and exports in this country.

Think about it. That's what we got done, and by the way, we didn't go through Congress to do it. [*Laughter*] But we did use the tools of government—us working together—to help make it happen.

Now, there are more steps that we can take to help this economy grow even faster. There are things we can do right now that will put more money in your pockets, will help businesses sell more products around the world, will put people to work in Michigan and across the country. And to get these things done, we do need Congress.

They're commonsense ideas that have been supported in the past by Democrats and Republicans, things that are supported by Carl Levin. The only thing keeping us back is our politics. The only thing preventing these bills from being passed is the refusal of some folks in Congress to put country ahead of party. There are some in Congress right now who would rather see their opponents lose than see America win.

And that has to stop. It's got to stop. We're supposed to all be on the same team, especially when we're going through tough times. We can't afford to play games, not right now, not when the stakes are so high for our economy.

And if you agree with me—it doesn't matter if you're a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent—you've got to let Congress know. You've got to tell them you've had enough of the theatrics. You've had enough of the politics. Stop sending out press releases. Start passing some bills that we all know will help our economy right now. That's what they need to do. They've got to hear from you.

Let me be specific. I'll give you some examples. You've got to tell them to extend the payroll tax cut so middle class families will continue to have more money to spend. We passed this in December. The average family received \$1,000 from that tax cut, and you need to get it again, because the economy is still weak. It's going to help you make ends meet, but it's also going to mean more customers for businesses. It'll increase demand. It's right for the economy, and I would sign that bill today if it came to my desk.

Tell Congress to get past their differences and send me a road construction bill so that companies can put tens of thousands of people to work right now building our roads and bridges and airports and seaports. I mean, think about it, we—America used to have the best stuff: best roads, best airports, best seaports. We're slipping behind because we're not investing in it, because of politics and gridlock. Do you want to put people to work right now rebuilding America? You've got to send that message to Congress.

Send a message to Congress to come to an agreement on trade deals that will level the playing field and open markets to our businesses so we can sell more goods to countries around the world. We've got a lot of Americans driving Kias and Hyundais. I want folks in Korea driving Fords and Chevys and Chryslers. I'd like to see that. I want to see billions of dollars more products sold around the world stamped with three words: "Made in America." [*Applause*] "Made in America." Those trade bills are teed up; they're ready to go. Let's get it done.

Tell Congress we need to reform the patent system so entrepreneurs like the ones who developed some of the technology here can turn their ideas into businesses more quickly, so

companies like this one can better compete against companies around the world. We shouldn't make it so difficult for somebody with a good idea to translate that into a business.

Tell Congress we've got hundreds of thousands of bright, talented, skilled Americans who are returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan. And I've proposed connecting those veterans looking for work with businesses that need their skills. You've got 24-year-olds and 25-year-olds that are leading platoons and handling equipment that's worth tens or hundreds of billions of dollars, and they come back here and they can't find a job? Let's put them to work. These are things we can do right now.

These are things I've already proposed, we've worked out the glitches, the legislation is drafted, let's get it done.

Now, given the weaknesses of the economy, we need to do even more than that. And over the coming weeks, I'm going to be putting out more proposals, week by week, that will help businesses hire and put people back to work. And I'm going to keep at it until every single American who wants a job can find one.

Now, we do have to pay for these things. And in order to pay for these things, Congress has to finish the job of reducing the Nation's budget deficit in a sensible, responsible way. Not just with more cuts this year or next year. Those cuts would weaken the economy more than it already is, and we've already cut a trillion dollars in what's called discretionary spending. What we need is a long-term plan to get our Nation's finances in order. That's the only way we can invest in places like this. That's how we can fund the research at the Department of Energy. That's how we can fund the community college that trains folks to be able to work here. That's how we can fund the infrastructure and the technology that will help us win the future, by doing what you do, what families do.

Think about it: When things are tight you cut out those things you cannot afford, even if it's tough, to pay for the things that really matter. You don't cut out the college fund for your kids. You stop maybe going out as often. You don't stop taking care of your parent who needs care. You cut back on some of the things that you don't really need. It's the same principle applies to government. And by the way, in your own families, I'm assuming you don't just keep all the stuff you like and tell your spouse, you got to get rid of all the stuff she likes or he likes. *[Laughter]* That wouldn't work in my household. You don't just cut out the stuff that's important to you and—or keep all the stuff that's important to you and cut out the stuff that's important for your kids. The same is true for us as an American family.

We can't ask the people in this room—working families, middle class families—to bear the entire burden. We're not going to balance our budgets on the back of middle class and working people in this country. Everybody has got to do their part. Everybody has got to do their part. Everybody has got to chip in. That's fair. You learn it in kindergarten. That's what all this fuss was about in Washington: Are we going to deal with our deficit in a way that's fair? And that means closing tax loopholes for billionaires before we cut college loans for young people. That means ending Government subsidies for oil and gas companies that are doing very well before you cut health care for seniors. It means making sure that the biggest corporations pay their fair share in taxes before we gut the investments in technology and clean energy that made this factory a reality.

Now, that's just common sense. It should have bipartisan support. These are things we could be doing right now. And that's how we can jump-start this economy and speed up the

recovery and get more folks working, while making sure that we get our fiscal house in order. We can do both.

And I'll be laying out more proposals in the days ahead. And I'm going to keep after every idea and every serious proposal to help us grow this economy, until everybody who wants a job can find one.

But I want everybody to understand here, the problem is not that we don't have answers. The problem is, is that folks are playing political games. And we've got a long way to go. We didn't get into this mess overnight, and it's going to take time to get us out. That's the truth. But that's no excuse for inaction. It's time to put aside ultimatums. It's time to stop drawing lines in the sand.

You know, in the aftermath of this whole debt ceiling debacle, and with the markets going up and down like they are, there's been a lot of talk in Washington right now that I should call Congress back early. The last thing we need is Congress spending more time arguing in DC. What I figure is, they need to spend more time out here listening to you and hearing how fed up you are. That's why I'm here. That's why I'll be traveling to a lot of communities like this one over the next week. That's what Congress should be doing: go back home, listen to people's frustrations with all the gridlock. Listen to how frustrated folks are with the constant bickering and the unwillingness to compromise and the desire to score points, even if it's at the expense of our country. And if they're listening hard enough, maybe they'll come back to Washington ready to compromise and ready to create jobs and ready to reduce our deficit, ready to do what you sent them there to do.

You know, America voted for divided Government. And that makes it tough. You got one party controlling the House of Representatives, another party controlling the Senate. So they voted for—you voted for divided Government. But you didn't vote for dysfunctional Government. You didn't vote for a do-nothing Government. You didn't vote for a Government that—where folks are just looking out for special interests. You didn't vote for a Government that is beholden to lobbyists.

We've got a lot of work to do, and the only way we will get it done is if everybody, Democrats and Republicans, find a way to put country ahead of party. That's what I'm fighting for. I'm here to enlist you in that fight. You've got to hold everybody accountable, because if we can come together and find common ground, there is no stopping the United States of America. There is no holding us back. We can strengthen this economy, and we can put our Nation back to work. And we can lead the world in growing industries. And we will make it through these economic storms and reach calmer waters stronger than we were before.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Elizabeth Rolinski, vice president of operations, Johnson Controls Power Solutions.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Johnson Controls, Inc., in Holland, MI.

*Locations:* Holland, MI.

*Names:* Levin, Carl; Roell, Stephen A.; Rolinski, Elizabeth.

*Subjects:* Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Budget, Federal : Budget Control Act of 2011; Budget, Federal : Congressional spending restraint; Budget, Federal : Deficit and

national debt; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Entrepreneurship :: Promotion efforts; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Government bonds, creditworthiness; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Market volatility; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Career training and continuing education; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Domestic sources; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Energy : Hybrid and alternative fuel automobiles :: Battery technology, U.S. production; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Subsidies, elimination; Europe : Financial markets :: Unrest; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Japan : Earthquake and tsunami, damage and recovery efforts; Michigan : Johnson Controls, Inc., in Holland; Michigan : President's visit; Middle East : Political unrest and violence; Science and technology : Patent approval process, improvement efforts; Science and technology : Research and development; Taxation : Corporate tax rates; Taxation : Payroll tax cut; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Veterans : Unemployment and underemployment.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201100563.