

**The President's Weekly Address**

*February 23, 2013*

Hi, everybody. Our top priority as a country right now should be doing everything we can to grow our economy and create good, middle class jobs.

And yet, less than 1 week from now, Congress is poised to allow a series of arbitrary, automatic budget cuts that will do the exact opposite. They'll slow our economy. They'll eliminate good jobs. They'll leave many families who are already stretched to the limit scrambling to figure out what to do.

But here's the thing: These cuts don't have to happen. Congress can turn them off anytime with just a little compromise. They can pass a balanced plan for deficit reduction. They can cut spending in a smart way and close wasteful tax loopholes for the well off and well connected.

Unfortunately, it appears that Republicans in Congress have decided that instead of compromising—instead of asking anything of the wealthiest Americans—they'd rather let these cuts fall squarely on the middle class.

And here's what that choice means. Once these cuts take effect, thousands of teachers and educators will be laid off, and tens of thousands of parents will have to scramble to find child care for their kids. Air traffic controllers and airport security will see cutbacks, causing delays across the country. Even President Bush's Director of the National Institutes of Health says these cuts will set back medical science for a generation.

Already, the threat of these cuts has forced the Navy to delay the deployment of an aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf, affecting our ability to respond to threats in an unstable part of the world. And just this week, the Pentagon announced that if these cuts go through, almost 800,000 defense employees—the equivalent of every person in Miami and Cleveland combined—will be forced to take an unpaid leave.

That's what this choice means. Are Republicans in Congress really willing to let these cuts fall on our kids' schools and mental health care just to protect tax loopholes for corporate jet owners? Are they really willing to slash military health care and the border patrol just because they refuse to eliminate tax breaks for big oil companies? Are they seriously prepared to inflict more pain on the middle class because they refuse to ask anything more of those at the very top?

These are the questions Republicans in Congress need to ask themselves. And I'm hopeful they'll change their minds. Because the American people have worked too hard for too long to see everything they've built undone by partisan recklessness in Washington.

Instead of these reckless, unbalanced cuts, I believe we should work together to build on the more than \$2.5 trillion in deficit reduction we've already achieved. We should do it in a balanced way: with smart spending cuts, entitlement reform, and tax reform. That's my plan. It's got tough cuts, tough reforms, and asks more of the wealthiest Americans. It's on the White House web site for everybody to see. And it requires Democrats and Republicans to meet halfway to resolve the problem. That's what the American people expect. And that's what you deserve.

We just need Republicans in Washington to come around. Because we need their help to finish the job of reducing our deficit in a smart way that doesn't hurt our economy or our people. After all, as we learned in the 1990s, nothing shrinks the deficit faster than a growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs. That has to be our driving focus. That has to be our north star: making America a magnet for good jobs, equipping our people with the skills required to fill those jobs, making sure your hard work leads to a decent living. That's what this city should be focused on like a laser. And I'm going to keep pushing folks here to remember that.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:20 p.m. on February 22 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on February 23. In the address, the President referred to former President George W. Bush; and Elias A. Zeroing, former Director, National Institutes of Health. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 23.

*Categories:* : Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Zeroing, Elias A.

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