

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

**Remarks at the Safeway Incorporated Distribution Center in Upper
Marlboro, Maryland**
February 18, 2014

The President. Well, good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. It is good to be here. And I want to thank Jack Jacobs and all the folks at Safeway for having us here today at this busy distribution center, where delivery trucks get everything from Doritos to diapers where they need to go. And by the way, I have a little soft spot for Safeway in my heart, because some of you know I went to high school in Hawaii and I was living with my grandparents, and our main grocery store was Safeway. It was right down the way. And so my grandmother would send me out to go shopping at Safeway, and everybody there always treated me very well. So I very much appreciate the good work you guys do.

And I want to thank all the workers and businesspeople and labor leaders and environmental leaders who are here today as we take another big step to grow our economy and reduce America's dependence on foreign oil.

Now, in my State of the Union Address, I said that this would be a year of action, and I meant it. So over the past 3 weeks, I've acted to require Federal contractors to pay their employees a fair wage of at least \$10.10 an hour, because we believe in a higher minimum wage. I've ordered an across-the-board reform of job training programs so we can train workers with the skills that employers actually need and match them to the good jobs that are out there right now needing to be filled. I directed the Treasury Secretary to create something we're calling a MyRA. It's a new way to help working Americans start saving for retirement. And we've brought together business leaders who've committed to helping more unemployed Americans find work, no matter how long they've been looking.

So the point is, I'm eager to work with Congress wherever I can, but whenever I can act on my own to expand opportunity for more Americans and help build our middle class, I'm going to do that.

And all of you, I think, understand that although the economy has been doing better, we've spent the past 5 years fighting our way back from the worst recession of our lifetimes. Now, the economy is growing. Our businesses have created over 8½ million new jobs over the past 4 years. The unemployment rate is actually the lowest it's been in over 5 years. But the trends, the long-term trends, that have hurt middle class families for decades have continued: folks at the top doing better than ever before; average wages and incomes have barely budged. Too many Americans are working harder than ever just to keep up.

So our job is to not only get the economy growing, but also to reverse these trends and make sure that everybody can succeed. We've got to build an economy that works for everybody, not just the fortunate few. Opportunity for all, that's the essence of America. No matter who you are, no matter where you come from, no matter how you start out, if you're willing to work hard and take responsibility, you can succeed.

So I've laid out an opportunity agenda to help us do that. Part one is create more new jobs that pay good wages, jobs in manufacturing, energy, exports, innovation. Part two, we've got to

train folks with the skills they need to fill those jobs. Part three, we've got to guarantee every child access to a world-class education. Part four is making sure that the economy rewards hard work with equal pay for equal work and wages you can live on, savings you can retire on, health insurance you can count on that's there for when you need it.

Now, there are very few factors that are helping grow our economy more, bringing more good jobs back to America than our commitment to American manufacturing and American energy. And that's why we're here today.

Five years ago, we set out to break our dependence on foreign oil. And today, America is closer to energy independence than we've been in decades. For the first time in nearly 20 years, America produces more oil here at home than we buy from other countries. Our levels of dangerous carbon pollution that contributes to climate change has actually gone down even as our production has gone up. And one of the reasons why is because we dedicated ourselves to manufacturing new cars and new trucks that go farther on a gallon of gas. And that saves families money, it cuts down harmful pollution, and it creates new advances in American technology.

So for decades, the fuel efficiency standards of our cars and trucks was stuck in neutral even as other kinds of technology leapt forward. And that left families and businesses and our economy vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices. Every time oil prices shot up, the economy got hurt. Our automakers were in danger of being left in the dust by foreign automakers. Carbon pollution was going unchecked, which was having severe impacts on our weather.

And that's why, after taking office, my administration worked with automakers, autoworkers, environmental advocates, and States across the country, and we put in— we set in motion the first-ever national policy aimed at both increasing gas mileage and decreasing greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks sold in the United States. And as our automakers retooled and prepared to start making the world's best cars again, we aimed to raise fuel economy standards to 35.5 miles per gallon for a new vehicle by 2016.

Audience member. Wow!

The President. Yeah, wow. [*Laughter*]

That was an increase of more than 8 miles per gallon over what cars had averaged at the time. And what we were clear about was, if you set a rule, if you set a clear goal, we would give our companies the certainty that they needed to innovate and outbuild the rest of the world. They could figure it out if they had a goal that they were trying to reach. And thanks to their ingenuity and hard work, we're going to meet that goal.

Two years later, we've already seen enormous progress, and we're building on that progress by setting an even more ambitious target: We're going to double the distance our cars and light trucks can go on a gallon of gas by 2025. We're going to double it. And that means— [*applause*—that's big news. Because what it means is, you've got to fill up every 2 weeks instead of every week, and that saves the typical family more than \$8,000 at the pump over time. I'm assuming you can use \$8,000— [*laughter*—that you're not paying at the gas station. And in the process, it cuts American oil consumption by 12 billion barrels.

So we let the automakers decide how they were going to do it. We set the goal, and we said go figure it out. And they invested in innovative and cost-effective technologies. And some are already making cars that beat the target of nearly 55 miles per gallon. They've got plug-in hybrids. They've got electric vehicles. They're taking advantage of the investments that the

Recovery Act made and American advances in battery technology. So cars are getting better, and they're getting more fuel efficient all the time.

And for anybody who said this couldn't be done or that it would hurt the American auto industry, the American auto industry sold more cars last year than any time since 2007. And since we stepped in to help our automakers retool—[*applause*]
—since we stepped in to help the automakers retool, the American auto industry has created almost 425,000 new jobs.

So we raised fuel efficiency, helped consumers, helped improve air quality, and we're making better cars than ever, and the automakers are hiring folks again for good jobs all across the country. More plants are running at full capacity—some are even running three shifts, 24 hours a day—churning out some of the most high-tech, fuel-efficient, high-performance cars in the world.

And that's a story of American ingenuity, American grit, and everybody has a right to be proud of it. But today we're taking the next step.

Heavy-duty trucks account for just 4 percent of all the vehicles on the highway. I know when you're driving sometimes, it feels like it's more—[*laughter*]
—but they're only 4 percent of all the vehicles. But they're responsible for about 20 percent of carbon pollution in the transportation sector. So trucks like these are responsible for about 20 percent of our on-road fuel consumption. And because they haul about 70 percent of all domestic freight—70 percent of the stuff we use, everything from flat-screen TVs to diapers, to produce, to you name it—every mile that we gain in fuel efficiency is worth thousands of dollars of savings every year.

So that's why we're investing in research to get more fuel economy gains. And thanks to a partnership between industry and my administration, the truck behind me was able to achieve a 75-percent improvement in fuel economy over the last year—75 percent. That's why I call this Super Truck. [*Laughter*] It's impressive, this one right here as well. I mean, these are—first of all, they're really big. [*Laughter*] But you can see how they're—how they've redesigned the truck in order for us to save fuel economy.

And improving gas mileage for these trucks are going to drive down our oil imports even further. That reduces carbon pollution even more, cuts down on businesses' fuel costs, which should pay off in lower prices for consumers. So it's not just a win-win, it's a win-win-win. You've got three wins. [*Laughter*]

In 2011, we set new standards for medium- and heavy-duty trucks to take effect this year and last until 2018. Three weeks ago, in my State of the Union Address, I said we'd build on that success. Today I'm directing the Secretary of Transportation, Anthony Foxx, who is right here, former mayor of Charlotte, and Gina McCarthy, the Administrator of the EPA—two outstanding public servants—their charge, their goal, is to develop fuel economy standards for heavy-duty trucks that will take us well into the next decade, just like our cars. And they're going to partner with manufacturers and autoworkers and States and other stakeholders, truckers, to come up with a proposal by March of next year, and they'll complete the rule a year after that.

And businesses that buy these types of trucks have sent a clear message to the nearly 30,000 workers who build them: We want trucks that use less oil, save more money, cut pollution. So far, 23 companies have joined our National Clean Fleets Partnership to reduce their oil consumption or replace their old fleets of trucks with more fuel-efficient models. And collectively, they operate about 1 million commercial vehicles nationwide.

So this is a lot of companies, and some of them are competitors. And if rivals like PepsiCo and Coca-Cola, or UPS and FedEx, or AT&T and Verizon—if they can join together on this, then maybe Democrats and Republicans can do the same. [*Applause*] Maybe Democrats and Republicans can get together.

So when you see these companies' new electric- or natural gas-powered delivery or garbage trucks, it's due to this partnership. And the reason we're here is because Safeway was an early leader on this issue. By improving the aerodynamics of its trucks, investing in larger trailers, more efficient tires, Safeway has improved its own fuel efficiency. And the results are so solid that Safeway now encourages all the companies it hires to ship its products to do the same.

So to help our businesses and manufacturers meet this new goal, we're offering new tax credits, both for companies that manufacture heavy-duty, alternative fuel vehicles and those that build fuel infrastructure so that trucks running on biodiesel or natural gas or hybrid electric technology, they'll have more places to fill up.

Let me say this: The goal we're setting is ambitious, but these are areas where ambition has worked out really well for us so far. Don't make small plans, make big plans. And anybody who had dire predictions for the auto industry, said we couldn't do it, manufacturers couldn't bring jobs back to America—every time they say, that they're proven wrong. Every time somebody says you can't grow the economy while bringing down pollution, it's turned out, they've been wrong. Anybody who says we can't compete when it comes to clean energy technologies like solar and wind, they've had to eat those words. You can't bet against American workers or American industry. You can't bet against America. Otherwise, you're going to lose money every time, because we know how to do this when we set broad, ambitious goals for ourselves.

So from day one, we've known we had to rebuild our economy and transition to a clean energy future, and we knew it wouldn't be easy or quick, and we've got a lot of work to do on both counts. But the economy is growing. We're creating jobs. We're generating more clean energy. We're cutting our dependence on foreign oil. We're pumping out less dangerous carbon pollution. If we keep going down this road, then we're going to have a future full of good-paying jobs.

We've got assembly lines that are humming with the components of a clean energy age. We got more of the best trucks and cars in the world designed and engineered and made in America.

If we keep on going, we're going to leave a better future for our children. And I'm proud of Safeway and all its workers for helping to show us the way. If it can be done here, it can be done all across the country.

So congratulations to all of you. Thank you, and God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jack L. Jacobs, director of distribution for the Eastern division, Safeway Inc.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Safeway Inc., distribution center in Upper Marlboro, MD.

Locations: Upper Marlboro, MD.

Names: Foxx, Anthony R.; Jacobs, Jack L.; Lew, Jacob J.; McCarthy, Regina

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