

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

**Remarks at the Ford Motor Company Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne,
Michigan**

January 7, 2015

The President. Thank you, everybody! Give Mia a big round of applause for that outstanding introduction. Well, hello, Michigan! Happy New Year to everybody.

Audience members. Happy New Year!

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I—what was that?

Audience member. Love you, man.

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all the outstanding leaders that we've got here today. I want to introduce some of them. We've got Secretary of Labor Tom Perez here. We've got Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan here. Senator Gary Peters is in the house. Congresswoman Debbie Dingell is here. Your outstanding CEO, Mark Fields, is here.

Now, I have to say, I love the Secret Service, I love the Beasts that they put me in and—that's what we call the cars I drive in, "the Beasts." So I like my ride these days. And it was made in Michigan too. But I just had a chance to look at these new Mustangs, and I've got to say that the Mustangs had a little more style, a little more flavor. [*Laughter*]

Bill Ford is in the house. Surprisingly enough, we talked a little bit about Sunday. [*Laughter*] Now, listen, I'm a Bears fan. You beat us twice. But even a Bears fan has to admit—

Audience member. We got hosed!

The President. —that that was a little suspect. I have never seen anything like that before. I would have been pretty irritated. Were you irritated? Oh, yes. [*Laughter*] But all I can say—because I'm used to saying this, I'm a Bears fan—there's always next year. [*Laughter*] And look, you've got a lot to be hopeful for. First of all, you've got one of the best defenses in the league. A fine young quarterback, Megatron. And if there's one thing that you can take to the bank when talking about Detroit is that Detroit always comes back. [*Applause*] Detroit always comes back.

And that's why I'm here today. One of my New Year's resolutions is to make sure that more Americans in Wayne, more Americans in Michigan, more Americans all across this great country—that everybody feels like they're coming back. And there is no doubt, thanks to the steps that we took early on to rescue our economy and to rebuild it on a new foundation, we are entering into the new year with new confidence that America is coming back.

Now, you don't have to take my word for it. The facts are the facts. And let's face it, a lot of times the media doesn't like reporting on good news, but every once in a while, it's important for us to hear some good news, not to make us complacent, but to give us confidence that if we work harder, we can make even more good news.

So here's how we begin this year. Last year, 2014, was the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s. [Applause] Since the 1990s. We've now had a 57-month streak of private sector job creation. We've created nearly 11 million new jobs. That's the longest stretch in our history of private sector, uninterrupted job creation.

Here's another way of thinking about it. Since 2010, we, America, have put more people back to work than Europe, Japan, and every other advanced economy combined. [Applause] Combined. And let me tell you what's leading the way: American manufacturing. After a decade of decline, American manufacturing is in its best stretch of job growth since the 1990s. Here in Michigan, manufacturers have created more than a hundred thousand jobs, helping to cut your unemployment rate in half.

So we're making more stuff. We're selling it around the world. America is the number-one producer of oil, the number-one producer of gas. It's helping to save drivers about a buck-10 a gallon at the pump over this time last year. And the cars that you make help everybody go a little further on that gallon of gas.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act—also known as Obamacare—about 10 million Americans gained health insurance just over this last year. We've cut our deficits by about two-thirds. I'd like people to think about that, because when they do surveys of, like, ordinary folks on the street and they ask them, are the deficits going up or are they coming down, everybody automatically assumes, well, Government spending and deficits must be going up. Deficits have come down by two-thirds since I took office—by two-thirds. They're going down. And after 13 long years, our war in Afghanistan has come to a responsible end, which means more of our brave troops have come home and spent time with their families during the holidays.

So the point is, we're moving. These 6 years have been tough, demanded hard work, demanded sacrifice on everybody's part. You guys know that more than most. Which means that as a country, we have every right to be proud of what we've got to show for all that hard work.

America's resurgence is real. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise. We've got the best cards, and we are doing better than just about anybody else on Earth. And now that we've got some calmer waters, now that the worst of the crisis is behind us, if we all do our part, if we all pitch in, then we can make sure that this rising tide is actually lifting all the boats, not just some. We can make sure that the middle class is the engine that powers American prosperity for decades to come.

And that's going to be the focus of my State of the Union address in a couple of weeks: building on the progress that we've already made. But I've got to admit, I've only got 2 years left in office; I didn't want to wait for the State of the Union to talk about all the things that make this country great and how we can make it better. So I thought I'd get started this week. I figured, why wait? It's like opening your Christmas presents a little early.

So today I'm here in Detroit, going to talk about the incredible things that have happened in the auto industry and what more we can do with manufacturing. Tomorrow I'm going to visit Arizona, a State that's—was hit about as hard as anybody by the housing crisis, because we want to talk about how we're making homeownership a reality for more middle class families.

On Friday, I'm going to go to Tennessee, a State that's making big strides in education, to show how we can help every American get the education they need to get ahead in this new economy.

But today I wanted to come here to Michigan because this State proves no matter how tough times get, Americans are tougher. So—and plus, I wanted to see the new Mustang. [Laughter]

Now, just—let's just take a minute and think about what you've had to fight through. A few years ago, nearly one in five autoworkers got a punch in the gut with a pink slip. The year before I took office, 400,000 jobs vanished in this industry—400,000. Sales plunged 40 percent. And then, as the financial crisis built, we faced what once seemed unimaginable when just two of the Big Three—GM and Chrysler—were on the brink of failure.

Now, this is the heartbeat of American manufacturing right here. And it was flatlining. And we had a choice to make. We could have kept giving billions of taxpayer dollars to the auto industry without asking for accountability or change in return. But that would have just kicked the problem down the road. We could have done nothing, which some people said we should do, and let those companies fail. But think about what that would have meant for this country. The suppliers, the distributors, the communities that depend on the workers who patronize the restaurants and shop at the stores—all those companies would have gone under also.

And look, the fact is, nobody was in a stronger position than Ford. Bill and the team had done a great job steering Ford through tough times, but Bill and others are the first to admit that you could have had a cascading effect if the whole supply chain in the U.S. auto industry starts declining. Then, Ford could have gone under too. Plants would have shuttered. We would have lost this iconic industry, sold for scraps. And folks like you—the men and women who built these companies with your hands—would have been left hanging out to dry. And the communities you depended on—the schoolteachers, the small-business owners, the servers in the diner, and, let's face it, the barkeep—[laughter]—I'm just saying. [Laughter] Are you a barkeep, or you're just waving at me? [Laughter]

Audience member. [Inaudible]—a teacher.

The President. But everybody would have been affected. Their jobs were at stake too.

And it's more than that. The jobs in the auto industry have always been about more than a paycheck. They're a source of pride for generations. It was representative of what it meant to get into the middle class. You work hard in this job, you could afford to raise a family, buy a house, go on vacation, retire with some dignity. You knew you were making something that people could count on. It meant something. Every car you sent off the line brought you that step closer to doing the right thing by your family and giving something to your kids and having a sense of security in your life. So plants like this one built more than just cars, they built the middle class in this country. And that was worth fighting for.

So in exchange for the help, we demanded responsibility. We said to the auto industry, you've got to change with the times. Plants retooled. Plants restructured. Labor and management worked together, settled their differences. Everybody put some skin in the game. Everybody made some sacrifices. It wasn't just some, it wasn't just the workers who gave something up—everybody.

And that's how things work best, by the way, when everybody is in it: when workers and businesses work together; when whoever is in the boardroom and folks on the floor, they both understand they're in it together. And we believe America is best when everybody is in it together. And we rejected the false choice that either unions or businesses could succeed but not both. We said: You know what, what's going to work for the company is also going to work

for that worker and vice versa, which means when the company is doing better, then the workers have got to get their share as well.

And Ford rejected the false choice that they could either take care of their shareholder or take care of their worker. They did both. And the company benefited, and America benefited. We believed in shared sacrifice and that shared sacrifice leads to shared prosperity.

Now, I've got to tell you, I was talking to the Detroit News. They were asking: What was it like when you were making this decision? I just want everybody to be clear: It was not popular. Even in Michigan, it wasn't popular. I remember they did a poll and, like, in Michigan, it was like only 10 percent were in favor. *[Laughter]* And you don't have to be a genius political analyst to say 10 percent's not very high. *[Laughter]*

And look—and it wasn't on my to-do list when I ran for President. I wasn't expecting to have to do this. But I ran not to be just doing the popular things, I ran not just to do the easy things, I ran to do the right thing. And saving the American auto industry was the right thing to do. Betting on you was the right thing to do. *[Applause]* It was the right thing to do. And that bet has paid off for America, because the American auto industry is back.

Now, part of the reason that we wanted to start this trip here is not just because I wanted to see the new Mustang—*[laughter]*—not just because the American auto industry is back, but because last month, we actually marked a milestone. Last month, the rescue of the auto industry officially came to an end. The auto companies have now repaid taxpayers every dime and more of what my administration invested in you. You paid the taxpayers back with your hard work, with your dedication.

And over the past 5 years, this industry created about 500,000 new jobs. Last year, American autoworkers churned out cars faster than any year since 2005. Ford has brought jobs back from Mexico, created nearly 24,000 new jobs across this country, including 1,800 new jobs right here in this plant. And after more than a century since Henry Ford introduced the moving assembly line, you're reinventing it: one production line for gas, electric, hybrid, plug-in vehicles. That's the first in the world, right here in Wayne, Michigan. *[Applause]* First in the world. That's always cool when you do something first.

And you're helping rebuild the middle class for the 21st century. Just down the road, in Lincoln Park, UAW-Ford Joint Apprenticeship Program is providing workers with hands-on training in the skills that employers need for the jobs of tomorrow. And nationally, by the way, 87 percent of all apprentices are employed after they complete their apprenticeship program, with an average starting wage of \$50,000. So the more folks we get into apprenticeships, the more folks are getting middle class jobs.

And that's why I called on last year for businesses across the country to create more and expand more apprenticeship programs. And since then, we've seen the largest increase in apprenticeships in nearly a decade. And now my administration is investing a hundred million dollars in an American Apprenticeship Grant competition. We're going to build on this momentum. We're going to expand successful programs. We want young people to see that they have opportunities. They don't all have to go to a 4-year college. They can get an apprenticeship, save some money, start working, build a family, buy a home, get some Lions tickets. *[Laughter]*

Because everybody came together here and worked together, folks are better off. And some of the most high-tech, fuel-efficient, high-powered, heart-pounding, good-looking, well-

designed, fuel-efficient cars in the world are once again designed, engineered, forged, and built not in Europe, not in Asia, right here in the United States of America. Right here in America.

So because of you—because of you—manufacturing has a future in this country. Manufacturing's actually grown faster than other parts of the economy. And companies are now saying: "You know what, we've got to get back to America; we've got to relocate. We were offshore." And now they're saying: "Uh-oh. America's back; we better get back in there." And that means, because of you, the middle class has a future in this country.

And the auto industry has proved that any comeback is possible. And by the way, so has Motor City. [Applause] So has a Motor City. A year and a half ago, Detroit became the largest city ever to file for bankruptcy. Today, under the leadership of Mayor Duggan, Detroit is charting a new course. Businesses and private investors are making big investments, including Ford, which is helping to launch a tech startup incubator downtown. New restaurants and stores are popping up. Residents are fighting blight, securing abandoned homes, cleaning up neglected neighborhoods.

We're seeing stories of young people who left town for other opportunities, didn't think they could make it here, and suddenly, they're saying, "You know what, maybe I want to get back to Detroit," hoping to be part of the rebirth of this city.

Now, this city still faces big challenges, but you're coming back. Just like the auto industry is going to have to continue to come up with new ideas and new designs and address competition. It never stops. We got to stay hungry. We can't be complacent. Just like America has got to still keep on working. Just like the Lions got to still come up with a little more work. But we're coming back.

And one thing is for sure: We may not all root for the Lions, but America is rooting for Detroit. [Applause] America is rooting for Detroit. We want the Motor City strong. And behind the stories of plants and cities and economic data, it's people. It's all of you.

So I'll just close with a story of a guy named Ramone, because we're rooting for guys like Ramone. Ramone spent 8 years in the military, served in Afghanistan, served in Iraq. Ramone here? Raise your hand, Ramone.

So Ramone is somebody who fought for our freedom, fought for our security. But sometimes, we give lip service to supporting our troops, and then when they come home, they get lost. So when Ramone came home, he had a hard time finding a job because it was a tough economy. He didn't want to be a burden on his family, so he moved into a homeless shelter, took whatever work he could get. And then, one day in 2012, a VA counselor that he'd been working with handed him an application from Ford. Ford was hiring for new shifts.

Imagine what Ramone felt the day he knocked on his grandpa's door—his grandfather who had spent 25 years building Mustangs in Dearborn—and Ramone was able to tell his grandfather he got a job at Ford. And now Ramone has got his own place. And now Ramone has got a good job right on the line here in Wayne. And every day, he's doing just what his grandfather did. And he's proud. He's punching in and building some of the best cars in the world.

If you want to know what America is about, about grit and determination and hard work and sacrifice and looking out for one another and not giving up, think about Ramone. Think about Detroit. Think about the auto industry. Think about the Midwest. Think about Michigan. Think about America.

When our assembly lines grind to a halt, we work together, we get them going again. We don't give up. We get up, we fight back. We come back stronger than before. Thanks to the hard work of people like you, America is coming back. And I'm going to be on your side every step of the way.

Thank you, Michigan. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:22 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mia Dew, employee, and William C. Ford, Jr., executive chairman, Ford Motor Co.; and Matthew Stafford, quarterback, and Calvin "Megatron" Johnson, wide receiver, National Football League's Detroit Lions. He also referred to Mr. Ford in his capacity as vice chairman of the Detroit Lions.

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