

Remarks at a Democratic Governors Association Meeting
February 20, 2015

The President. Well, I want to welcome the Democratic Governors to this meeting and thank them for all the outstanding work that they are doing. I am a little concerned that David Ige of Hawaii does not know what to do with this weather. [*Laughter*] I don't even know if he owns a winter coat.

Governor David Y. Ige of Hawaii. I bought one in Colorado. [*Laughter*]

The President. But this gives me a chance to have an ongoing conversation with Governors. I've said in the past, and it continues to be true: Governors can't afford to just peddle an ideology, they've got to actually make things work on behalf of their constituencies. And this is where a lot of the rubber hits the road.

And the men and women around this table are doing some great work on the issues that are of uppermost priority to this administration. That is, making sure that we've got a strong brand of middle class economics, that we are giving opportunity for people who are working hard out there to succeed, and make sure that their wages and their retirement and their health care and the education for their kids—that those things are available and providing them pathways to be able to improve their lives.

We have made enormous progress over the last 6 years. As I've said before, last year, we saw the strongest job growth since the 1990s. We've had 59 straight months of uninterrupted private sector job growth, and manufacturing is stronger than it's been since the nineties. So we're seeing steady improvement in the economy. But we've got a lot more work to do. And every one of the Governors here would acknowledge that there are still people who are not being reached by the progress that's been made and that we've got to really tackle some of these issues.

We've got to make sure that we are providing the kind of job training that people need to fill the jobs of the future. We've got to make sure that education is affordable and that we're using, not only our 4-year colleges and universities, but also our community colleges, which is why I'm going to be talking to them about how we can promote this notion of the first 2 years of college—community college—free for kids who are willing to earn it.

We need to make sure that workers are getting paid a fair wage. And I want to congratulate a number of the people around this room that either have already been able to pass a strong minimum wage in their State or are in the process of doing so and are advocating for it in the future.

I know there are others around this table who are advancing an agenda for paid sick leave. We've got 43 million people in this country, if they get sick, they've got to make a decision about whether they go to work sick, which is probably not very good for their coworkers or their employers or losing their paycheck, something that they probably can't afford. And so whether it's the work that's being done by Governor Malloy, when it comes to being the first in the State to mandate paid leave, Governor Inslee fighting to do the same, Governor Shumlin signing a law to raise Vermont's minimum wage, others like newly elected Governor Raimondo, working to increase the minimum wage in Rhode Island, we're seeing a lot of great work being done around this table.

And we're also going to be talking about some issues of national importance where we've had real leadership at the State level: clean energy, for example. Obviously, Governor Hickenlooper in Colorado has been doing a lot of work on those issues. We care about climate change, and we don't think it contradicts our need to also continually grow the economy and be energy independent.

So I want to thank everybody here. I'm looking forward to a great conversation. And all these folks are also then going to be putting on their dancing shoes, I think, on Sunday—*[laughter]*—when we have a chance to get all the Governors together for a little fellowship.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:15 p.m. in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Dannel P. Malloy of Connecticut; and Gov. Jay R. Inslee of Washington.

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