

The President's News Conference July 11, 2011

The President. Good morning, everybody. I want to give a quick update on what's happening with the debt negotiations, provide my perspective, and then I'm going to take a few questions.

As all of you know, I met with congressional leaders yesterday. We're going to be meeting again today, and we're going to meet every single day until we get this thing resolved.

The good news is that all the leaders continue to believe, rightly, that it is not acceptable for us not to raise the debt ceiling and to allow the U.S. Government to default. We cannot threaten the United States full faith and credit for the first time in our history. We still have a lot of work to do, though, to get this problem solved. And so let me just make a couple of points.

First of all, all of us agree that we should use this opportunity to do something meaningful on debt and deficits. And the reports that have been out there have been largely accurate that Speaker Boehner and myself had been in a series of conversations about doing the biggest deal possible so that we could actually resolve our debt and our deficit challenge for a long stretch of time. And I want to say I appreciate Speaker Boehner's good faith efforts on that front.

What I emphasized to the broader group of congressional leaders yesterday is, now is the time to deal with these issues. If not now, when? I've been hearing from my Republican friends for quite some time that it is a moral imperative for us to tackle our debt and our deficits in a serious way. I've been hearing from them that this is one of the things that's creating uncertainty and holding back investment on the part of the business community. And so what I've said to them is, let's go. And it is possible for us to construct a package that would be balanced, would share sacrifice, would involve both parties taking on their sacred cows, would involve some meaningful changes to Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid that would preserve the integrity of

the programs and keep our sacred trust with our seniors, but make sure those programs were there for not just this generation, but for the next generation; that it is possible for us to bring in revenues in a way that does not impede our current recovery, but is fair and balanced.

We have agreed to a series of spending cuts that will make the Government leaner, meaner, more effective, more efficient, and give taxpayers a greater bang for their buck. That includes defense spending. That includes health spending. It includes some programs that I like very much, and we'd—be nice to have, but that we can't afford right now.

And if you look at this overall package, we could achieve a situation in which our deficits were at a manageable level and our debt levels were stabilized, and the economy as a whole, I think, would benefit from that. Moreover, I think it would give the American people enormous confidence that this town can actually do something once in a while, that we can defy the expectations that we're always thinking in terms of short-term politics and the next election and every once in a while we break out of that and we do what's right for the country.

So I continue to push congressional leaders for the largest possible deal. And there's going to be resistance. There is frankly resistance on my side to do anything on entitlements. There is strong resistance on the Republican side to do anything on revenues. But if each side takes a maximalist position, if each side wants 100 percent of what its ideological predispositions are, then we can't get anything done. And I think the American people want to see something done. They feel a sense of urgency, both about the breakdown in our political process and also about the situation in our economy.

So what I've said to the leaders is, bring back to me some ideas that you think can get the necessary number of votes in the House and in the Senate. I'm happy to consider all options, all alternatives that they're looking at. The things that I will not consider are a 30-day or a

60-day or a 90-day or a 180-day temporary stopgap resolution to this problem. This is the United States of America, and we don't manage our affairs in 3-month increments. We don't risk U.S. default on our obligations because we can't put politics aside.

So I've said—I've been very clear to them: We're going to resolve this, and we're going to resolve this for a reasonable period of time, and we're going to resolve it in a serious way. And my hope is, is that as a consequence of negotiations that take place today, tomorrow, the next day, and through next weekend, if necessary, that we're going to come up with a plan that solves our short-term debt and deficit problems, avoids default, stabilizes the economy, and proves to the American people that we can actually get things done in this country and in this town.

All right, with that, I'm going to take some questions, starting with Ben Feller [Associated Press].

National Debt and Deficit/Taxes

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Two quick topics: Given that you're running out of time, can you explain what is your plan for where these talks go if Republicans continue to oppose any tax increases, as they've adamantly said that they will? And secondly, on your point about no short-term stopgap measure, if it came down to that and Congress went that route, I know you're opposed to it, but would you veto it?

The President. I will not sign a 30-day or a 60-day or a 90-day extension. That is just not an acceptable approach. And if we think it's going to be hard—if we think it's hard now, imagine how these guys are going to be thinking 6 months from now in the middle of an election season where they're all up. It's not going to get easier, it's going to get harder. So we might as well do it now: pull off the bandaid; eat our peas. [Laughter] Now is the time to do it. If not now, when?

We keep on talking about this stuff, and we have these high-minded pronouncements about how we've got to get control of the deficit and how we owe it to our children and our

grandchildren. Well, let's step up. Let's do it. I'm prepared to do it. I'm prepared to take on significant heat from my party to get something done. And I expect the other side should be willing to do the same thing if they mean what they say that this is important.

And let me just, Ben, comment on this whole issue of tax increases, because there's been a lot of information floating around there. I want to be crystal clear: Nobody has talked about increasing taxes now. Nobody has talked about increases—increasing taxes next year. What we have talked about is that starting in 2013, that we have gotten rid of some of these egregious loopholes that are benefiting corporate jet owners or oil companies at a time where they're making billions of dollars of profits. What we have said is, as part of a broader package, we should have revenues, and the best place to get those revenues are from folks like me who have been extraordinarily fortunate, and that millionaires and billionaires can afford to pay a little bit more, going back to the Bush tax rates.

And what I've also said to Republicans is, if you don't like that formulation, then I'm happy to work with you on tax reform that could potentially lower everybody's rates and broaden the base, as long as that package was sufficiently progressive so that we weren't balancing the budget on the backs of middle class families and working class families and we weren't letting hedge fund managers or authors of best-selling books off the hook.

That is a reasonable proposition. So when you hear folks saying, well, the President shouldn't want massive, job-killing tax increases when the economy is this weak, nobody is looking to raise taxes right now. We're talking about potentially 2013 and the out-years. In fact, the only proposition that's out there about raising taxes next year would be if we don't renew the payroll tax cut that we passed in December, and I'm in favor of renewing it for next year as well. But there have been some Republicans who said we may not renew it.

And if we don't renew that, then the \$1,000 that's been going to a typical American family this year as a consequence of the tax cut that I

worked with the Republicans and passed in December, that lapses. That could weaken the economy.

So I have bent over backwards to work with the Republicans to try to come up with a formulation that doesn't require them to vote sometime in the next month to increase taxes. What I've said is to identify a revenue package that makes sense, that is commensurate with the sacrifices we're asking other people to make, and then, I'm happy to work with you to figure out how else we might do it.

Q. Do you see any path to a deal if they don't budge on taxes?

The President. I do not see a path to a deal if they don't budge, period. I mean, if the basic proposition is, "It's my way or the highway," then we're probably not going to get something done because we've got divided Government. We've got Democrats controlling the Senate; we probably are going to need Democratic votes in the House for any package that could possibly pass. And so if in fact Mitch McConnell and John Boehner are sincere—and I believe they are—that they don't want to see the U.S. Government default, then they're going to have to compromise just like Democrats are going to have to compromise, just like I have shown myself willing to compromise.

Chip Reid [CBS News].

National Debt and Deficit/Budget Debate

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said that everybody in the room is willing to do what they have to do, wants to get something done by August 2. But isn't the problem the people who aren't in the room, and in particular, Republican Presidential candidates and Republican Tea Partiers on the Hill and the American public? The latest CBS News poll showed that only 24 percent of Americans said you should raise the debt limit to avoid an economic catastrophe. There are still 69 percent who oppose raising the debt limit. So isn't the problem that you and others have failed to convince the American people that we have a crisis here, and how are you going to change that?

The President. Well, let me distinguish between professional politicians and the public at

large. The public is not paying close attention to the ins and outs of how a Treasury auction goes. They shouldn't. They're worrying about their family; they're worrying about their jobs; they're worrying about their neighborhood. They've got a lot of other things on their plate. We're paid to worry about it.

I think, depending on how you phrase the question, if you said to the American people, is it a good idea for the United States not to pay its bills and potentially create another recession that could throw millions of more people out of work, I feel pretty confident I can get a majority on my side on that one.

And that's the fact. If we don't raise the debt ceiling, and we see a crisis of confidence in the markets, and suddenly, interest rates are going up significantly, and everybody is paying higher interest rates on their car loans, on their mortgages, on their credit cards, and that's sucking up a whole bunch of additional money out of the pockets of the American people, I promise you, they won't like that.

Now, I will say that some of the professional politicians know better. And for them to say that we shouldn't be raising the debt ceiling is irresponsible. They know better.

And this is not something that I am making up. This is not something that Tim Geithner is making up. We're not out here trying to use this as a means of doing all these really tough, political things. I'd rather be talking about stuff that everybody welcomes, like new programs or the NFL season getting resolved or—[laughter]. Unfortunately, this is what's on our plate. It's before us right now. And we've got to deal with it.

So what you're right about, I think, is, is that the leaders in the room here at a certain point have to step up and do the right thing, regardless of the voices in our respective parties that are trying to undermine that effort.

I have a stake in John Boehner successfully persuading his caucus that this is the right thing to do, just like he has a stake in seeing me successfully persuading the Democratic Party that we should take on these problems that we've been talking about for too long, but haven't been doing anything about.

Q. Do you think he'll come back to the \$4 trillion deal?

The President. I think Speaker Boehner has been very sincere about trying to do something big. I think he'd like to do something big. His politics within his caucus are very difficult, you're right. And this is part of the problem with a political process where folks are rewarded for saying irresponsible things to win elections or obtain short-term political gain, when we actually are in a position to try to do something hard we haven't always laid the groundwork for. And I think that it's going to take some work on his side, but look, it's also going to take some work on our side, in order to get this thing done.

I mean, the vast majority of Democrats on Capitol Hill would prefer not to have to do anything on entitlements, would prefer frankly not to have to do anything on some of these debt and deficit problems. And I'm sympathetic to their concerns, because they're looking after folks who are already hurting and already vulnerable, and there are a lot of families out there and seniors who are dependant on some of these programs.

And what I've tried to explain to them is, number one, if you look at the numbers, then Medicare in particular will run out of money, and we will not be able to sustain that program no matter how much taxes go up. I mean, it's not an option for us to just sit by and do nothing. And if you're a progressive who cares about the integrity of Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid and believes that it is part of what makes our country great that we look after our seniors and we look after the most vulnerable, then we have an obligation to make sure that we make those changes that are required to make it sustainable over the long term.

And if you're a progressive that cares about investments in Head Start and student loan programs and medical research and infrastructure, we're not going to be able to make progress on those areas if we haven't gotten our fiscal house in order.

So the argument I'm making to my party is, the values we care about—making sure that

everybody in this country has a shot at the American Dream and everybody is out there with the opportunity to succeed if they work hard and live a responsible life, and that Government has a role to play in providing some of that opportunity through things like student loans and making sure that our roads and highways and airports are functioning, and making sure that we're investing in research and development for the high-tech jobs of the future—if you care about those things, then you've got to be interested in figuring out how do we pay for that in a responsible way.

And so yes, we're going to have a sales job; this is not pleasant. It is hard to persuade people to do hard stuff that entails trimming benefits and increasing revenues. But the reason we've got a problem right now is people keep on avoiding hard things, and I think now is the time for us to go ahead and take it on.

Rich Wolf [USA Today].

Social Security/Budget Debate

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You keep talking about balance, shared sacrifice, but in the \$4 trillion deal that you're talking about roughly, it seems to be now at about 4 to 1 spending to taxes; we're talking about \$800 billion in taxes, roughly. That doesn't seem very fair to some Democrats. I'm wondering if you could clarify why we're at that level. And also, if you could clarify your Social Security position: Would any of the money from Social Security, even from just chained CPI, go toward the deficit as opposed to back into the trust fund?

The President. With respect to Social Security, Social Security is not the source of our deficit problems. Social Security, if it is part of a package, would be an issue of how do we make sure Social Security extends its life and is strengthened? So the reason to do Social Security is to strengthen Social Security to make sure that those benefits are there for seniors in the out-years. And the reason to include that potentially in this package is if you're going to take a bunch of tough votes, you might as well do it now, as opposed to trying to muster up the political will to get something done further down in the future.

With respect to a balanced package, is the package that we're talking about exactly what I would want? No. I might want more revenues and fewer cuts to programs that benefit middle class families that are trying to send their kids to college, or benefit all of us because we're investing more in medical research.

So I make no claims that somehow the position that Speaker Boehner and I discussed reflects 100 percent of what I want. But that's the point. My point is, is that I'm willing to move in their direction in order to get something done. And that's what compromise entails. We have a system of government in which everybody has got to give a little bit.

Now, what I will say is, is that the revenue components that we've discussed would be significant and would target folks who can most afford it. And if we don't do any revenue—because you may hear the argument that why not just go ahead and do all the cuts and we can debate the revenue issues in the election, right? You'll hear that from some Republicans. The problem is, is that if you don't do the revenues, then to get the same amount of savings you've got to have more cuts, which means that it's seniors or it's poor kids or it's medical researchers or it's our infrastructure that suffers.

And I do not want, and I will not accept, a deal in which I am asked to do nothing, in fact, I'm able to keep hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional income that I don't need, while a parent out there who is struggling to figure out how to send their kid to college suddenly finds that they've got a couple thousand dollars less in grants or student loans.

That's what the revenue debate is about. It's not because I want to raise revenues for the sake of raising revenues or I've got some grand ambition to create a bigger government. It's because if we're going to actually solve the problem, there are a finite number of ways to do it. And if you don't have revenues, it means you are putting more of a burden on the people who can least afford it. And that's not fair. And I think the American people agree with me on that.

Sam Stein [Huffington Post].

National Economy/Job Growth/Budget Debate

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. With unemployment now at 9.2 percent and a large chunk of those lost jobs coming from the private sector, is now a really good time to cut trillions of dollars in spending? How will we still create jobs? And then to piggyback on the Social Security question, what do you say to members of your own party who say it doesn't contribute to the deficit, let's consider it, but not in the context of this deal?

The President. Our biggest priority as an administration is getting the economy back on track and putting people back to work. Now, without relitigating the past, I'm absolutely convinced, and the vast majority of economists are convinced, that the steps we took in the Recovery Act saved millions of people their jobs or created a whole bunch of jobs.

And part of the evidence of that is as you see what happens with the Recovery Act phasing out. When I came into office and budgets were hemorrhaging at the State level, part of the Recovery Act was giving States help so they wouldn't have to lay off teachers, police officers, firefighters. As we've seen that Federal support for States diminish, you've seen the biggest job losses in the public sector, teachers, police officers, firefighters losing their jobs.

So my strong preference would be for us to figure out ways that we can continue to provide help across the board. But I'm operating within some political constraints here, because whatever I do has to go through the House of Representatives.

What that means then is, is that among the options that are available to us is, for example, the payroll tax cut, which might not be exactly the kind of program that I would design in order to boost employment, but does make a difference because it puts money in the pockets of people who are then spending it at businesses, large and small. That gives them more customers, increases demand, and it gives businesses a greater incentive to hire. And that would be, for example, a component of this overall package.

Unemployment benefits, again, puts money in the pockets of folks who are out there

knocking on doors trying to find a job every day. Giving them those resources, that puts more money into the economy and that potentially improves it—improves the climate for businesses to want to hire.

So as part of a component of a deal, I think it's very important for us to look at what are the steps we can take short term in order to put folks back to work. I am not somebody who believes that just because we solve the deficit and debt problems short term, medium term, or long term, that that automatically solves the unemployment problem. I think we're still going to have to do a bunch of stuff, including, for example, trade deals that are before Congress right now that could add tens of thousands of jobs.

Republicans gave me this list at the beginning of this year as a priority, something that they thought they could do. Now I'm ready to do it, and so far we haven't gotten the kind of movement that I would have expected.

We've got the potential to create an infrastructure bank that could put construction workers to work right now, rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our vital infrastructure all across the country. So those are still areas where, I think, we can make enormous progress.

I do think that if the country as a whole sees Washington act responsibly, compromises being made, the deficit and debt being dealt with for 10, 15, 20 years, that that will help with businesses feeling more confident about aggressively investing in this country, foreign investors saying America has got its act together and are willing to invest. And so it can have a positive impact in overall growth and employment.

It's not the only solution. We're still going to have to have a strong jobs agenda. But it is part of a solution. I might add it is the primary solution that the Republicans have offered when it comes to jobs. They keep on going out there and saying, "Mr. President, what are you doing about jobs?" And when you ask them, well, what would you do? "We've got to get Government spending under control, and we've got to get our deficits under control." So I say, okay, let's go. Where are they? I mean, this is what

they claim would be the single biggest boost to business certainty and confidence. So what's the holdup?

With respect to Social Security, as I indicated earlier, making changes to these programs is so difficult that this may be an opportunity for us to go ahead and do something smart that strengthens Social Security and gives not just this generation but future generations the opportunity to say this thing is going to be in there for the long haul.

Now, that may not be possible, and you're absolutely right that, as I said, Social Security is not the primary driver of our long-term deficits and debt. On the other hand, we do want to make sure that Social Security is going to be there for the next generations, and if there is a reasonable deal to be had on it, it is one that I'm willing to pursue.

Q. Are there things with respect to Social Security, like raising the retirement age, means testing—are those too big a chunk for—

The President. I'm probably not going to get into the details, Sam, right now of negotiations. I might enjoy negotiating with you, but I don't know how much juice you've got in the Republican caucus. [*Laughter*] That's what I figured.

All right, Lesley Clark [*McClatchy Newspapers*].

Budget Debate/National Debt and Deficit

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Have you—you've talked with economists, you said that economists have agreed that a deal needs to be made. Have you worked with new U.S. business leaders at all to lobby Congress to raise the debt ceiling? And if so, who are you talking to?

The President. I have spoken extensively to business leaders. And I'll be honest with you: I think that business leaders in the abstract want to see a resolution to this problem. What I've found is that they are somewhat hesitant to weigh in on some of these issues even if they're willing to say something privately to me, partly because they've got a whole bunch of business pending before Congress and they don't want to make anybody mad.

So this is a problem of our politics and our politicians, but it's not exclusively a problem of our politics and our politicians. I mean, the business community is a lot like everybody else, which is we want to cut everybody else's stuff and we want to keep our stuff. We want to cut our taxes, but if you want to raise revenue with somebody else's taxes, that's okay. And that kind of mindset is why we never get the problem solved.

There have been business leaders, like Warren Buffett, who I think have spoken out forcefully on this issue. I think some of the folks who participated in the Bowles-Simpson Commission made very clear that they would agree to a balanced approach even if it meant for them, individually, that they were seeing slightly higher taxes on their income, given that they're—I think the average CEO, if I'm not mistaken, saw a 23-percent raise this past year while the average worker saw a 0- to 1-percent raise last year.

So I think that there are a lot of well-meaning businesspeople out there who recognize the need to make something happen. But I think that they've been hesitant to be as straightforward as I'd like when it says, this is what a balanced package means. It means that we've got some spending cuts, it means that we've got some increased revenue, and it means that we're taking on some of the drivers of our long-term debt and deficits.

Q. And can you say, as the clock ticks down, whether or not the administration is——

The President. I'm sorry.

Q. Can you say, as the clock ticks down, whether or not the administration is working on any sort of contingency plans if things don't happen by August 2?

The President. We are going to get this done by August 2.

George Condon [National Journal].

Bipartisanship

Q. Mr. President, to follow on Chip's question, you said that the Speaker faces tough politics in his caucus. Do you have complete confidence that he can deliver the votes on any-

thing that he agrees to? Is he in control of his caucus?

The President. That's a question for the Speaker, not a question for me. My experience with John Boehner is—has been good. I think he's a good man who wants to do right by the country. I think that it's a—as Chip alluded to, the politics that swept him into the Speakership were good for a midterm election; they're tough for governing. And part of what the Republican caucus generally needs to recognize is that American democracy works when people listen to each other, we're willing to give each other the benefit of the doubt, we assume the patriotism and good intentions of the other side, and we're willing to make some sensible compromises to solve big problems. And I think that there are members of that caucus who haven't fully arrived at that realization yet.

Q. So your confidence in him wasn't shaken by him walking away from the big deal he said he wanted?

The President. These things are a tough process. And look, in fairness, a big deal would require a lot of work on the part of Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi and myself to bring Democrats along. But the point is, is if everybody gets in the boat at the same time, it doesn't tip over. I think that was Bob Dole's famous comment after striking a deal with the President and Mr. Gingrich back in the nineties. And that is always the case when it comes to difficult but important tasks like this.

Last question. April Ryan [American Urban Radio Networks].

National Economy/Debt and Deficit

Q. Mr. President, hi. I want to revisit the issue of sacrifice. In 2009, you said that—expect the worst to come; we have not seen the worst yet. And now with these budget cuts looming, you have minorities, the poor, the elderly, as well as people who are scared of losing jobs, fearful. And also, what say you about Congressman Chaka Fattah's bill, the "Debt Free America Act"? Do you support that bill? Are you supporting the Republican bill that is similar to his, modeled after Congressman Fattah's bill?

The President. Well, I'm not going to comment on a particular bill right now. Let me speak to the broader point that you're asking about, April.

This recession has been hard on everybody, but obviously, it's harder on folks who've got less. And the thing that I am obsessed with, and have been since I came into office, is all those families out there who are doing the right thing every single day, who are looking after their families, who are just struggling to keep up and just feel like they're falling behind, no matter how hard they work.

I got a letter this past week from a woman who—her husband had lost his job, had pounded the pavement, finally found a job. They felt like things were stabilizing for a few months. Six months later he lost his second job. Now they're back looking again and trying to figure out how they are going to make ends meet. And there are just hundreds of thousands of folks out there who really have seen as tough of an economy as we've seen in our lifetimes.

Now, we took very aggressive steps when I first came into office to yank the economy out of a potential great depression and stabilize it. And we were largely successful in stabilizing it. But we stabilized it at a level where unemployment is still too high, and the economy is not growing fast enough to make up for all the jobs that were lost before I took office and the few months after I took office.

So this unemployment rate has been really stubborn. There are a couple of ways that we can solve that. Number one is to make sure that the overall economy is growing. And so we have continued to take a series of steps to make sure that there's money in people's pockets that they can go out there and spend. That's what these payroll tax cuts were about.

We've taken a number of steps to make sure that businesses are willing to invest, and that's what the small-business tax cuts and some of the tax breaks for companies that are willing to invest in plants and equipment—and zero capital gains for small businesses—that's what that was all about, was giving businesses more incentive to invest.

We have worked to make sure that the training programs that are out there for folks who are having to shift from jobs that may not exist anymore so that they can get the training they need for the jobs that do exist, that those are improved and sharpened.

We have put forward a series of proposals to make sure that regulations that may be unnecessary and are hampering some businesses from investing, that we are examining all of those for their costs and their benefits. And if they are not providing the kind of benefits in terms of the public health and clean air and clean water and worker safety that have been promised, then we should get rid of some of those regulations.

So we've been looking at the whole menu of steps that can be taken. We are now in a situation where because the economy has moved slower than we wanted, because of the deficits and debt that result from the recession and the crisis, that taking a approach that costs trillions of dollars is not an option. We don't have that kind of money right now.

What we can do is to solve this underlying debt and deficit problem for a long period of time so that then we can get back to having a conversation about, all right, since we now have solved this problem, that's not—no longer what's hampering economic growth, that's not feeding business and uncertainty, everybody feels that the ground is stable under our feet, are there some strategies that we could pursue that would really focus on some targeted job growth, infrastructure being a primary example.

I mean, the infrastructure bank that we've proposed is relatively small. But could we imagine a project where we're rebuilding roads and bridges and ports and schools and broadband lines and smart grids, and taking all those construction workers and putting them to work right now? I can imagine a very aggressive program like that that I think the American people would rally around and would be good for the economy not just next year or the year after, but for the next 20 or 30 years.

But we can't even have that conversation if people feel as if we don't have our fiscal house

in order. Right? So the idea here is, let's act now. Let's get this problem off the table. And then with some firm footing, with a solid fiscal situation, we will then be in a position to make the kind of investments that, I think, are going to be necessary to win the future.

So this is not a right or left, conservative/liberal situation. This is how do we operate in a smart way, understanding that we've got some short-term challenges and some long-term challenges. If we can solve some of those long-term challenges, that frees up some of our energies to be able to deal with some of these short-term ones as well.

Memorandum on Regulation and Independent Regulatory Agencies July 11, 2011

Memorandum for the Heads of Independent Regulatory Agencies

Subject: Regulation and Independent Regulatory Agencies

America's free market is the greatest force for prosperity the world has ever known. It is the key to our global leadership and the success of our people. But throughout our history, one of the reasons it has worked is that we have sought a proper balance—a balance that promotes economic growth, innovation, competitiveness, and job creation, while protecting the health, safety, and security of the American people. Over the past two and a half years, the pursuit of that balance has guided my Administration's approach to rules and regulations. And in January of this year, I signed an Executive Order requiring executive agencies to reduce regulations that place unnecessary burdens on American businesses and the American people while ensuring that regulations protect our safety, health, and environment. I initiated a careful, Government-wide review of regulations already on the books in order to reduce outdated, unjustified regulations that stifle job creation and make our economy less competitive. We are taking immediate steps to eliminate millions of hours in annual paperwork burdens for large and small businesses

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:15 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson, Cochairs, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform; former Sen. Robert J. Dole; and former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newton L. Gingrich.

and save more than \$1 billion in annual regulatory costs. And hundreds of reform proposals from 30 agencies, now available for public scrutiny, promise to deliver billions of dollars in additional savings.

The Executive Order also requires executive agencies to consider costs and benefits and to reduce burdens on the American people; to expand opportunities for public participation; to simplify and harmonize rules; and to promote flexibility and freedom of choice.

With full respect for the independence of your agencies, I am asking you today to join in this review and produce your own plans to reassess and streamline regulations. For rules going forward, I am also asking you to follow the key cost-saving, burden-reducing principles outlined in the January Executive Order.

I hope you see this as an opportunity to do something big and lasting—to change the ways of Washington; to focus on what works; and to forge a 21st-century regulatory system that makes our economy stronger and more competitive, while we meet our fundamental responsibilities to one another.

I look forward to working with all of you on this important initiative, and I thank you for your attention and service to our country.

BARACK OBAMA