**The White House**

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Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address | January 20, 2015

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THE PRESIDENT:  Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans:

We are 15 years into this new century.  Fifteen years that dawned with terror touching our shores; that unfolded with a new generation fighting two long and costly wars; that saw a vicious recession spread across our nation and the world.  It has been, and still is, a hard time for many.

But tonight, we turn the page.  Tonight, after a breakthrough year for America, our economy is growing and creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999.  (Applause.)  Our unemployment rate is now lower than it was before the financial crisis.  More of our kids are graduating than ever before.  More of our people are insured than ever before.  (Applause.)  And we are as free from the grip of foreign oil as we’ve been in almost 30 years.  (Applause.)

Tonight, for the first time since 9/11, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over.  (Applause.)  Six years ago, nearly 180,000 American troops served in Iraq and Afghanistan.  Today, fewer than 15,000 remain.  And we salute the courage and sacrifice of every man and woman in this 9/11 Generation who has served to keep us safe.  (Applause.)  We are humbled and grateful for your service.

America, for all that we have endured; for all the grit and hard work required to come back; for all the tasks that lie ahead, know this:  The shadow of crisis has passed, and the State of the Union is strong.  (Applause.)

At this moment -- with a growing economy, shrinking deficits, bustling industry, booming energy production -- we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth.  It’s now up to us to choose who we want to be over the next 15 years and for decades to come.

Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well?  Or will we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and chances for everyone who makes the effort?  (Applause.)

Will we approach the world fearful and reactive, dragged into costly conflicts that strain our military and set back our standing?  Or will we lead wisely, using all elements of our power to defeat new threats and protect our planet?

Will we allow ourselves to be sorted into factions and turned against one another?  Or will we recapture the sense of common purpose that has always propelled America forward?

In two weeks, I will send this Congress a budget filled with ideas that are practical, not partisan.  And in the months ahead, I’ll crisscross the country making a case for those ideas.  So tonight, I want to focus less on a checklist of proposals, and focus more on the values at stake in the choices before us.

It begins with our economy.  Seven years ago, Rebekah and Ben Erler of Minneapolis were newlyweds.  (Laughter.)  She waited tables.  He worked construction.  Their first child, Jack, was on the way.  They were young and in love in America.  And it doesn’t get much better than that.  “If only we had known,” Rebekah wrote to me last spring, “what was about to happen to the housing and construction market.”

As the crisis worsened, Ben’s business dried up, so he took what jobs he could find, even if they kept him on the road for long stretches of time.  Rebekah took out student loans and enrolled in community college, and retrained for a new career.  They sacrificed for each other.  And slowly, it paid off.  They bought their first home.  They had a second son, Henry.  Rebekah got a better job and then a raise.  Ben is back in construction -- and home for dinner every night.

“It is amazing,” Rebekah wrote, “what you can bounce back from when you have to…we are a strong, tight-knit family who has made it through some very, very hard times.”  We are a strong, tight-knit family who has made it through some very, very hard times.

America, Rebekah and Ben’s story is our story.  They represent the millions who have worked hard and scrimped, and sacrificed and retooled.  You are the reason that I ran for this office.  You are the people I was thinking of six years ago today, in the darkest months of the crisis, when I stood on the steps of this Capitol and promised we would rebuild our economy on a new foundation.  And it has been your resilience, your effort that has made it possible for our country to emerge stronger.

We believed we could reverse the tide of outsourcing and draw new jobs to our shores.  And over the past five years, our businesses have created more than 11 million new jobs.  (Applause.)

We believed we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet.  And today, America is number one in oil and gas.  America is number one in wind power.  Every three weeks, we bring online as much solar power as we did in all of 2008.  (Applause.)  And thanks to lower gas prices and higher fuel standards, the typical family this year should save about $750 at the pump.  (Applause.)

We believed we could prepare our kids for a more competitive world.  And today, our younger students have earned the highest math and reading scores on record.  Our high school graduation rate has hit an all-time high.  More Americans finish college than ever before.  (Applause.)

We believed that sensible regulations could prevent another crisis, shield families from ruin, and encourage fair competition.  Today, we have new tools to stop taxpayer-funded bailouts, and a new consumer watchdog to protect us from predatory lending and abusive credit card practices.  And in the past year alone, about 10 million uninsured Americans finally gained the security of health coverage.  (Applause.)

At every step, we were told our goals were misguided or too ambitious; that we would crush jobs and explode deficits.  Instead, we’ve seen the fastest economic growth in over a decade, our deficits cut by two-thirds, a stock market that has doubled, and health care inflation at its lowest rate in 50 years.  (Applause.)  This is good news, people.  (Laughter and applause.)

So the verdict is clear.  Middle-class economics works.  Expanding opportunity works.  And these policies will continue to work as long as politics don’t get in the way.  We can’t slow down businesses or put our economy at risk with government shutdowns or fiscal showdowns.  We can’t put the security of families at risk by taking away their health insurance, or unraveling the new rules on Wall Street, or refighting past battles on immigration when we’ve got to fix a broken system.  And if a bill comes to my desk that tries to do any of these things, I will veto it.  It will have earned my veto.  (Applause.)

Today, thanks to a growing economy, the recovery is touching more and more lives.  Wages are finally starting to rise again.  We know that more small business owners plan to raise their employees’ pay than at any time since 2007.  But here’s the thing:  Those of us here tonight, we need to set our sights higher than just making sure government doesn’t screw things up; that government doesn’t halt the progress we’re making.  We need to do more than just do no harm.  Tonight, together, let’s do more to restore the link between hard work and growing opportunity for every American.  (Applause.)

Because families like Rebekah’s still need our help.  She and Ben are working as hard as ever, but they’ve had to forego vacations and a new car so that they can pay off student loans and save for retirement.  Friday night pizza, that’s a big splurge.  Basic childcare for Jack and Henry costs more than their mortgage, and almost as much as a year at the University of Minnesota.  Like millions of hardworking Americans, Rebekah isn’t asking for a handout, but she is asking that we look for more ways to help families get ahead.

And in fact, at every moment of economic change throughout our history, this country has taken bold action to adapt to new circumstances and to make sure everyone gets a fair shot.  We set up worker protections, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid to protect ourselves from the harshest adversity.  We gave our citizens schools and colleges, infrastructure and the Internet -- tools they needed to go as far as their effort and their dreams will take them.

That’s what middle-class economics is -- the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, everyone plays by the same set of rules.  (Applause.)  We don’t just want everyone to share in America’s success, we want everyone to contribute to our success.  (Applause.)

I want our actions to tell every child in every neighborhood, your life matters, and we are committed to improving your life chances as committed as we are to working on behalf of our own kids.  (Applause.)  I want future generations to know that we are a people who see our differences as a great gift, that we’re a people who value the dignity and worth of every citizen -- man and woman, young and old, black and white, Latino, Asian, immigrant, Native American, gay, straight, Americans with mental illness or physical disability.  Everybody matters.  I want them to grow up in a country that shows the world what we still know to be true:  that we are still more than a collection of red states and blue states; that we are the United States of America.  (Applause.)

I want them to grow up in a country where a young mom can sit down and write a letter to her President with a story that sums up these past six years:  “It’s amazing what you can bounce back from when you have to…we are a strong, tight-knit family who’s made it through some very, very hard times.”

My fellow Americans, we, too, are a strong, tight-knit family.  We, too, have made it through some hard times.  Fifteen years into this new century, we have picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves off, and begun again the work of remaking America.  We have laid a new foundation.  A brighter future is ours to write.  Let’s begin this new chapter together -- and let’s start the work right now.  (Applause.)

Thank you.  God bless you.  God bless this country we love.  Thank you.  (Applause.)

*After reading, notate the following information in your R/W notebook:*

* + **Speaker** (who is it? What do we know about the speaker?)
	+ **Occasion** (what is the event? Setting? Time and place?)
	+ **Audience** (who is the speech targeted towards?)
	+ **Purpose** (what’s the reason for the text? What does the speaker want the reader to get from/feel the speech?)
	+ **Subjec**t (what is the topic or issue being addressed?)
	+ **Tone** (what is the author’s attitude toward to subject? Does the tone change throughout? Identify all…if multiple)