

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DNC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

March 22, 2013

President Obama Visits Israel

On Wednesday, President Obama began the first trip abroad of his second term with a visit to Israel where he met with President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

By visiting Israel on the first overseas trip of his second term, the President reiterated that the United States' support for Israel is unshakeable. President Obama's visit comes during the 65th anniversary celebration of a free and independent State of Israel.

Upon his arrival, the President spoke directly to the Israeli people about the strength and future of our relationship.



The President said:

"I want to begin right now, by answering a question that is sometimes asked about our relationship -- why? Why does the United States stand so strongly, so firmly with the State of Israel? And the answer is simple. We stand together because we share a common story - - patriots determined 'to be a free people in our land,' pioneers who forged a nation, heroes who sacrificed to preserve our freedom, and immigrants from every corner of the world who renew constantly our diverse societies.

"We stand together because we are democracies. For as noisy and messy as it may be, we know that democracy is the greatest form of government ever devised by man.

"We stand together because it makes us more prosperous. Our trade and investment create jobs for both our peoples. Our partnerships in science and medicine and health bring us closer to new cures, harness new energy and have helped transform us into high-tech hubs of our global economy.

"We stand together because we share a commitment to helping our fellow human beings around the world. When the earth shakes and the floods come, our doctors and rescuers reach out to help. When people are suffering, from Africa to Asia, we partner to fight disease and overcome hunger.

"And we stand together because peace must come to the Holy Land. For even as we are clear-eyed about the difficulty, we will never lose sight of the vision of an Israel at peace with its neighbors."

[Three Year Anniversary of the Affordable Care Act](#)

This week marks the three year anniversary since President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law. The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, commemorated the milestone by highlighting some of the significant progress we have seen during the first three years of implementation in a post on the White House blog.



Secretary Sebelius writes:

"In the three years since the [Affordable Care Act](#) became law, the slower growth of health care costs is saving money in Medicare and the private insurance market, helping to curb previously skyrocketing premiums and making Medicare stronger.

"The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office recently estimated that Medicare and Medicaid spending would be 15 percent less -- or about \$200 billion— in 2020 than was previously projected, thanks to this slower growth. Medicare spending per beneficiary rose by just 0.4

percent in 2012, while Medicaid spending per beneficiary actually dropped by 1.9 percent last year. We are making Medicare stronger, too, by spending smarter, promoting coordinated care, and fighting fraud. Not only does this ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. It means that those who count on Medicare -- our grandparents, parents, our friends, and neighbors – will have it for years to come.

"Today, we are announcing that thanks to the [Affordable Care Act](#), more than 6.3 million seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare have saved more than \$6.1 billion on prescription drugs since the health care law was enacted three years ago. This is the result of the law's closing of the prescription coverage gap known as 'the donut hole.'"

Click here to read Secretary Sebelius' full blog [post](#).

[Vice President Biden Attends Inaugural Mass](#)

On Tuesday, Vice President Biden led a Presidential Delegation to attend the mass for the Inauguration of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope Francis. The Vice President was joined by Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez, and Georgetown University President John DeGioia.

[The White House Celebrates Women's History Month](#)

President Obama, the First Lady, and Dr. Jill Biden hosted a diverse group of talented and inspirational women at a White House reception celebrating Women's History Month. In remarks in the East Room of the White House, the President spoke to the important role female leaders have played and continue to play in achieving the kind of progress American women have and continue to make.



The President said:

"When I look around this room, it is hard to believe that 100 years ago this month, thousands of women were marching right outside this house demanding one of our most fundamental right: the right to vote, to have a say in our democracy. And today, a century later, its rooms are full of accomplished women who have overcome discrimination, shattered glass ceilings, and become outstanding role models for all of our sons and daughters. And that means we've come a long way, and that's thanks to the efforts of so many people like you.

"Because of the hard work and exemplary leadership of the women in this room, military families have protected family and medical leave. Women have legal recourse to fight against pay discrimination ... Women have the opportunity to serve on the front lines of our military conflicts, and that means that they're getting paid and promoted equally. Women have the opportunity to make their own choices about their health."

[President Obama Meets with Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny](#)

On Tuesday, President Obama welcomed Taoiseach Enda Kenny of Ireland to the White House. Following a bilateral meeting in the Oval Office, the President and Prime Minister attended a St. Patrick's Day luncheon in the Capitol.

President Obama reaffirmed the ceaseless bond between our two countries, saying:

"So on this St. Patty's Day, let's remember the Irish -- both those who have left us and those who are with us today, who have fought and bled and labored to make this country a better place for their children and for ours. Let's give thanks for the men and women who proved that through hard work and perseverance, anybody can earn themselves a piece of the American Dream.

"And let's welcome our Irish brethren who have welcomed so many of us -- not just as allies and as friends, but as family as well."



President Obama Nominates Thomas Perez to be Next Secretary of Labor

On Monday, President Obama announced Thomas Perez as his choice to serve as the next Secretary of Labor. Perez currently heads the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.



In remarks at the announcement, the President said:

"His story reminds us of this country's promise, that if you're willing to work hard, it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what your last name is -- you can make it if you try," President Obama said. "And Tom has made protecting that promise -- for everybody -- the cause of his life."

Holding Republicans Accountable: House Republicans Vote to Raise Taxes on Middle Class Families with Passage of Ryan Budget

On Thursday House Republicans passed Paul Ryan's House Republican budget, which gives the wealthiest Americans a massive new tax cut paid for by raising taxes on the middle class by \$2,000.

Republicans had the opportunity to stand up to Paul Ryan and the GOP, but instead they chose to slash taxes for the wealthiest Americans while forcing dramatic cuts to programs benefiting the middle class, seniors, and vulnerable Americans. The Ryan Budget makes it tougher for middle class families who work hard and play by the rules to get ahead and threatens the mortgage interest deductions and child tax credits, which could be sacrificed under the new GOP budget.

Paul Ryan's budget just doesn't add up. This budget asks nothing from the wealthiest Americans and places the entire burden of deficit reduction on programs affecting seniors, children, and students and raises taxes on middle class families who can least afford to pay more.

The President has said time and time again he is committed to work with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to grow the economy and cut the deficit in a balanced way. It is an approach the American people overwhelmingly support and that is what the President will continue to fight for each day.

Issues in the News

Talking Points: President Obama Nominates Tom Perez to be Labor Secretary

- Today the President nominated Tom Perez to be the next United States Secretary of Labor. Perez currently serves as the head of the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. He is a dedicated public servant who has spent his entire career fighting to keep the American dream within reach for hardworking middle class families and those striving to get into the middle class.
- Tom's commitment to preserving the American dream is rooted in his own life experience. As the son of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Perez learned from an early age the value of hard work. His father passed away when Tom was just 12 years old. Tom's parents taught him and his four siblings to work hard, aim high, and always give back to the community.
- His parents also taught the importance of education as a means for growth. Combining hard work, Pell Grants, student loans and other support from his family and community, Tom became the first lawyer in his family which allowed him to continue his family's tradition of service. He understands that hard work pays off, and responsibility is rewarded, and he'll continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the American people.
- Mr. Perez is the right person for the job. Those who know him best describe him as a pragmatic leader and a consensus builder. He's worked with business and labor leaders, and with federal, state, and local governments. He understands that our economy works better when the middle class, and those working to get into the middle class, have security on the job and a democratic voice in the workplace, and everybody plays by the same set of rules.
- Under Tom's leadership at the Justice Department, the Civil Rights Division has:
 - settled the three largest fair lending cases ever on behalf of families targeted by unfair mortgage lending practices,
 - fought to protect the rights of every American student to achieve the quality education they will need to compete for the jobs of tomorrow,
 - dramatically increased the enforcement of human trafficking laws,
 - and stepped up its efforts to ensure our nation's veterans do not lose their civilian job because they are serving our nation.
- Prior to serving in his current position, Tom served as the Secretary of Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), which protects consumers and workers through the enforcement of a wide range of consumer rights, workplace safety, and wage and hour laws.
- It is our hope the Senate will act swiftly to confirm Mr. Perez so he can get to work for the American people and continue his lifetime of service.