

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DNC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

April 5, 2013

[President Obama Calls for Action on Commonsense Proposals to Reduce Gun Violence](#)



On Wednesday, President Obama traveled to Colorado where he delivered remarks urging the American people to continue calling on Congress to take the next step toward reducing gun violence by voting in favor of the set of common-sense proposals presented in January.

Speaking at the Denver Policy Academy, the President pointed to Colorado's recently enacted tougher background checks for gun owners as evidence that "practical progress is possible" and that "there doesn't have to be a conflict between protecting our citizens and protecting our Second Amendment rights."

Over the past two decades since its establishment, the [national background check system](#) has already kept guns out of the hands of more than 2 million dangerous people. But President Obama said loopholes currently in the law continue to let too many criminals avoid background checks entirely.

That's why one of the proposals President Obama put forward in January to help reduce gun violence would close those loopholes by requiring background checks for anyone who wants to buy a gun.

The President said:

"Now, understand, nobody is talking about creating an entirely new system. We are simply talking about plugging holes, sealing a porous system that isn't working as well as it should. If you want to buy a gun, whether it's from a licensed dealer or a private seller, you should at least have to pass a background check to show you're not a criminal or someone legally prohibited from buying on. And that's just common sense."

President Obama urged Americans to call on Congress to support this commonsense proposal.

"And that's what members of Congress need to hear from you. Right now, members of Congress are at home in their districts. Many of them are holding events where they can hear from their constituents. So I'm asking anyone out there who is listening today, find out where your member of Congress stands on these issues. If they're not part of the 90 percent of Americans who agree on background checks, then ask them why not. Why wouldn't you want to make it more difficult for a dangerous criminal to get his or her hands on a gun? Why wouldn't you want to close the loophole that allows too many criminals to buy a gun without even the simplest of background checks? Why on Earth wouldn't you want to make it easier rather than harder for law enforcement to do their job?"

Watch President Obama's remarks [here](#).

White House Announces BRAIN Initiative

On Tuesday, President Obama announced the launch of the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies or "BRAIN" initiative. The BRAIN Initiative, funded with approximately \$100 million from the President's FY 2014 Budget, aims to transform how we understand the human brain and will strive to help scientists find innovative ways to cure, prevent and treat Alzheimer's, epilepsy, traumatic brain injury and other brain disorders.

President Obama spoke of the personal impact such discoveries could mean for millions of Americans and their families, saying:



"Imagine if no family had to feel helpless watching a loved one disappear behind the mask of Parkinson's or struggle in the grip of epilepsy. Imagine if we could reverse traumatic brain injury or PTSD for our veterans who are coming home. Imagine if someone with a prosthetic limb can now play the piano or throw a baseball as well as anybody else, because the wiring from the brain to that prosthetic is direct and triggered by what's already happening in the patient's mind. What if computers could respond to our thoughts or our language barriers could come tumbling down. Or if millions of Americans were suddenly finding new jobs in these fields -- jobs we haven't even dreamt up yet -- because we chose to invest in this project."

The BRAIN Initiative is just one of the Obama Administration's "Grand Challenges" – advancements in science and technology that are aggressive but achievable. President Obama urged foundations, research universities, and philanthropists to join his effort to identify and pursue the Grand Challenges of the 21st century.

In his remarks, the President reflected upon America's long history as a leader in research and scientific discovery. He emphasized the importance of strengthening our commitment to harnessing innovation and striving toward future breakthroughs, saying:

"And the investments don't always pay off. But when they do, they change our lives in ways that we could never have imagined. Computer chips and GPS technology, the Internet -- all these things grew out of government investments in basic research. And sometimes, in fact, some of the best products and services spin off completely from unintended research that nobody expected to have certain applications. Businesses then used that technology to create countless new jobs..."

"I don't want our children or grandchildren to look back on this day and wish we had done more to keep America at the cutting edge. I want them to look back and be proud that we took some risks, that we seized this opportunity. That's what the American story is about. That's who we are. That's why this BRAIN Initiative is so important. And if we keep taking bold steps like the one we're talking about to learn about the brain, then I'm confident America will continue to lead the world in the next frontiers of human understanding. And all of you are going to help us get there."

Click [here](#) to view the White House fact sheet on the BRAIN Initiative.

[President Obama Meets with Prime Minister of Singapore](#)

On Tuesday, President Obama met with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore in the Oval Office. The President thanked the Prime Minister for being “an outstanding partner for us on the international stage” and noted that “Singapore and the United States have historically had an extraordinary relationship.”



In remarks before the bilateral meeting, President Obama highlighted Singapore’s leadership on the international stage as a model for other nations worldwide.

The President said:

“I think their progress and their development over the last several decades has been an example for many countries around the world. We have extremely close military cooperation. And I want to thank Singapore for all the facilities that they provide that allow us to maintain our effective Pacific presence.”

Read President Obama and Prime Minister Lee’s remarks before the meeting [here](#).

[White House Hosts Annual Easter Egg Roll](#)

On Monday, President and Mrs. Obama welcomed more than 30,000 people to the South Lawn for 135th annual White House Easter Egg Roll. Inspired by the First Lady’s *Let’s Move* initiative, this year’s theme was “Be Healthy, Be Active, Be you.” The day’s activities ranged from the traditional Easter Egg Roll to cooking demonstrations and an obstacle course where professional sports team players and coaches played sports with the kids and demonstrated easy ways to have fun while being active.

Mrs. Obama welcomed kids and their families to the White House, saying:

“So today, we want you to have a great time. We want you to run around. We want you to go over and see the White House Garden. We want you to learn about making tasty, healthy food. We’re going to come down and do some Easter egg roll. We’re going to read some stories. But overall, we want you guys to have a good time and keep moving and be healthy.”



President Obama and Vice President Biden Speak at White House Easter Prayer Breakfast

On Friday, continuing a tradition that began in 2010, President Obama and Vice President Biden spoke at the White House Easter Prayer Breakfast. The event also featured a prayer by Father Larry Snyder and a gospel singing.

The President said:

"In these sacred days, those of us as Christians remember the tremendous sacrifice Jesus made for each of us -- how, in all His humility and His grace, He took on the sins of the world and extended the gift of salvation. And we recommit ourselves to following His example -- to loving the Lord our God with all our hearts and all our souls and with all our minds, and to loving our neighbors as ourselves.

"That's the eternal spirit of Easter. And this year, I had -- I think was particularly special for me because right before Easter I had a chance to feel that spirit during my trip to the Holy Land. And I think so many of you here know there are few experiences more powerful or more humbling than visiting that sacred earth.

"It brings Scripture to life. It brings us closer to Christ. It reminds us that our Savior, who suffered and died was resurrected, both fully God and also a man; a human being who lived, and walked, and felt joy and sorrow just like us."

The Vice President said:

"For me, the essence of my faith is tolerance: not being judgmental about people of different faiths. When I was in Rome a few weeks ago, Pope Francis spoke movingly in his homily about our commitments to each other, not just as people of faith, but, he went on to say, but as human beings.

"I grew up in a tradition of Catholic social doctrine, and I was incredibly impressed by His Holiness's homily, his sense of social justice. But I believe his message reads something essential about all faiths, and that is ultimately we all believe that we have a responsibility to one another and we all are our brothers' and our sisters' keepers. When it comes down to it, we all know that we're connected by much more than divides us, although the focus is always on what divides us. As we move forward as a nation, I do believe we're going to be judged on how we answer that call -- that call of moral responsibility, to whether we stand up for those who have the least among us, whether we act on their behalf.

"And one of the things that I think at least the President and I believe has been the essence of this administration is the most animating principle of the administration has been just that: to look out for the least among us. Those are the values that I know that the President -- and I personally know -- the President holds extremely close to his heart."

DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz's Statement on Cesar Chavez Day

DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz released the following statement in honor of Cesar Chavez Day, which was on Sunday:

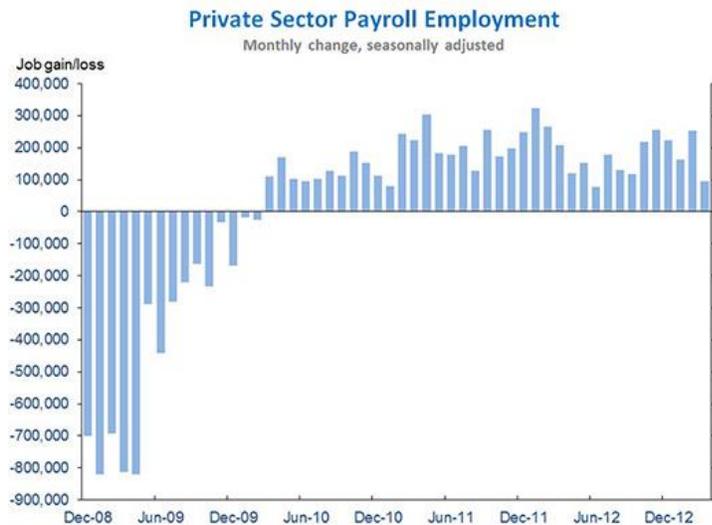
"On this day I join the millions of Americans to honor the birthday and legacy of Cesar Chavez. Chavez believed deeply that every individual deserves respect and dignity, that an honest day's work is worth a decent wage, and that the collective power of individuals can bring about real change in our society. Embodying these ideals we as a nation hold dear, Chavez has inspired so many to stand up for their basic rights.

"In the coming months, Congress will debate raising the minimum wage and finally fixing our broken immigration system through common-sense reforms. I will fight alongside President Obama and my fellow Democrats to honor the legacy of Cesar Chavez by ensuring everyone in our great nation is treated with dignity and humanity and every worker has a right to make an honest living through hard work. I'm hopeful Republicans will join us."

CEA Chairman's Statement on the Employment Situation in March

Alan B. Krueger, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, issued the following statement on today's Bureau of Labor Statistics' jobs report for March, which shows that the private sector added 95,000 jobs in March and unemployment fell to 7.6 percent—the 37th month in a row the private sector has added jobs for a total of nearly 6.5 million over that period:

"While more work remains to be done, today's employment report provides further evidence that the U.S. economy is continuing to recover from the worst downturn since the Great Depression. It is critical that we continue the policies that are helping to build an economy that creates jobs and works for the middle class as we dig our way out of the deep hole that was caused by the severe recession that began in December 2007....



"It is important to bear in mind that the March household and payroll surveys are the first monthly surveys to look at employment since the beginning of sequestration. While the recovery was gaining traction before sequestration took effect, these arbitrary and unnecessary cuts to government services will be a headwind in the months to come, and will cut key investments in the Nation's future competitiveness. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the sequester will reduce employment by 750,000 full-time equivalent jobs by the end of the year.

"Now is not the time for Washington to impose more self-inflicted wounds on the economy. The Administration continues to urge Congress to replace the sequester with balanced deficit reduction, while working to put

in place measures to put more Americans back to work like rebuilding our roads and bridges and promoting American manufacturing. The President will continue to press Congress to act on measures he called for in the State of the Union to promote job growth, ensure workers have the skills they need to compete, and help hardworking Americans make a decent living."

You can view Chairman Krueger's full statement [HERE](#).

Issues in the News

Talking Points: Employment Situation in March

- Today's employment report shows the private sector has added jobs for 37 straight months, totaling nearly 6.5 million jobs during that period. It also shows private sector payrolls increased by 95,000 in March and the unemployment rate is at 7.6%.
- Though we are making progress, today's employment report is a reminder we have more work to do to promote job growth and strengthen the recovery. It also reinforces we can't afford Washington to keep lurching from one manufactured emergency to another.
- Unfortunately because Republicans in Congress refuse to replace the sequester in a balanced way, Americans are currently living with drastic across the boards cuts that independent economists say will shave .6 percentage points off of growth and cost more than 700,000 jobs by the end of the year. These arbitrary and unnecessary sequestration cuts have created a headwind that is hurting an economy that was recovering, and will cut key investments that will make our country more competitive in the future.

- We must work toward an economy built on a vibrant and strong middle class. We should be focused every day on promoting policies the President laid out in his State of the Union – making America a magnet for jobs, providing workers with the skills necessary to compete for those jobs, and helping Americans working everyday make a decent living.
- That’s our North Star – a strong and thriving economy built on good middle class jobs.
- President Obama will continue working with members from both parties to find common ground and make progress on improving the economy, immigration reform, and sensible measures to combat gun violence. And he will continue working to find common ground to take on our fiscal challenges in a balanced way.
- We will not be able to solve every challenge we face, but the America people deserve a Congress willing to act and get the job done. President Obama will continue working to find common ground and build on the progress we’ve made.

###

Talking Points: Reducing Gun Violence – 4/3/2013

- President Obama traveled to the Denver Police Academy today where he encouraged the American people to continue calling on Congress to pass common-sense reforms to reduce gun violence. While in Denver, the President met with community leaders and local law enforcement officials to discuss new measures recently passed by the state including a provision to close loopholes in the background check system to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and others who should not have access to them.
- On Monday, President Obama will travel to Connecticut and will continue urging Congress to pass common-sense measures to reduce gun violence.
- President Obama, like most Americans, believes the Second Amendment guarantees an individual’s right to bear arms. He also believes, like most Americans, that we have a responsibility to make sure guns are used in a safe manner and do not fall into the wrong hands. As the President has said repeatedly, “While there is no law or set of laws that can prevent every senseless act of violence completely, if there is if even one thing we can do to reduce this violence – even one life can be saved – we have an obligation to try.”
- That’s why President Obama asked the Vice President to lead an effort, working with members of the cabinet, to outline concrete steps we can take action on right now to keep our kids safe, help prevent mass shootings, and reduce the widespread gun violence in our country.
- President Obama laid out a specific plan based on these recommendations that will protect our children and communities by reducing gun violence. He also signed 23 executive actions to reduce gun violence. But these executive actions are not a replacement for legislative action on Capitol Hill.
- There is a genuine disagreement about the best way forward to reduce the epidemic of gun violence, but the Americans people have been very clear that the time to act is now. Senators in Washington have heard their calls and in the last few weeks taken some big steps forward.
- Just a few weeks ago, the Senate Judiciary Committee advanced a bill that would make it harder for criminals and people with severe mental illnesses who could be a threat to themselves or others to obtain a gun- this is an idea supported by nine out of ten Americans, including a majority of people who own guns.
- The Senate has also been developing a bill that would crack down on people who buy guns with the intent to funnel them to criminals. This bill would reduce violent crime and help protect our law enforcement officials.
- And the Senate took steps to reinstate and toughen a ban on military-style assault weapons and set a 10 round limit for magazines. This would make our schools safer places for our children to grow and learn.

- These measures deserve a vote and will get one in the Senate. I urge members of the House to do the same. These are not controversial bills- they're common sense and supported by the majority of the American people.
- We might not be able to stop every act of gun violence. But as Americans, we have an obligation to try.
- We have a real chance to reduce gun violence in our country. We can reaffirm our tradition of responsible gun ownership, and we can do more to stop guns from getting into the hands of dangerous people who would use them to commit acts of violence.
- We've made progress in the last few months, but there is more work to do. In the weeks ahead we need to finish the job.

###

Talking Points: BRAIN Initiative – 4/2/2013

- President Obama laid out his vision for creating a stronger middle class during his State of the Union address by making landmark investments in research and development.
- Earlier today, The President unveiled a new initiative to transform how we understand the human brain.
- The BRAIN (Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies) Initiative, funded with approximately \$100 million from the President's FY 2014 Budget, will strive to help scientists find innovative ways to cure, prevent and treat Alzheimer's, epilepsy, traumatic brain injury and other brain disorders.
- By accelerating the development and application of new technologies, the BRAIN Initiative will allow scientists to create compelling images of how individual brain cells and complex neural circuits interact at the speed of thought. These innovations will provide an enhanced account of how the human brain records, stores, retrieves and processes huge reams of data, and explain the complex links between behavior and brain function.
- The BRAIN Initiative is just one of the Obama Administration's "Grand Challenges" – advancements in science and technology that are aggressive but achievable. In his speech in the East Room of the White House, the President urged foundations, research universities, and philanthropists to join his effort to identify and pursue the Grand Challenges of the 21st century.

The Brain Initiative includes:

- **Key Investments to jumpstart the effort:** The National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and the National Science Foundation will back approximately \$100 million in research starting in Fiscal Year 2014.
- **Strong academic leadership:** Dr. Cornelia "Cori" Bargmann (The Rockefeller University) and Dr. William Newsome (Stanford University) will chair a high-level working group at the National Institutes of Health that defines detailed scientific goals for NIH investment, and create a scientific plan for achieving these goals over several years, including timetables, milestones and cost estimates.
- **Public-private partnerships:** Federal research agencies will join companies, foundations, and private researchers that are investing in similar neuroscience research, like the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Allen Institute, the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, and the Kavli Foundation.
- **Maintaining our highest ethical standards:** We know that new ethical challenges can arise from pioneering research. President Obama will direct the Commission for the Study of Biological Issues to examine the ethical, legal and societal implications created by the BRAIN Initiative and other recent neuroscience advances to ensure that that this new initiative continues to adhere to our highest standards of research protections.