

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

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President Obama speaks about the successes and future of the Affordable Care Act

On Thursday, President Obama spoke at the White House about the future of the Affordable Care Act, and highlighted the benefits that members of the public are already seeing. Once fully implemented, the Affordable Care Act will provide affordable health coverage to all everyone, ensuring that insurance companies cannot drop patients for preexisting conditions or lifetime dollar limits on their coverage.

Americans are already seeing the benefits of the Affordable Care Act, and as implementation continues people will experience the law's full benefits. President Obama said:

"The good news is that starting October 1st, new online marketplaces will allow consumers to go online and compare private health care insurance plans just like you'd compare over the Internet the best deal on flat-screen TVs, or cars or any other product that is important to your lives. And you're going to see competition in ways that we haven't seen before.



Insurance companies will compete for your business. And in states that are working hard to make sure this law delivers for their people, what we're seeing is that consumers are getting a hint of how much money they're potentially going to save because of this law. In states like California, Oregon, Washington, new competition, new choices, market forces are pushing costs down.

"Just yesterday, state officials in New York announced that average premiums for consumers who buy insurance in their new marketplace will be at least 50 percent lower next year than they are today. Think about that -- 50 percent lower. So for people like Morgan who are self-employed, who have to buy on the individual market, they're suddenly going to see opportunities not just for the rebates we discussed, but also for even greater savings in their monthly premiums."

President Obama also explained that many individuals will be receiving rebate checks from their insurance companies because of requirements in the law that eighty cents of every dollar must be spent on healthcare premiums and not for administrative purposes. He said:

"For years, too many middle-class families saw their health care costs go up and up and up, without much explanation as to why or how their money was being spent. But today, because of the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies have to spend at least 80 percent of every dollar that you pay in premiums on your health care -- not on overhead, not on profits, but on you.

"Now, many insurance companies are already exceeding this target, and they're bringing down premiums and providing better value to their customers. But those that aren't now actually have to reimburse you. If they're not spending your premium dollars on your health care -- at least 80 percent of it -- they've got to give you some money back."

Click [here](#) to read the rest of the President's remarks.

DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz Addresses 104th NAACP Annual Convention

On Wednesday, Democratic National Committee Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz spoke at the 104th NAACP Annual Convention in Orlando, Fla. to address voting rights and the need to protect those fundamental rights.

Chair Wasserman Schultz discussed the importance of ensuring that voting rights are protected:

"That's why groups like the NAACP have fought—and continue to fight—to protect and defend the right to vote, because we know that voting is not a privilege, it is a right which must not be infringed. We also, we also know and remember the incredible sacrifices of the many Americans who gave so much to secure and protect the right to vote."

Wasserman Schultz continued:

"And yet despite those sacrifices, we have recently been reminded that progress is never guaranteed and that the right to vote is only as safe as the political will to protect it. We've seen states like South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and yes, Florida, launch cynical and divisive campaigns to restrict access to the ballot. These widespread efforts to suppress voting are a blemish on our democracy."

Wasserman Schultz also highlighted the need for Congress to step up and take the necessary action in protecting voters' rights:

"We must all remain vigilant and focused in light of the Supreme Court's decision and hold the leadership in the House accountable to update the law. Sitting on the sidelines, waiting for something to happen is not an option."

[Watch](#) Chair Wasserman Schultz deliver the speech or [read](#) her full remarks.



President Obama Welcomes former President George H.W. Bush to the White House for Points of Light Award Ceremony

On Monday, President Obama welcomed former President George H.W. Bush to the White House to present the 5,000th Daily Point of Light Award. The recipients of the award were the co-founders of Outreach Inc., Floyd Hammer and Kathy Hamilton.

Hamilton and Hammer established Outreach Inc. after participating in a volunteer mission to Tanzania to renovate an HIV/AIDS clinic and seeing the surrounding poverty. Outreach Inc. has packaged and distributed over 233 million free meals to children in more than 15 countries, including the United States.



President Bush made the recognition of volunteerism a priority through the implementation of the Daily Point of Light Awards, giving out 1,029 during his time in office. President Bush also made volunteerism a priority when he created the nonprofit – Points of Light – which has become the largest organization in the world recognizing and participating in volunteer service. Michelle Nunn, the CEO of Points of Light, delivered remarks during the event in the East Room to honor Hammer and Hamilton.

President Obama also spoke to the room, stressing the importance of volunteerism and its growth in American society since 1989:

“Service is up across age groups and across regions. It’s now a graduation requirement in many high schools and colleges. It’s embedded in the culture of businesses large and small. And speaking for my family, volunteering has brought joy and meaning to Michelle and me and our daughters over the years, and I know that’s the case for many of your families, too.”

President Obama continued to thank President Bush for his efforts:

“This national tradition [of volunteering] may seem perfectly ordinary to many Americans, especially those who have grown up during this period. But, in fact, it reflects tremendous progress. And today we can say that our country is a better and a stronger force for good in the world because, more and more, we are a people that serve. And for that, we have to thank President Bush, and his better half, Barbara, who is just as committed as her husband to service, and has dedicated her life to it as well.”

Watch President Obama honor the 5000th Daily Point of Light Award recipients [here](#).

[President Obama Delivers Remarks on Trayvon Martin](#)

This afternoon, President Obama spoke in the White House briefing room about Trayvon Martin.

“Each successive generation seems to be making progress in changing attitudes when it comes to race. It doesn’t mean we’re in a post-racial society. It doesn’t mean that racism is eliminated. But when I talk to Malia and Sasha, and I listen to their friends and I seem them interact, they’re better than we are -- they’re better than we were -- on these issues. And that’s true in every community that I’ve visited all across the country.

“And so we have to be vigilant and we have to work on these issues. And those of us in authority should be doing everything we can to encourage the better angels of our nature, as opposed to using these episodes to heighten divisions. But we should also have confidence that kids these days, I think, have more sense than we did back then, and certainly more than our parents did or our grandparents did; and that along this long, difficult journey, we’re becoming a more perfect union -- not a perfect union, but a more perfect union.”

Spanish-language television anchors participate in “Live From the White House” series

President Obama invited four Spanish-speaking anchors from Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles and New York/New Jersey local news stations to participate in the “Live From the White House” series, an initiative meant to provide reporters from outside of the Washington, D.C. area the opportunity to cover the President and the Administration.



The reporters interviewed the President in the Blue Room, where he talked about bipartisan commonsense immigration reform, which would be a big boost to our economy.

During the interviews, the President urged the House of Representatives to take action and said he wants to see the best outcome for the country and see the Senate’s bill become a reality for the millions of individuals who would like to remain in the country and become legal,

tax-paying citizens.

The reporters also had the opportunity to speak with Senior Administration officials who emphasized that commonsense immigration reform will reduce the deficit and grow the economy, and highlighted a recent White House report on the economic benefits of the Senate’s immigration reform legislation.

First Lady Michelle Obama Speaks at Urban Alliance Youth Event

On Thursday, First Lady Michelle Obama spoke to a group of interns at an Urban Alliance Youth Event in Chicago. The First Lady had a personal conversation with the interns about their experiences taking their first steps in building connections and relationships for their careers.

Mrs. Obama spoke to the students to help direct them on how to succeed. She said that their first step was being part of a supportive program like Urban Alliance:

“I want to take this time to congratulate everyone involved with Urban Alliance, particularly the staff I know who worked so hard to make this happen, and people who are so committed: to all the funders, to the business leaders who have made these internships possible, to you all students for having the courage to step outside your comfort zones. That was probably initially pretty scary. I know that feeling. I was you guys -- I say that all the time -- living on the South Side, looking at these buildings, wondering what it was like to work in those offices, finding real opportunities for myself, when I didn’t have networks or connections.

“So this is a very special program. And I wanted to be here because I want all the business leaders and community leaders around the country to understand that this is part of the answer. Programs like these are the answer in so many ways to stemming the tide of violence for kids in so many communities, giving them an opportunity to envision a world outside of gang banging and hanging on the streets, dropping out. You have to be able to envision a different life for yourself, right, to know what’s out there, to know what’s going on downtown in order to know what you want to work for.”

The First Lady finished her remarks with words of encouragement on how to move forward after their internships in the city:

“So we all have to use our positions, that spotlight we have, that platform, to help show young people around this country that there’s so much to dream for.”

[DNC beats RNC in annual softball game](#)

On Wednesday night, the staff of the Democratic National Committee triumphed over the Republican National Committee with a 6-5 victory in the annual softball game. The RNC jumped out to an early 5-0 lead through two innings, but the DNC, spurred by solid defense and timely hitting, came back to tie the game at 5 sending it to extra innings. After the RNC failed to score, the DNC won the game on an exciting inside the park home run.

During the game, DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz surprised the players and fans by coming out to cheer on the Democrats. After the win the commissioner presented the DNC a trophy to recognize their victory.



PUTTING TAX BREAKS FOR THE RICH OVER MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES

Tens of billions of dollars in devastating automatic spending cuts are taking effect across the country as a direct result of Congressional Republicans' inaction. While President Obama has offered a balanced approach to reduce the deficit, Republicans refuse to compromise and have minimized or even mocked the impact of the GOP Sequester.

Mitch McConnell thinks people won't be "inconvenienced" by their communities losing out on tens of millions of dollars. Chris Christie doesn't think the sequester "is going to have [a] grave effect on anybody." Rep. Tim Huelskamp called the cuts "a yawn."

Despite Republicans' rhetoric, the effects of the GOP Sequester are being felt in communities around the country. Please see below for a report from *Think Progress* on the people who have lost their housing as a direct result of Republicans' inaction:

<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/07/12/2293211/affordable-housing-sequestration/>

Meet The People Who Lost Their Housing Thanks To Budget Cuts

By **Bryce Covert**

Ismael Brazza was one of the lucky few to move to the top of the waiting list for Section 8 housing vouchers in Washington State. After applying more than a year ago, he was told he would finally get the subsidy to help pay for rent and had two months to find an apartment. But after just a week of searching he found out that his voucher was being rescinded thanks to sequestration. Now he's back to staying with different relatives.

Brazza is one of the hundreds of thousands who have suffered some of the most immediate consequences of sequestration, which have already kicked children out of Head Start, reduced Meals on Wheels deliveries to the elderly, and devastated some public schools. Overall, it will cut more than \$2 billion this year from housing assistance and other related programs that are funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). For Section 8, that means many local housing authorities that dole out the vouchers will freeze waiting lists and when people leave the program, the freed up vouchers won't be turned over to new applicants. This is projected to result in 140,000 fewer households getting assistance.

Brazza had never intended to rely on public assistance, but he lost his job while dealing with colon cancer. Between that, a divorce, and a lack of family support, he applied for public housing vouchers. "I've been self-sufficient all my life," he told ThinkProgress. "But cancer struck and everything changed." He meant the housing to be a temporary support while he fought cancer and went back to school for a career in physical therapy.

Now his cancer has returned. "I'm having a difficult time financially. I am under a lot of debt, medical bills, credit card bills, struggling to survive," he said. The housing authority hasn't been able to tell him when, if ever, he might get off the waiting list again and actually get some help with rent. If sequestration cuts aren't reversed, the chances don't look good.

While some budget cuts will take a while to actually impact local programs, these took effect immediately. "It started over the winter," says Linda Couch, senior vice president for policy and research at the National Low Income Housing Coalition. "The voucher waiting list started to slow down in December in anticipation of sequestration." Once sequestration went into law, people like Brazza who had just moved off of waiting lists got notices that their vouchers were being rescinded.

In Brazza's own state of Washington, most housing authorities are shrinking their programs in this way. Ben Miksch, state and federal policy associate at the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, related a conversation with one he had recently: "Sequestration happened, so now when 10 people leave the system, we're just going to serve 10 less people." They haven't had to kick anyone off the rolls who already has a voucher, and "we're fighting tooth and nail to make sure that we don't," Miksch said. But even slow attrition is troubling. He reports seeing increased demand as wages stagnate and housing costs go up. "We're seeing more and more people who need assistance, and at the same time we're reducing the assistance we're giving them."

Things are similarly dire in New York City. Sequestration will reduce its vouchers by 8,000, which will mean close to 24,000 people won't be able to access affordable housing, Judith Goldiner, attorney in charge of the civil law reform unit at Legal Aid, said. The housing authority is also looking at reducing the amount of rent that each voucher will pay out, resulting in 9,800 families having to pay more of their income toward rent. Yet this population "by definition can't afford it, any increase," she said. On top of these changes, the New York Housing Authority is saying that if it doesn't get \$14,000 from HUD, it will have to take 1,200 vouchers away from those who already have them. "We haven't seen this before, this has never happened before," Goldiner said. "We're looking at a doomsday scenario."

The options being weighed in New York City are the same ones housing authorities across the country are forced to consider. They were already operating on a "shoestring budget," Couch explained, because most aren't allowed to have large reserves – they only have a couple of week's worth of money stored up. That has meant the pullback in resources has been fast and severe. After the initial letters sent out to those looking for housing like Brazza, authorities are turning to decreasing the worth of each voucher. That means either the landlord takes a hit or the tenant has to come up with the extra money. "In some cases people are paying zero rent and are now paying \$50, or if you're paying \$50 it now goes to \$100," said Jeremy Rosen, policy director at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. "It sounds like a small overall amount of money, but it's a doubling of your rent, and if you don't have much or any extra money it matters." Couch warned that this could also mean landlords are hesitant to take Section 8 tenants in the future if the rent money is no longer stable.

Other problems loom on the horizon. If housing authorities are no longer giving out vouchers when they get freed up, that will mean fewer vouchers get funded the following year. That's because they only get funding based on the vouchers it had allocated in the last calendar year. "It's a really nasty downward spiral of funding," Couch said, "which will take authorities years to dig out of."

Meanwhile, many authorities have cut maintenance funding for public housing, which will also have long-lasting impacts. Now when a unit is vacated, rather than taking a week to turn over after getting new paint and any repairs it may take three or four weeks, Couch explained. "That slows the waiting list." It will also likely mean fewer available

units overall. "We have already for years and years had maintenance backlogs in public housing," Rosen said. Budget cuts will mean less money for repairs, and "there are housing units that are actually in disrepair and can't be used but could be if they had the money to fix them."

And while HUD has instructed authorities to do all that they can to avoid taking vouchers away from those who already have them, including granting them flexibility to dip into some other funds, that may not last. "It's probable we'll start to see people actually have to be kicked out of units, have vouchers taken away," Miksch said. Authorities will have to "say sorry, I know you just got out of your car into an apartment, but you have to go back, hope you didn't sell your car," he added.

Brazza is still unable to work thanks to his battle with cancer and other health problems. But he remains optimistic about his own outlook. "I'm going to beat it, I'm going to fight it," he said.

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