significant and have captured the headlines of the news media. We must also keep in mind the small issues that can potentially transform into global conflicts.

Currently, for example, one of the seemingly more exotic issues threatening world peace involves the disputed Diaoyu (or Senkaku) Islands in the South China Sea. Although rocks make good headlines and often make each other escalate, a small territorial issue can turn into a potentially larger crisis. While China flaunts its growing dominance in the region, Americans and Japanese recall Beijing’s territorial claims.

In my conversations with various Chinese people during my last year studying abroad in Beijing, most people strongly sided with their government's territorial claims over islands never solved issues; it mainly risks-local people. I told them that flying war planes over disputed islands can cause more tensions. 

Despite these flights by our bombers, the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Koreans demonstrate their respective ownership on the small islands that are actually miniscule, as they are uninhabited and truly worthless, as they are uninhabited and lack natural resources. The issue of the Diaoyu Islands is finally coming to an end. Tonight, this chamber speaks with one voice to the people we represent: it is you, our citizens, who make the state of our Union strong.

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January 28, 2014

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE S521

In sum, to avoid international incidents, the United States must practice a more responsible system of foreign policy. The tension of the East Asian region is only one example of when America used force prior to engaging in other forms of international communication. Instead, the US government must work with cultural and historical backgrounds of various conflicts and first try to resolve them through peaceful means, rather than skyrocket the likelihood of starting wars.

ARGAILL MORRIS, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 11 (FINALIST)

Many United States issues have been the subject of recent news and the media; some are international and others are local. I believe that the environmental issues in the US have not had their share of the spotlight. Small measures, whether local, state, or national policies could change the US environment for the better. One of these measures is increased regulation of the fracking industry.

Fracking, or "fracking," is the process of gathering oil by forcing highly pressurized fluid into oil or gas formations, so that the oil or gas flows to the surface. The use of fracking has jumped to 25% of oil production, up from 1% in 2000. It has spurred hopes of an energy independent United States, many drawn back, especially where the environment is concerned. Fracking endangers plants, livestock, and most importantly, human beings. In fact, many individuals believe that the fracking industry could seriously harm the health of the United States and its people. We must not allow ourselves to be lured by the benefits fracking provides; instead, we must examine it closely to determine if energy independence is worth the risk.

Of the 750 chemicals that can be used in fracking, 12 are carcinogens. In Wyoming, Pennsylvania and other states, these chemicals have contaminated drinking water in residential areas. If there is no way to change the chemical makeup of fracturing fluid or illegalize fracting completely, making sure the fracking industry is subject to strict regulation is the next best course of action.

Progress is being made, however. The FRAC (Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals) Act was introduced in 2011, which shows that the issue has caught the attention of Congress. However, both the House and Senate versions have yet to be passed. These bills will bring back to the attention of Congress, because as long as the fracking industry is not subject to the same regulation as every other, the natural environment is in danger. The United States will continue to be at risk. 

REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON JANUARY 28, 2014—PM 27

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was ordered to lie on the table:

To the Congress of the United States:

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

Today in America, a teacher spent extra time with a student who needed it, and did her part to lift America's graduation rate to its highest level in more than three decades.

An entrepreneur flipped on the lights in her tech startup, and did her part to add to the more than eighty million new jobs our businesses have created over the past 4 years.

A farmer prepared for the spring after the strongest five-year stretch of farm exports in our history. A rural doctor gave a young child the first prescription to treat asthma that his mother could afford. A man took the bus home from the graveyard shift, bone-tired but dreaming big dreams for his son. And in tight-knit communities across America, fathers and mothers will tuck in their kids, put an arm around their shoulders, give thanks for being home from a war that, after 12 long years, is finally coming to an end.

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Tonight, this chamber speaks with one voice to the people we represent: it is you, our citizens, who make the state of our Union strong.

Here are the results of your efforts: The lowest unemployment rate in over 5 years. A rebounding housing market. A manufacturing sector that's adding jobs for the first time since the 1990s. More oil produced at home than we buy from the rest of the world—the first time that's happened in nearly 20 years. Our deficits cut more than in half. And for the first time in over a decade, business leaders around the world have declared that China is no longer the world’s number one place to invest; America is.

That’s why I believe this can be a breakthrough year for America. After 5 years of grid and determined effort, the United States is better-positioned for the 21st century than any other nation on Earth.

The question for everyone in this chamber, running through every decision we make this year, is whether we are going to help or hinder this progress. For several years now, this town has been consumed by a vicious argument over the proper size of the federal government. It's an important debate—everyone's life, the hard work of the people who sent us here. I believe most of you are, too. Last month, thanks to the work of Democrats and Republicans, this Congress finally produced a budget that undoes some of last year's severe cuts to government programs. That's progress. Nobody got everything they wanted, and we can still do more to invest in this country's future while bringing down our deficit in a balanced way. But the budget compromise should leave us freer to focus on creating new jobs, not creating new crises.

In the coming months, let's see where else we can make progress together. Let's make this a year of action. That's what most Americans sent us here for — to end our deficit in a balanced way, to put more Americans back to work, to focus on their lives, their hopes, their aspirations. And what I believe unites the people of this Nation, regardless of race or region or party, young or old, rich or poor, is the simple, profound belief in opportunity for all—the notion that if you work hard and take responsibility, you can get ahead.

Let's face it: that belief has suffered some serious blows. Over more than three decades, even before the Great Recession hit, massive shifts in technology and global economic power have eliminated a lot of good, middle-class jobs, and weakened the economic foundations that families depend on.
Today, after 4 years of economic growth, corporate profits and stock prices have rarely been higher, and those at the top have never done better. But average wages have barely budged. Inequality has deepened. Upward mobility is stalled. The hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by—let alone get ahead. And too many still aren’t working at all.

Our job is to reverse these trends. It won’t happen right away, and we won’t agree on everything. But what I offer tonight is a set of concrete, practical proposals to speed up growth, strengthen the middle class, and build new ladders of opportunity into the middle class. Some require Congressional action, and I’m eager to work with all of you. But America does not stand still—and neither will I. So wherever and whenever I can take steps without legislation to expand opportunity for more American families, that’s what I’m going to do.

As usual, our First Lady sets a good example. Michelle’s Let’s Move partnership with schools, businesses, and local leaders has helped bring down childhood obesity rates for the first time in 30 years—an achievement that will improve lives and reduce health care costs for decades to come. The Joining Forces alliance that Michelle and Jill Biden launched has already encouraged employers to hire nearly 400,000 veterans and military spouses. Taking a page from that playbook, the White House just organized a College Opportunity Summit where already, 150 universities, businesses, and nonprofits have made concrete commitments to reduce inequality in access to higher education—and help every hardworking kid go to college and succeed when they get to campus. Across the country, we’re partnering with businesses, colleges, and state legislatures on issues from homelessness to marriage equality.

The point is, there are millions of Americans outside Washington who are tired of stale political arguments, and are moving this country forward. They believe, and I believe, that here in America, our success should depend not by—let alone get ahead. And too many still aren’t working at all.

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and fix our broken immigration sys-
tem. Republicans and Democrats in the
Senate have acted. I know that mem-
ers of both parties in the House want
to do the same. Independent econ-
omists say immigration reform will
grow our economy and shrink our defi-
cits by $3 trillion in the next two decades. And for good reason: When people come here to fulfill their dreams—to study, invent, and con-
tribute to our culture—they make our
country a more attractive place for business and create jobs for everyone. So let’s get immigration re-
form done this year.

The ideas I’ve outlined so far can speed up growth and create more jobs. But in this rapidly-changing economy, we have to make sure that every Amer-
ican has the skills to fill those jobs.

The good news is, we know how to do it. Two years ago, as the auto industry came roaring back, Andra Rush opened
up a manufacturing firm in Detroit. She knew she needed help, so she dialed up the best-selling truck in America, and she knew how to make them. She just needed the workforce. So she dialed up what we call an American Job Center—places where folks can walk in to get
the help or training they need to find a
new job, or better job. She was flooded
with new workers. And today, Detroit
Manufacturing Systems has more than
700 employees. What Andra and her employees expe-
rrienced is how it should be for every
employer—and every job seeker. So to-
night, I’ve asked Vice President Biden
to lead an across-the-board reform of
America’s training programs to make
sure they have one mission: Train Amer-
icans with the skills employers need, and match them to good jobs that need to be filled right now. That
means more on-the-job training, and more apprenticeships that set a young
worker on an upward trajectory for
life. It means more career pathways to
community colleges that can help de-
sign training to fill their specific needs. And if Congress wants to help,
you can concentrate funding on proven
programs that connect more ready-to-
work Americans with ready-to-be-filled
jobs.

I’m also convinced we can help Amer-
icans return to the workforce faster by
reforming unemployment insurance so
that it’s more effective in today’s econ-
omy. But first, this Congress needs to
restore those unemployment insurance
incentives for you just let expire for 1.6 million peo-
ple.

Let me tell you why.

Misty DeMars is a mother of two
young boys. She’d been steadily em-
ployed since she was a teenager. She
put herself through college. She’d
never collected unemployment bene-
fits. In May, she and her husband used
their life savings to buy their first
home. A week later, budget cuts claim-
ed the job she loved. Last month, when their unemployment insurance was cut off, she sat down and wrote me
a letter—the kind I get every day. “We
are the face of the unemployment cri-
sis,” she wrote. “I am not dependent
on the government. . . . Our country de-
deps on people like us who build car-
ers, contribute to society . . . care about our neighbors. . . . I am confident
that in time I will find a job . . . I will
help, but more important, this country
needs them in the game. That’s why I’ve been asking CEOs to
give more long-term unemployed work-
ners a fair shot at that new job and new
chance to support their families; this
week, many will come to the White
House to make that commitment real.
Tonight, I ask every business leader
to America to join us in and to do the
same—because we are stronger when
America fields a full team.

Of course, it’s not enough to train to
to-day’s workforce. We also have to pre-
pare tomorrow’s workforce, by guaran-
teeing every child access to a world-
class education.

Esteven Rodriguez couldn’t speak a word of English when he moved to New
York City at age nine. But last month,
thanks to the support of great teachers
and an innovative tutoring program,
he led a march of his classmates—through a crowd of cheering parents and neigh-
bors—to the post office, where they mailed off their
college applications. And this son of a
factory worker just found out he’s
going to college this fall.

Five years ago, we set out to change
the odds for all our kids. We worked
with lenders to reform student loans,
and more young people are earning
college degrees than ever before. Race to the Top, with the help of gov-
ernors from both parties, has helped
students raise expectations and perfor-
amance. Teachers and principals
in schools from Tennessee to Washington, D.C. are making big strides in pre-
paring students with skills for the new
economy—problem solving, critical
thinking, science, technology, engi-
neering, and math. Some of this change
is hard. It requires everything from
more challenging curriculums and
more demanding parents to better sup-
port for teachers and new ways to mea-
sure how well our kids think, not how
wel! they can bubble in a test. But it’s worth it—and it’s work-
ing.

The problem is we’re still not reach-
ing enough kids, and we’re not reach-
ing them in time. That has to change.
Tonight, I repeat that request tonight.
But in the meantime, 30 states have raised pre-K funding on their own. They know we can’t wait. So
just as we worked with States to re-
form our schools, this year, we’ll invest
in new partnerships with States and communities across the country in a
race to the top for our youngest chil-
dren. And as Congress decides what it’s
going to do, I’m going to pull together
leaders from both parties, from business leaders, and philanthropists willing to
help more kids access the high-quality
pre-K they need.

Last year, I also pledged to connect
99 percent of our students to high-speed
broadband over the next 4 years. To-
night, I can announce that with the
support of the FCC and companies like
Apple, Microsoft, Sprint, and Verizon,
we’ve got a down payment to start connec-
ting more than 15,000 schools and 20
million students over the next 2 years,
without adding a dime to the deficit.

We’re working to redesign high
schools and partner them with colleges
and employers that offer the real-world
education and hands-on training that can help our next generation launch their life directly to their next step.

We’re shaking up our system of higher
education to give parents more infor-
mation, and colleges more incentives to offer better value, so that no middle-
class kid is priced out of a college edu-
cation. And we’re launching the oppor-
tunity to cap their monthly student
loan payments to 10 percent of their in-
come, and I want to work with Con-
gress to see how we can help even more
Americans who feel trapped by student
debt.

Tonight, I call on Leaders from some of America’s leading foundations and
corporations on a new initiative to
help more young men of color facing
tough odds stay on track and reach
their full potential.
The bottom line is, Michelle and I
want every child to have the same
chance this country gave us. But we
know our opportunity agenda won’t be
complete—and too many young people
entering the workforce today will see
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child care is more challenging than any
other job, too. It’s time to do something
to help more young men of color facing
tough odds stay on track and reach
their full potential.

Today, women make up about half
of our workforce. But they still make 77
cents for every dollar a man earns.
That is wrong, and in 2014, it’s an em-
barrassment. A woman deserves equal
pay for equal work. She deserves to
have a baby without sacrificing her job
or her career. And she deserves care
for a sick child or sick parent without
running into hardship—and you know
what, a father does, too. It’s time to do
away with workplace policies that be-
long in a “Mad Men” episode. This
year, let’s all come together—Congress,
the White House and businesses from
Wall Street to Main Street—to give
every woman the opportunity she de-
serves. Because I firmly believe when
women succeed, America succeeds.

Now, women hold a majority of local
councils—yet they are not the only ones
stifled by stagnant wages. Americans understand that some peo-
ple will earn more than others, and we
don’t resent those who, by virtue of their efforts, achieve incredible success. But Americans overwhelmingly agree that no one who works full time should ever have to raise a family in poverty.

In the year since I asked this Congress to raise the minimum wage, five States have passed laws to raise theirs. Many businesses have done it on their own. Nick Chute is here tonight with his boss, John Soranno. John’s an owner of Nicky Pizza in Minneapolis, and Nick helps make the dough. Only now he makes more of it: John just gave his employees a raise, to ten bucks an hour—a decision that eased their financial stress and boosted their morale.

Tonight, I ask more of America’s business leaders to follow John’s lead and do what you can to raise your employees’ wages. To every mayor, governor, and state legislator in America, I say, you don’t have to wait for Congress to raise wages for Americans who work hard every day. If you take this on. And as a chief executive, I intend to lead by example. Profitable corporations like Costco see higher wages as the smart way to boost productivity and reduce turnover. We should all be doing more. In the rest of the week, I’ll issue an Executive Order requiring Federal contractors to pay their federally-funded employees a fair wage of at least $10.10 an hour—because if you cook our troops’ meals or wash their clothes, you didn’t have to work to live. Of course, to reach millions more, Congress needs to get on board. Today, the Federal minimum wage is worth about 20 percent less than it was when Ronald Reagan took office. Tom HARKIN and George MILLER have a bill to fix what that by lifting the minimum wage to $10.10. This will help families. It will give businesses customers with more money to spend. It doesn’t involve any new bureaucratic program. So join the rest of the country. Say yes. Give America a raise.

There are other steps we can take to help families make ends meet, and few are more effective at reducing inequality and helping families pull themselves up through hard work than the Earned Income Tax Credit. Right now, it helps about half of all parents at the poverty level. But I agree with Republicans like Senator RUMO that it doesn’t do enough for single workers who don’t have kids, So let’s work together to strengthen the credit, reward work, and help more Americans get ahead.

Let’s do more to help Americans save for retirement. Today, most workers don’t have a pension. A Social Security check often isn’t enough on its own. And while the stock market has doubled over the last 5 years, that doesn’t help folks who don’t have 401Ks. That’s why, tomorrow, I will direct the Treasury to take steps to make it easier for Americans to start their own retirement savings: MyRA. It’s a new savings bond that encourages folks to build a nest egg. MyRA guarantees a decent return with no risk of losing what you put in. And if this Congress wants to help, work with me to fix an upside-down tax code that gives big tax breaks to help the wealthy save, but does little to nothing for middle-class Americans. Offer them automatic access to an automatic IRA on the job, so they can save at work just like everyone in this Chamber can. And since the most important investment many families make is their home, send me legislation that makes it easier on the banks, and harder on the borrowers, to call your mom and walk her through the application. It will give her some peace of mind—plus, she’ll appreciate hearing from you.

After all, that’s the spirit that has always moved this Nation forward. It’s the spirit of citizenship—the recognition that through hard work and responsibility, we can pursue our individual dreams, but still come together as one American family to make sure the next generation can pursue its dreams as well.

Citizenship means standing up for everyone’s right to vote. Last year, part of the Voting Rights Act was weakened. But conservative Republicans and Democratic leaders to go together to strengthen it; and the bipartisan commission I appointed last year has offered reforms so that no one has to wait more than a half hour to vote. Let’s support these efforts. It should be easier, not harder, for people to sign up. citizens and their neighbors,” he said. “They are people who shop and go to church with—farmers out on the tractors—grocery clerks—they are people who go to work every morning praying they don’t get laid off. No one deserves to live that way.”

Steve’s right. That’s why, tonight, I ask every American who knows someone without health insurance to help them get covered by March 31st. Moms, granparents, your kids—call your mom and walk her through the application. It will give her some peace of mind—plus, she’ll appreciate hearing from you.

And here’s another number: zero. Because of this law, no American can ever lose health insurance. When Amanda was diagnosed with a pre-existing condition like asthma, they were worried. They were foot- ing the bill for a housing crisis ever again, and keeps the dream of homeownership alive for future generations of Americans.

One last point on financial security. For decades, few things exposed hard-working families to economic hardship more than a broken health care system. And in case you haven’t heard, we’re in the process of fixing that.

A pre-existing condition used to mean someone like Amanda Shelly, a physician assistant and single mom from Arizona, couldn’t get health insurance. But on January 1st, she got covered. On January 3rd, she felt a sharp pain. On January 6th, she had emergency surgery. Just one week earlier, Amanda said, that surgery would’ve meant bankruptcy.

That’s what health insurance reform is all about—the peace of mind that if misfortune strikes, you don’t have to lose everything.

Already, because of the Affordable Care Act, more than 3 million Americans under age 26 have gained coverage under their parents’ plans. More than nine million Americans have signed up for private health insurance or Medicaid coverage.

And here’s another number: zero. Because of this law, no American can ever again be dropped or denied coverage for a preexisting condition like asthma, diabetes, or cancer. So what are you going to do? Call your mom and walk her through the application. It will give her some peace of mind—plus, she’ll appreciate hearing from you.

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for its own future. If the Afghan government signs a security agreement that we have negotiated, a small force of Americans could remain in Afghanistan with NATO allies to carry out two narrow missions: training and assisting Afghan forces and counterterrorism operations to prevent any remnant of al Qaeda from returning. For while our relationship with Afghanistan will change, one thing will not: our resolve that terrorists do not launch attacks against our country.

The fact is, that danger remains. While we have put al Qaeda’s core leadership on a path to defeat, the threat has evolved, as al Qaeda affiliates and other extremists take root in different parts of the world. In Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, and Mali, we have to keep working with partners to disrupt and disable these networks. In Syria, we’ll support the opposition that rejects the agenda of terrorist networks. Here at home, we’ll keep strengthening our defense, to prevent new threats in the future from cyberattacks. And as we reform our defense budget, we have to keep faith with our men and women in uniform, and invest in the capabilities they need to succeed in future missions.

We must remain vigilant. But I strongly believe our leadership and our security cannot depend on our military alone. As Commander in Chief, I have used force when needed to protect the American people, and I will never hesitate to do so as long as I hold this office. But I will not send our troops into harm’s way unless it’s truly necessary; nor will I allow our sons and daughters to be mired in open-ended conflicts. We must fight the battles that need to be fought, not those that terrorists prefer from us—large-scale deployments that drain our strength and may ultimately feed extremism.

So, even as we aggressively pursue terrorist networks—through more targeted efforts and by building the capacity of our foreign partners—America must move off a permanent war footing. That’s why I’ve imposed prudent limits on the use of drones—for we will not be safer if people abroad believe we strike within their countries without regard for the consequence. That’s why, working with this Congress, I will reform our surveillance programs—because the vital work of our intelligence community depends on public confidence in its breadth, that the surveillance of ordinary people is not being violated. And with the Afghan war ending, this needs to be the year Congress lifts the remaining restrictions on detainee transfers and we close the prison at Guantanamo Bay—because we counter terrorism not just through intelligence and military action, but by remaining true to our Constitutional ideals, and setting an example for the rest of the world.

You know, in a world of complex threats, our security and leadership depends on all elements of our power—including strong and principled diplomacy. American diplomacy has rallied more than 50 countries to prevent nuclear materials from falling into the wrong hands, and allowed us to reduce our own reliance on Cold War stockpiles. American diplomacy, backed by the threat of force, is why Syria’s chemical weapons have been eliminated, and we will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future the Syrian people deserve—a future free of dictatorship, terror and fear. As we speak, American diplomacy is appealing to Israelis and Palestinians as they engage in difficult but necessary talks to end the conflict there; to achieve dignity and an independent state for Palestinians, and lasting peace and security for the State of Israel—a Jewish state that knows America will always be at their side.

And it is American diplomacy, backed by pressure, that has halted the progress of Iran’s nuclear program—and rolled parts of that program back—for the very first time in a decade. As we sit here, the P5+1 have begun to eliminate its stockpile of higher levels of enriched uranium. It is not installing advanced centrifuges. Unprecedented inspections help the world verify, every day, that Iran is not advancing its nuclear weapons program. With our allies and partners, we’re engaged in negotiations to see if we can peacefully achieve a goal we all share: preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

These negotiations will be difficult. They may not succeed. We are clear-eyed about Iran’s support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, which threaten our allies; and the mistrust between our nations cannot be wished away. But these negotiations do not rely on trust; any long-term deal we agree to must be based on verifiable action that convinces us and the international community that Iran is not building a nuclear bomb. It John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan could negotiate with the Soviet Union, then surely a strong and confident America can negotiate with less powerful adversaries today.

The sanctions that we put in place helped make this opportunity possible. But let me be clear: if this Congress sends me a new sanctions bill now that threatens to derail these talks, I will veto it. For the sake of our national security, we must give diplomacy a chance to succeed. If Iran’s leaders do not keep their word, then I will be the first to call for more sanctions, and stand ready to exercise all options to make sure Iran does not build a nuclear weapon. But if Iran’s leaders do seize the chance, then Iran could take an important step to rejoin the community of nations, and we will have resolved one of the leading security challenges of our time without the risks of war.

Finally, let’s remember that our leadership is defined not just by our defense against threats, but by the enormous opportunities to do good and promote understanding around the globe—to forge greater cooperation, to expand new markets, to free people from fear and want. And no one is better positioned to take advantage of those opportunities than America.

Our alliance with Europe remains the strongest the world has ever known. And as we support those who are willing to do the hard work of building democracy. In Ukraine, we stand for the principle that all people have the right to express themselves freely and peacefully, and have a say in their country’s future. Across Africa, we’re working together businesses and governments to double access to electricity and help end extreme poverty. In the Americas, we are building new ties of commerce, but we’re also expanding cultural and educational exchanges among young people. And we will continue to focus on the Asia-Pacific, where we support our allies, shape a future of greater security and prosperity, and extend a hand to those devastated by disaster—like the Philippines, when our Marines and civilians rushed to aid those battered by a typhoon, and were greeted with words like, “We will never forget your kindness” and “God bless America!”

But we do these things because they help promote our long-term security. And we do them because we believe in the inherent dignity and equality of every human being, regardless of race or religion, creed or sexual orientation. And nowhere is the world seeing the expression of that commitment—when Team USA marches the red, white, and blue into the Olympic Stadium—and brings home the gold.

My fellow Americans, no other country in the world does what we do. On every issue, the world turns to us, not simply because of the size of our economy or our military might—but because of the ideals we stand for, and the burdens we bear to advance them. And we know that those who serve in uniform, those who serve in white coats, those who serve their country’s needs to bring home the gold. And we will be your advocate, your partner, and your friend in all that you do. But because the American people have the best—because they have the best values. And because we believe in the strength of America's economy or our military might—but because of the ideals we stand for, and the burdens we bear to advance them. And we know that those who serve in uniform, those who serve in white coats, those who serve their country’s needs to bring home the gold. And we will be your advocate, your partner, and your friend in all that you do. But because the American people have the best—because they have the best values. And because we believe in the strength of America’s alliances and partnerships, America will always be at their side.
His comrades found him in a canal, face down, underwater, shrapnel in his brain. For months, he lay in a coma. The next time I met him, in the hospital, he couldn’t speak; he could barely move. Over the years, he endured dozens of surgery and procedures, and hours of grueling rehab every day.

Even now, Cory is still blind in one eye. He still struggles on his left side. But slowly, steadily, with the support of caregivers like his dad Craig, and the community around him, Cory has grown stronger. Day by day, he’s learned to speak again and stand again and walk again—and he’s working toward the day when he can serve his country again.

“emy recovery has not been easy,” he says. “Nothing in life that’s worth anything is easy.”

Cory is here tonight. And like the Army he loves, like the America he serves, Sergeant First Class Cory Remsburg never gives up, and he does not quit.

My fellow Americans, men and women like Cory remind us that America has never come easy. Our freedom, our democracy, has never been easy. Sometimes we stumble; we make mistakes; we get frustrated or discouraged. But for more than 200 years, we have put those things aside and placed our collective shoulder to the wheel of progress—to create and build and expand the possibilities of individual achievement; to free other nations from tyranny and fear; to promote justice, and fairness, and equality under the law, so that the words set to paper by our founders are made real for every citizen. The America we want for our kids—a rising America where honest work is plentiful and communities are strong; where prosperity is widely shared and opportunity for all lets us go as far as our dreams and toil will take us—none of it is easy. But if we work together, if we summon what is best in us, with our feet planted firmly in today but our eyes cast towards tomorrow—I know it’s within our reach.

Believe it.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

BARACK OBAMA.


MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:06 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1684. An act to convey certain property to the State of Wyoming to consolidate the historic Ranch A, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2166. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture to expedite access to certain Federal lands under the administrative jurisdiction of each Secretary for good Samaritan search-and-recovery missions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 3008. An act to provide for the conveyance of a small parcel of National Forest System land in Los Padres National Forest in California, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:


EC–4442. A communication from the President of the United States of America, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the continuation of a national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 12947 with respect to terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4443. A communication from the Secretary of the Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Registration of Municipal Advisors” (RIN3215–AK86) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.


EC–4445. A communication from the General Counsel of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Executive Compensation for Government Sponsored Enterprises” during the adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4446. A communication from the General Counsel of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Golden Parachute Payments” (RIN2900–AA08) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4447. A communication from the Director of Human Resources, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, three (3) reports relative to vacancies in the position of “Special Agent” at the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2014; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–4448. A communication from the Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Endangered and Threatened Species; Designation of a Nonessential Experimental Population” (RIN1546–BL28) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–4449. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Bond Premium Carried Forward” (RIN1560–BL21) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4450. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Endangered and Threatened Species; Designation of a Nonessential Experimental Population” (RIN1546–BL28) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4451. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Computation of, and Rules Relating to, Medical Loss Ratio” (RIN1209–BL05) (TD 9652) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4452. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “2014 Prevailing Rate Area Map for Federal Wage and Vendor Allowances” (RIN1545–BI57) (TD 9652) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4453. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Golden Parachute Payments” (RIN2900–AA08) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4454. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Golden Parachute Payments” (RIN2900–AA08) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 16, 2014; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–4455. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-