

**The White House**

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**Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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MR. CARNEY: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to your daily briefing in the West Wing of the White House -- the people's house. Good Friday to you.

Before I take your questions I just wanted to point to something I believe you have seen already, which is that today the Obama administration announced that it is taking two important steps to help U.S. businesses create jobs and strengthen their competitiveness in a global economy.

Through two presidential memoranda issued today, the Obama administration will take steps to speed up the transfer of a federal research and development from the laboratory to the marketplace, and it will create Business USA -- a one-stop, central, online platform where small businesses -- and businesses of all sizes -- that want to begin or increase exporting can access information about available federal programs without having to waste time navigating the federal bureaucracy.

These announcements are part of a series of executive actions to put Americans back to work and strengthen the economy, because we cannot wait for congressional Republicans to act.

With that, I will take your questions. Erica.

Q In an interview published today, Bill Daley said, "On the domestic side, both Democrats and Republicans have really made it very difficult for the President to be anything like a chief executive." What have Democrats done to make that difficult?

MR. CARNEY: Well, Bill was speaking, I think, broadly about Presidents and Congress, but there's no question that Democrats haven't agreed -- or some Democrats haven't agreed with every position the President has taken on every issue. We certainly saw that during the debt ceiling crisis, where the President was willing to make some political -- some tough choices that would have been challenges for him within his own party in the effort to get a grand bargain with the Speaker of the House.

But let's make no mistake here. Let's be clear about what the overwhelming obstacle here is to getting things done that the American people want, and that is understood by the Chief of Staff, the Vice President, the President, everybody else here. The obstacle to getting things done that the American people want done on the economy and jobs has been congressional Republicans.

The kinds of things that we put forward to Congress to put Americans back to work and grow the economy were designed specifically with the hope that they could draw bipartisan support, because they're the kinds of measures that have gained bipartisan support in the past. Republicans made a decision, clearly, that we hope will be reversed at some point, that their primary objective wasn't to help the American people get back to work, to grow the American economy -- their number-one priority as stated by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, was to make President Obama a one-term President. That makes getting action out of Congress on the domestic side of the ledger quite difficult, when you have a Congress like we do, which is controlled by the House -- controlled by Republicans in the House and where Republicans have the capacity to block anything in the Senate.

Q And does the President agree with Bill Daley's description of the first three years of his administration as, "ungodly" and "brutal"?

MR. CARNEY: Bill, as all of you who know him, is -- can be very candid and clear in his language. There is no question that when this President took office in January of 2009, we were in an ungodly, bad situation economically. The economy was in free fall. We now know that in the fourth quarter of 2008, the quarter that ended three weeks before he became President, the economy shrank by 9 percent -- 8.9 percent -- the most significant contraction of the economy since the Great Depression. We lost, because of this recession, 8 million jobs -- terrible, terrible job loss. So that was a pretty ungodly situation.

And we've been taking -- this President has been taking steps, making decisions ever since he took office to try to dig us out -- rather, to climb out of the hole that was dug by this recession. And a lot of those decisions were tough. Some of them were unpopular at the time, but they've proven to be the right decisions. And so I think that is precisely what Mr. Daley was describing.

Q And then on Occupy Wall Street, has the President had a chance to see the footage or get briefed on the alleged police brutality in Oakland, the injuries to an Iraq War veteran, and any reaction to that?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I know that he's aware of it. I don't know that he's been briefed on it. He's aware of it from news reports. As I said yesterday, it's very important that we remember that we have a long and noble tradition of free expression, free speech, and protests and demonstrations in this country.

With regard to the situation in Oakland, this is a local law enforcement issue. I would note that the police are investigating that incident, so I don't really have much more to say about that in particular.

Sam.

Q Thanks, Jay. Going back to the interview, Mr. Daley is quoted as saying that, "The President says all the time he's surprised his approval number is above 40." What does he think it should be?

MR. CARNEY: I think "44" is what he said. And, well, precisely because of the circumstances that have -- that this country has been in since he took office: the worst recession since the Great Depression. I mean, it bears repeating, none of us in this room, I think I can say fairly, have experienced an economy like this in our lifetimes. And that has been brutal and difficult for the American people. And he's President, he's chief executive, and he's had to make a lot of difficult decisions to get the economy growing again, to stop the free fall, to put people back to work, and that's been a tough situation.

So the American people are frustrated -- no question about it. You see it -- they're enormously frustrated with the fact that the economy is not growing fast enough, the fact that there's still a persistently high unemployment. And they're exceptionally frustrated by the unconscionable dysfunctionality of Congress that has prevented common-sense solutions from passing the House, passing the Senate, and being signed into law by the President. I think that frustration is borne out in the polls. It's borne out in polls that measure the President's job approval, and it's borne out in polls that measure congressional job approval, the latest of which I think was 9 percent for Congress. So that's what he's talking about.

Q Staying on that -- 9 percent, you mentioned that yesterday; other officials have mentioned it quite a bit. Do you all take that as evidence that the President's tour that has pushed for the jobs act is working --

MR. CARNEY: No --

Q -- in terms of seeking public opinion?

MR. CARNEY: I think other measurements that demonstrate that the American people, by substantial majority, support the provisions within the American Jobs Act show that the message about what's in the jobs act and why it is filled with things that the American people support, filled with things that outside economists say will grow the economy and create jobs, has been getting out.

In terms of -- I think that it's related in the sense that -- the fact that Congress -- Republicans in Congress have refused to in the House even take it up and in the Senate they voted in unison against it I'm sure contributes to their record-low approval ratings. But we look more towards the positive, in the sense, towards the fact that the American people support overwhelmingly both the provisions within the jobs act and the pay-fors.

And that's the important point here that I was trying to make yesterday, too, is that what's remarkable about the situation -- the Republican obstructionism when it comes to measures to create jobs and grow the economy -- is they're alone. Even within their own party, they're the outliers, the Republicans in Congress -- because Republicans out in the country support building roads and bridges and schools. They support putting police officers and teachers back to work. They support tax cuts for everyone who receives a paycheck. They support tax incentives for small businesses -- businesses of all kind to hire veterans. They support a tax cut, a payroll tax cut for employers, for small businesses to help them grow and expand and hire. And, significantly -- because this is the problem, according to the Republicans -- they support the pay-for; they support the means by which the President and the Democrats in Congress say this should be paid for, which is asking millionaires and billionaires -- the people who have done exceptionally well in this country for the last 30 years, but even the last 10 years while middle-class Americans have seen their incomes flat-line -- to pay a little bit more, to pay their fair share.

So they're completely isolated from their own supporters, their own constituents. And we think that with the effort the President is making out in the country to put forward his proposals, to demonstrate the common-sense nature of the solutions he's offering, that hopefully those constituents will then make it clear to their elected representatives that they want action, they want a yes vote on the very things that will put Americans back to work and grow the economy.

Yes. Reuters, did you --

Q Yes. Thanks. The President said in the op-ed in the Financial Times there needs to be a credible firewall for Europe's problems. I wondered if the 1 trillion euro package constitutes that, and whether the agreement struck this week changes the sentiment going into the G20, or not?

MR. CARNEY: Well, as I said yesterday, we welcome the decisions that were made, and now we look forward to a full and rapid implementation of those decisions. There are steps along this process that include implementation.

As you read in the President's op-ed in the Financial Times, he believes that all members of the G20 need to work together to demonstrate the kind of unity that these countries and economies represent as we take on these serious global economic challenges. And Europe is a principal focus right now because of the crisis that they are in, and, fortunately, they are taking welcome and important steps towards resolving that conclusively.

So I think that the posture that the President brings to the G20 is reflected in the op-ed that was published this morning.

Q May I also ask -- Speaker Boehner yesterday said that the major work of the super committee is going to have to be in savings from the entitlement programs. I know you've stated your position about the need for balance, but does it boil down to that in your view as well?

MR. CARNEY: No, it doesn't. You know the President's position. You know the American people's position. And the simple fact of the matter is, you can achieve significant, lasting, impactful deficit and debt reduction of the scale that the President has put forward in his proposal -- an additional \$3 trillion in deficit and debt reduction -- without making seniors or vulnerable Americans shoulder the burden. It's not fair to do that. And it's not supported by the American people.

It's why the Ryan budget has garnered so little support from the American people, because that's what it asks. It says, let's not only protect the tax cuts that were put into place in the last decade that helped explode the deficit for the wealthiest Americans, let's give them a little more. Let's give additional tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans, who, as we saw in a CBO nonpartisan report this week, have seen their share of the national wealth explode, compared to middle Americans -- seen their wealth explode over the last 30 years.

That's just not an approach that the President believes is fair or balanced. So, no, he does not believe that, and it's unacceptable to him that a solution can emerge here that puts all the burden on seniors, puts all the burden on the families with disabled children, puts all the burden on middle-class Americans and struggling Americans. He does not.

Let's move it around. All the way in the back -- yes.

Q Thanks, Jay. The Washington Post reported the U.S. has a new drone base operational in Ethiopia. Do you have a comment on that?

MR. CARNEY: I think I do -- I think I have something I can say about that report. The United States has unarmed reconnaissance aircraft at a facility in Ethiopia as part of our partnership with the government of Ethiopia to promote stability in the Horn of Africa. The UAVs are not conducting any strike missions from Ethiopia. There are no U.S. military bases in Ethiopia. We are engaged in a broad, sustained and integrated campaign to counter terrorism. We are harnessing every tool of American power -- military, civilian, and diplomatic. The United States is strengthening its intelligence, military and security capabilities and drawing from a full range of law enforcement tools in coordination with partners around the globe.

That's what I have to say on that.

Mr. Lothian.

Q Almost on a daily basis, the White House has been rolling out something under the We Can't Wait banner. I know you've referred often to the fact that the President did a lot early on in his administration, but why did he not take such an aggressive posture from the very beginning?

MR. CARNEY: It's somewhat ironic to suggest that the actions this President took from the beginning weren't aggressive, given that the criticism from the right is that they were too aggressive, too much to try to save the economy --

Q Yes, but at the time he was --

MR. CARNEY: Well, first of all, I think the agenda that this President acted on in the first year was historic in its scope. So I think we were quite busy around here from day one, taking actions that were absolutely necessary to prevent a total collapse of the global economy and the American economy; to take action that would have -- to prevent a depression in the United States, the likes of which we hadn't seen since the 1930s, the possibility of which could have led to unemployment in the 20 and 25 percent range here in America.

At the time, he was able to get the Recovery Act through. He was able to get provisions that were necessary to stave off depression through Congress -- and he did so, and was able to act legislatively. He has also, consistently throughout his presidency, used his executive authority where appropriate to advance his agenda of helping the American people as they manage and struggle through this different economy. He is continuing to do that, and stepping up that effort because of the obstructionism that we're seeing in Congress from Republicans.

This is an urgent priority. We can't wait until Republicans suddenly decide that it's the right time to help the economy grow and the right time to take measures that will help create jobs in this country. So he will do everything he can within his power -- small, medium and large -- to assist the American people in this economy, to help them

he can within his power -- small, medium and large -- to assist the American people in this economy, to help them with their student loans, to help underwater homeowners refinance their mortgages, to provide facilitated access through federal government programs for small and large businesses -- everything he can, step by step. And you haven't heard the end of it, because, again, there is no higher priority for him than doing everything he can to help the American people as we emerge from the worst recession since the Great Depression.

Q But some of these things like, for example, the website -- did it need an executive order for that? I mean, isn't this something that --

MR. CARNEY: Well, it's a presidential memorandum. Are you saying that we didn't do everything we could have done on the first day in office? I mean, it is true that he is consistently and constantly tasking his team here and his team broadly in the administration to come up with ideas and new initiatives and proposals that will assist in achieving this goal of putting people back to work and growing the economy, and helping Americans in this different economy.

So as new ideas present themselves, as they're evaluated in the administration and here in the White House, and the President signs off on them, he will act on them.

Ann.

Q On the Occupy protests, you described the President's tolerance for them and the right to speak out. What is the President telling mayors who say that they are now facing expense, the local law enforcement that are trying to clear these areas and running into violence -- what does the President say to them? Just suck it up and bear the cost and the price of free speech?

MR. CARNEY: I think you're presupposing conversations that you may imagine have taken place but I don't know that they have.

Q -- say yesterday?

MR. CARNEY: I don't know that that kind of conversation took place.

Q What did he say?

MR. CARNEY: Look, I think that as has been true throughout our history, there is a tradition of protest and demonstration, and exercise of free speech and expression, and it obviously has to be done in a lawful way and it has to be done appropriately. But the frustration that is felt by the -- demonstrated by the people who are out there is something the President fully understands, and it goes to the heart of what we've been discussing today and what we've been discussing frequently here about persistently high unemployment, about growth that's too slow, and about the dysfunctionality of Congress, the fact that Congress won't take action -- that their jobs proposals largely, even if you think they're good ideas, won't have an effect for a year or two or three, if they're positive at all.

And our point is the American people can't wait. It is not -- the status quo at 9.1 percent is not acceptable.

Q There is a tradition of civil disobedience, too. Does the President think that prolonged street demonstrations or sit-ins are worth the cost of that kind of free expression -- even when it burdens cities that are really strapped otherwise?

MR. CARNEY: Again, broadly -- I mean, I'm not going to get into assessments of individual cities and how they're responding, or what their cost burden is. The President has said that he understands people's frustrations. He understands that those frustrations are felt very broadly by the American people -- at least those frustrations that have to do with the fact that the economy isn't strong enough, the fact that unemployment is too high, and the fact that Washington is dysfunctional because of obstructionism by Republicans in Congress.

I mean, to the extent that this has to do with Wall Street specifically, we have a situation happening in Congress now where Republicans explicitly say they seek to dismantle or water down the Wall Street reforms that the President fought hard to put into place -- that are common-sense answers to the problems that existed that allowed the kind of behavior that contributed to the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Q Are local officials allowed to have frustrations, too?

MR. CARNEY: Of course they are.

Yes, Ed.

Q One of the things the Occupy Wall Street people are upset about is special interests having a lot of influence here in Washington and having their voices heard, and not individuals being heard. In The New York Times, there's a story today about this campaign pledge the President made about lobbyists not being allowed to give money to his campaign. And yet, the story lays out in great detail how there are a lot of people not just giving, but raising half a million dollars each, a lot of money, for the President's campaign. And they just don't register as lobbyists, but their

livelihood is lobbying. How do you square those two?

MR. CARNEY: I mean, first of all, you make it sound like they don't register as lobbyists and they're somehow violating the law. This President's record is unprecedented in terms of his rejection of money from PACs and lobbyists. I mean, what's interesting is that you're citing that story and not the story that demonstrated that lobbyists are lining up in record numbers to contribute to Republican campaigns, campaigns that openly and willingly accept money from lobbyists as well.

Q We can get to those as well. The President in 2008 made a pledge that he would not accept --

MR. CARNEY: Right, and he has -- he has kept that.

Q -- we can go through all the other candidates, but he made that pledge.

MR. CARNEY: And he has kept that pledge, and has been more transparent and held himself and his administration to higher standards than any administration in history. And that's a record we're very proud of.

Q Okay, so how, then, in the story -- a woman who runs Pfizer's lobbying shop -- you ask, well, they don't lobby -- she runs Pfizer's lobbying shop -- a drug company, billions of dollars of interests around the world, they lobby the White House, they lobby Congress. She runs their lobbying shop, and yet she's raised \$500,000 for the President's campaign. Isn't that violating the spirit --

MR. CARNEY: The point is, this President has been the most transparent in terms of disclosure, the most ethical in terms of the money that he will accept and the money he won't accept. There is no one who compares, thus far. We hope that there will be. And certainly none of the Republican candidates are even -- I mean, they don't even make an effort, right? And the fact is this President's record is unparalleled in this regard.

Q But he's also the President right now. They're candidates -- we don't know who's going to get the nomination -- they should be held to a high standard as well. But he's the President in office.

MR. CARNEY: And he had the standard prior to when he ran for office, not just when he took office.

Q Okay. And so the head of Comcast lobbying, David Cohen -- runs Comcast's lobbying, raised a half a million dollars. I understand he keeps saying disclosure and everything else, but how do you have somebody who is running a lobbying shop and they're raising a half a million dollars -- how does that square with the ban?

MR. CARNEY: Again, Ed, the President's standards are unequalled in this regard. The practice has been unprecedented in this regard. The transparency, the disclosure unequalled, again, by any other candidate. We're very confident that his record on this is exemplary.

Let me go -- yes, sir.

Q Thank you, Jay. How is the National Security Advisor Tom Donilon visit to China and India, and what did he discuss with Chinese leaders?

MR. CARNEY: I'll have to take that question. I haven't had a chance to discuss that with him or his deputy.

Laura.

Q I just want to follow up on Erica's first question to make sure I understood what you said in terms of the part of the Bill Daley interview when he said that there's both Republicans and Democrats who have been problematic, that Democrats he's referring to were from -- the criticism from the left during the debt -- the grand bargain --

MR. CARNEY: My point broadly was -- and I'm not going to parse --

Q No, I know what your point broadly was, but I want to know what your specific point was.

MR. CARNEY: I'm not going to parse his words. The point is clear that as you guys have reported, that there have been times when not every Democrat on Capitol Hill has agreed with the position the President has taken. And that was true most recently during the debt ceiling negotiations, although in the end, as you know, this President had worked with the Democratic leaders in both the House and the Senate, and had the Speaker of the House been willing to go forward with the grand bargain -- it was balanced and fair -- we could have achieved something quite significant and historic for this economy.

And Democrats were willing to go along with it -- not everyone, no question, not everyone. A lot of Democrats would not have. But we would have been able to deliver enough Democrats to get this done had the Speaker not backed out. Okay? But there's no question there hasn't been -- this President is making decisions based on what he thinks is right for all of the American people. It hasn't always been in every case supported by every member of the Democratic Party in the Congress, but what I can say is that this President understands well that Democrats in the House in Congress have been his allies when it comes to the number-one priority that the American people have, which is growing the economy and creating jobs.

And in the House and the Senate, Leader Pelosi and Leader Reid have been terrific allies in trying to get this jobs act through, and terrific allies in getting all of the important measures that this President has pushed for and gotten done in Congress in the nearly three years that he's been President.

Q Did you talk to Bill Daley before --

MR. CARNEY: I talk to Bill Daley every day, every morning.

Q About this interview in preparation to today's questions?

MR. CARNEY: I talked to him today, as I have -- I do every morning.

Q Why, on the announcements today regarding the executive memoranda, why was it necessary for the President to issue a memoranda to create a website?

MR. CARNEY: I can give you more detail on that. You have to initiate action, you write a presidential memoranda and it happens.

Q -- the government agencies --

MR. CARNEY: I'm not sure, Mike. The point is -- the point I made clear is that he will take every action he can within his power, and to order that action taken, in this case, required a presidential memorandum. And we're not arguing that there's a silver bullet measure in here that's sweepingly going to rectify all the challenges we face in the economy. In fact, some of them will be very narrow. Some of them will be substantial. Some of them -- especially the legislative ones -- could add up to 2 percent growth to the economy next year, and up to 1.9 million jobs, according to outside independent economists.

Q Typically -- you're talking about actions --

MR. CARNEY: No, I'm talking about the American Jobs Act. I said legislative. So if your point is that some measures are small and some measures are midsize or large, point taken and accepted.

Q And do you have an estimate of the impact on the economy or jobs that some of these actions are going to be taking, specifically the ones today?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a numerical estimate for you, no. But we know that in the case of the business-oriented options, that these are the kinds of things that small businesses and large businesses very much support and believe will have a very positive impact on what they do.

Q And one other question that's sort of a dramatic change of subject -- but Condoleezza Rice just published a book and in it she outlined some very tense negotiations in the last days of the previous administration. And according to her, the Prime Minister of Israel put on the table a map outlining a Palestinian state and how it would relate to the Israeli borders and so forth. And there's been some criticism since it was published that the current administration, the Obama administration, when it came in ignored that, did not try to build on that, and as a result of that the peace process is largely on life support at this point. I'm wondering if you take issue with that.

MR. CARNEY: Well, that criticism is preposterous. This President's commitment to and focus on doing everything the United States of America can to bring the two parties together, facilitate the peace process I think has been well documented. The fact that this is a challenge -- I mean, it's ironic because you're talking about the waning days of an eight-year presidency that also, not through lack of trying, but also did not reach a peace agreement between -- or help facilitate a peace agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

And I think we can give them the benefit of the doubt and say that this is a hard task and it has been a hard task for many, many years now. This President's focus on it has been intense, and his commitment to it has been intense because he believes that it is in the best interests of Israelis and Palestinians to find a two-state solution that gives the Palestinians the sovereignty that they deserve and the Israelis the security that they deserve.

Bill.

Q Jay, could you give us a quick readout of next week?

MR. CARNEY: You know, Bill, I'll do that at the end of the briefing -- and I'm sure I'll forget, and somebody will say, "Hey, week ahead."

Q Well, it's not the most serious topic, but the President with Jay Leno the other night -- Halloween is Monday -- and he said that he and the First Lady have this difference about whether they give out fruit and raisins or candy. Have they reached an agreement on --

MR. CARNEY: So if there are eggs on the house come 9:00 p.m. Monday you'll know what they were handing out?

(Laughter.)

Q Right, they'll be outside with the eggs. Any candy this year?

MR. CARNEY: I'll have to check. I'm sure there will be.

All the way in the back. And then Cheryl.

Q Yesterday and today you said the President gets his information on the Occupy movements from the news media. But on the other side of that --

MR. CARNEY: Well -- right.

Q But on the other side of that, has he as a result --

MR. CARNEY: My point is that this is not like secret intelligence stuff like he gets in the presidential daily briefing.

Q I know, no formal briefing.

MR. CARNEY: It's all out there, yes.

Q But as a result of what he's seen, has he instructed anyone, whether it be DHS or anyone else, to sort of reach out and liaise or work with or advise in any way any local or state law enforcement on how to deal with these protests?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of, no.

Yes.

Q Jay, at the G20 next week, how aggressively will the President pursue reform in China's currency? How much support does he have for that among the other G20 nations? And is there a concern about possible retaliation or repercussions from China?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a lot new for you on that. You know our position, and we've stated it clearly both publicly and to the Chinese, that while there has been progress made on this issue, that the currency still remains undervalued and we continue to work on that issue.

I don't really have much information to impart about how that fits into the G20 agenda. I think primarily, as you know, as we've been talking about a lot in the days leading up to the G20, the focus has been on Europe and its crisis and the steps that it needs to take and has taken in recent days towards resolving that crisis conclusively, and now we look forward to the implementation of that. I think that will still be a primary focus of the G20 in France.

Q You answered part of my question, but I'm wondering if the White House has gotten any more details about the eurozone agreement, or are you pushing to get more details ahead of the G20?

MR. CARNEY: I think we have great communication with our European allies and friends and partners. We have extreme and regular communication at the level of the Secretary of the Treasury and Treasury Department officials with their counterparts. So I think we're certainly getting the information that we need. But I don't have any more detail on that for you. You might go to Treasury.

Roger.

Q Yes, same topic. I was wondering, has the President called Chancellor Merkel or Mr. Sarkozy to offer any congratulations or anything?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have any -- I'm not aware of any calls to the Chancellor or the President. As you know, they did have a conference call, those two with the President, plus the Prime Minister.

Q That was last week?

MR. CARNEY: Last week. But I'm not aware of any calls today, or I don't have any calls of this week.

Q Does he have plans --

MR. CARNEY: Again, I don't have any to read out or preview.

Q All right. And on a related -- a different subject, Capitol Hill and the super committee. Mr. Boehner and Pelosi seemed to show some flexibility in some of their statements that they made yesterday -- Boehner saying that he could close loopholes in exchange for a reduction in some of the social programs, Pelosi saying that she wouldn't at least shut the door on revising the formula for Social Security COLAs, and both saying that the super committee, it's imperative that they get an agreement by November 23rd. Did you guys take note of that? Do you see any

openings? Do you see any flexibility? Is he planning to call people down here at some point?

MR. CARNEY: Well, let me start from the end of your question. November 23rd is a deadline set by the legislation, so I would imagine that there is a sense of urgency related to that deadline since it's a deadline.

Q But both sides are saying that now.

MR. CARNEY: Well, both sides are obligated under that deadline, as members of Congress and leaders in the House. But that's obviously a good thing.

We remain hopeful that Congress will address this issue in a way that's balanced, that includes hard choices for everybody, but if it's done in a balanced way, does not unduly or unfairly shift the burden onto one sector of society while holding harmless, if you will, another sector, especially, in this case, the most fortunate Americans who have seen their incomes rise dramatically in a period where middle-class Americans have seen their incomes stagnate or decline.

So I think it's certainly the case that there needs to be balance. And to the extent -- I think one question related to what the Speaker said suggested that it was -- there wasn't as much openness to the kind of balance that we think is necessary. But may your interpretation of that end up being correct. I hope that's the case. I hope there is a willingness -- we certainly do -- on the part of Republicans to approach this in a balanced way. Because if you do it in a balanced way, as everybody who's looked at this problem seriously has said -- all the outside commissions -- the President's fiscal commission, the Domenici-Rivlin commission -- you need to take this -- tackle this problem in a way that's balanced, that includes revenues, includes spending cuts, includes reform of entitlements. And if you do it that way you can actually accomplish something very significant that will be beneficial to the economy in the medium and long term.

Q Is he going to try and jump in, though, and --

MR. CARNEY: This is a congressional mandated action obligating a committee set up by Congress to deliver a product. We don't have any membership on that committee. So the President, in fact, already submitted -- probably engaged on the front end of this by putting forward his own proposal. And he certainly will continue to urge that committee and Congress in general to take the approach that is reflected in the detailed proposal he put forward.

April, and then Mark.

Q Jay, any White House comment on the final hurdle that has been cleared for the Black Farmers -- the \$1.15 billion? The judge just cleared and approved that last night.

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a formal comment for you, but I know that this has been an issue that has been worked on for years and years and years. It's cleared, as you indicate in your question, a number of hurdles, including since we've been here in office, and I know we support that. But I haven't got a formal statement yet on the judge's decision. And this has been bipartisan.

Q Does this administration look at this Black Farmers settlement as a major feather in the cap for President Obama, particularly as it took several Presidents over the years for this to happen?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think it's an important accomplishment for everyone involved, not least -- I mean, not just, obviously, this President, but a lot of people who were involved of both parties over the years in making this come to a conclusion in a way that is supported by a bipartisan majority.

Q Thanks, Jay.

MR. CARNEY: I'll take the last from Mark.

Q Jay, where are the ideas for all the executive actions coming from? Is someone designated in the White House to gather these ideas? Have notes gone out to department and agencies to send us your ideas?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't know if notes have gone out, but certainly it has been at the President's urging that everyone, both within the White House and broadly within the administration, look for opportunities to take executive action that can be, broadly speaking, helpful to Americans as they deal with this economy. And then that can be the kinds of measures that were announced today that are targeted at business; the kinds of measures that were announced earlier this week aimed at struggling homeowners and students with debt obligations. And you'll continue to see measures that affect different areas of the economy in a positive way.

Depending on where the issue resides, different people are involved here at the White House. We have -- at a policy level, Deputy Chief of Staff Nancy-Ann DeParle is chief of policy, if you will. But certainly many other people are involved.

Q The week ahead?

Q And then come back?

MR. CARNEY: The week ahead -- Ann reminded me. All right. I know I have it here somewhere. It will be brief. I'm all set. I've been -- I've gotten the hook.

The week ahead: On Monday, the President will meet with former British Prime Minister Tony Blair at the White House. On Tuesday, the President will participate in interviews with local TV anchors from markets across the country. On Wednesday, the President will attend meetings at the White House. And on Thursday, as you all know, the President will travel to Cannes, France, for the G20 Summit.

Thank you all very much. Have a great weekend.

Q -- how many interviews on Tuesday?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a number for you, but it will be here at the White House.

Q And is it a regional --

MR. CARNEY: Yes -- local, regional.

Q Jay, many, many meetings in the White House -- General Musharraf is doing a round, he's saying --

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware, but I don't know.

Q Thank you.

END

12:51 P.M. EDT