

Press Briefing by the Press Secretary Jay Carney , 09/17/13

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:40 P.M. EDT

MR. CARNEY: Hello, everyone. Thank you for being here. Before I take your questions I had a couple of things to mention at the top. First, the President will welcome Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to the White House on Monday, September 30th. The President looks forward to discussing with Prime Minister Netanyahu the progress on final status negotiations with the Palestinians, as well as developments in Iran, Syria, and elsewhere in the region.

Secondly, I have some good news on health care today -- about which I have a visual aid. Today the Department of Health and Human Services has released a new report showing that nearly six out of 10 Americans who currently do not have insurance could get coverage for less than \$100 a month per person under the health care law when the health insurance marketplaces open for business, with the help of tax credits and Medicaid. Overall, that's 23.2 million people, or 56 percent of the uninsured.

And if all 50 states expand Medicaid, as called for under the Affordable Care Act, the number of Americans who could get health insurance for less than \$100 per month would rise to nearly eight out of every 10 Americans, or 78 percent of the uninsured.

Now, that's 32.1 million Americans who could get health insurance for under \$100 per month if all governors followed the lead of the Republican governors in states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Arizona and North Dakota. This news also shows that forcing insurers to compete for your business, holding insurance companies accountable for the way they treat customers, and offering tax credits to make health care even more affordable have great potential to deliver affordable health care.

And for the people who already have insurance, this means no longer having to worry about being denied coverage for a preexisting condition, or losing health coverage when switching jobs, or having the unpaid bills of the uninsured significantly drive up health insurance for everyone else.

This news comes after the Census Bureau reported that the percent of uninsured Americans fell in 2012, in part thanks to gains in coverage of young adults on their parents' policies -- thanks, again, to the Affordable Care Act. Now, this is good news for uninsured Americans and their families who finally will have a simple way to get quality, affordable health care when the marketplaces open on October 1st.

With that, I will take your questions.

Q A couple questions on the Navy Yard shooting. Does the President have any plans to meet with first responders, victims, victims' families, considering that this shooting happened so close to the White House?

MR. CARNEY: I have no meetings of that nature to announce today. What I can tell you is that later this afternoon, the President will receive a briefing from Attorney General Eric Holder, FBI Director James Comey, and members of his national security team on yesterday's horrific shooting at the Washington Navy Yard. The President has obviously been updated regularly, including this morning at his PDB, on developments in that matter, but he will get a specific briefing from the Attorney General and the FBI Director this afternoon.

Q What time?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a time for that. Later this afternoon, Mark.

Q Did any of the updates he received this morning or last night focus on what the motivation of the shooter may have been, as there have also been some reports about the shooter's mental health condition?

MR. CARNEY: Matters regarding the investigation itself I have to refer to the FBI, which has the lead. And this is obviously something that's still under investigation, having just happened yesterday.

The President, as he said yesterday, wants to express his condolences and to send his thoughts and prayers to the victims and their families. He wants to commend the first responders, who did a remarkable job and responded quite quickly, saving lives and putting their own lives at risk as they did so.

But in terms of the investigation itself, motivation and other issues that will be decided by that investigation, we have to wait and see what the investigators provide.

Q The President spoke quite emotionally after the Newtown shooting. He made visits after other shootings to cities, towns that had been affected by gun violence. Does he feel in any way -- I don't know if he can tell from his perch here, but does he feel in any way like the reaction to this shooting may not have been quite as intense as it has after other incidents, that maybe there's some sort of numbness among the public because these shootings are happening so frequently?

MR. CARNEY: I know that he was horrified by this news. And while it is a sad truth that we in America seem to experience these mass shootings with all too much frequency, they are always horrifying. And the senseless violence and the senseless loss of life is a source of great pain for those who experience it in those communities and for everyone here in America, I think, who watches the images and can imagine the fear associated with an event like that.

So I don't -- I certainly don't have an observation from the President along those lines to make. When it comes to Newtown, I think it goes without saying that there was a particular horror when the victims are so young.

Q And just one quick one on Brazil. We obviously have the statement before we came up here. Does the White House see this decision by Dilma Rousseff to cancel this state dinner as a setback for this relationship, which the U.S. has really tried to cultivate and grow for the past few years?

MR. CARNEY: I think it's because the relationship is so important and because it has so many facets that the President agrees with this decision that they made together to postpone the visit. And they both look forward to that visit, which will celebrate our broad relationship, and the President believes and President Rousseff believes, as I understand it, should not be overshadowed by any single bilateral issue, no matter how important or challenging the issue may be. And we're certainly acknowledging the concerns that these disclosures have generated in Brazil and other countries.

Q Was this decision made in their phone call last night?

MR. CARNEY: It was discussed in their phone call last night and finalized, yes.

Q Jay, on the Navy Yard, the suspect apparently had a clearance to access that facility despite a history of mental problems. Does the President have any concerns about the clearance process and who's allowed to have access to facilities like that that merit review?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I'd say a couple of things. There's obviously been a variety of reports, and all of these matters are under investigation. And as we've seen in this incident, as we do so often -- and reports may or may not be true, and so I'm certainly not going to comment on an unfolding story, especially one that's under investigation by the FBI.

On the broader issue of clearances, as you know, DNI is currently undertaking a review of security clearance policy for certain contractors. And I can tell you that at the President's direction, OMB is examining standards for contractors and employees across federal agencies. So this is obviously a matter that the President believes and has believed merits review.

Q Is the DNI thing in the wake of this?

MR. CARNEY: The DNI -- well, no, that was announced previously. The OMB action is something that is getting underway.

Q On the budget quickly, a number of Democrats are now endorsing the idea of a so-called clean CR, even though there are concerns about enshrining the post-sequester levels of funding. You had said the other day that the President would be supportive of that as long as it's a clean bill. Is that still his position?

MR. CARNEY: Well, a short-term, clean CR that would allow Congress the time to reach a broader agreement is something that we could accept. Unfortunately, what we've seen from some Republicans is a desire to refight and re-litigate old battles, and to be willing to shut down the government, doing harm to the middle class, and to be willing even to allow the United States to default -- something we've never done in our history -- if they don't get what they want, which is to achieve through this kind of procedure what they could not achieve when it was passed by the House -- this is Obamacare -- passed by the House, passed by the Senate, signed into law by the President, upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States, and a law that we are going about the business of implementing, and a law that has already produced tangible benefits to millions of Americans -- tangible in many ways, including in financial ways that we've elaborated on in recent days.

So that is an obstacle that we currently face and which, as the President mentioned yesterday, needs to be addressed. Because it is simply unacceptable at a time, five years after the financial collapse, five years after this country stared into the economic abyss, five years of slow, steady recovery later that we cannot allow Washington to reverse that progress and to do it for the ideological agenda of a faction of the Republican Party.

Q What would the President hope to accomplish in that period of a short-term CR -- the broader issues? And does he intend to remain passive in this process with so little time left?

MR. CARNEY: The idea that he is passive is, of course, disproven by the facts. But the President has put forward a compromise budget proposal that anybody who looks at will say -- if he or she is serious -- represents hard choices by a Democratic President when it comes to entitlement savings, and asks for in return hard choices by Republicans when it comes to a balanced approach to reducing our deficit. That's the way that we should go about the business of continuing to deal with our deficit.

But Republicans aren't even talking about that anymore. It's hard to when the deficit has come down by half since the President took office. Instead, they're talking about basically hitching the fate of the economy -- the American economy and the global economy -- to their ideological agenda, which is to continue to fight the battle over the Affordable Care Act, a law that, as I said today, is producing enormous benefits for the American people and will produce even more for millions and millions of uninsured Americans who until this law passed and until this law gets implemented have not had access to affordable care but will because of this.

They want to overturn that, and they have no alternative. Their answer to those millions of Americans is, tough luck. Tough luck. And, by the way, if I don't get what I want, they say, we're going to set all that progress aside and reverse course. That's a terrible

approach.

Jim.

Q I know Ed asked this yesterday, but you've had a day to reflect. Still a good idea for the President to give what was a very partisan speech yesterday, even after what happened over at the Navy Yard?

MR. CARNEY: Look, I understand some Republicans are trying to make something of this. The President spoke about the Navy Yard at the very top of his briefing. He talked about the cowardly act that had taken place, the tragedy that was unfolding and the loss of life. And he called for and demanded a seamless investigation with federal and local law enforcement officials. And that is what we're seeing now.

It is a fact that we have very little time for Congress to act. And the consequences for the American economy of Congress failing to act would be significant. And it is absolutely important, part of his job, to talk about that to the American people. And far from being a partisan speech, the President made clear in his speech that many Republicans on Capitol Hill agree with him that we should not go down the road of threatening to shut down the government or defaulting on our obligations in the name of some partisan agenda item or partisan pursuit.

But, unfortunately, there is a faction that many, including in some op-ed pages, have noted -- conservative op-ed pages have noted are not doing a great service to their own party, let alone to the country or the middle class by pursuing this agenda.

So these deadlines are upon us. And Congress needs to act. Congress needs to fulfill its basic responsibility, which is to ensure that government functions are funded. Congress needs to fulfill its other basic responsibility, which is to ensure that it pays the bills that Congress racked up.

That's what the debt ceiling is all about. And it's hard to break through because it's a phrase that just reeks of sort of Washington arcane discussions -- debt ceilings, raising the debt limit, that kind of thing. But what it is, is basically allowing Congress to pay the bills that Congress already racked up -- full stop. It has nothing to do with future spending. It has to do with the United States of America being true to its obligations.

Q And, Jay -- Navy Yard, Newtown, Tucson, Aurora, Fort Hood -- is the President concerned that his presidency will be marked by an inability to resolve this issue of mass shootings?

MR. CARNEY: The President believes and I think has shown that we ought to do everything we can to implement common-sense measures to reduce gun violence in America. He came out with a comprehensive plan to do that that included calls for legislative action in Congress as well as numerous executive actions that his administration could take without Congress.

The President has, and his team have acted on all of those administrative actions and have added to those administrative actions. As recently as a couple of weeks ago, we had an announcement about two more executive actions that the administration is moving on.

And he has not in the least hidden his displeasure and disappointment in Congress for its failure to pass legislation that's supported by 80 to 90 percent of the American people, by majorities of the American people in virtually every state in the country. You could not define a case of Congress, or a minority in Congress, a minority in the Senate, taking its cues from a narrow special interest better than this, right? When you vote against 80 or 90 percent of the American people, when you vote against a majority of your constituents, in answer to or at the behest of a special interest, you are serving that narrow special interest. You're not serving your constituents.

And the President believes very --

Q So does that --

MR. CARNEY: We are continuing to push the cause of common-sense --

Q How so?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I can recite to you, as recently as two weeks ago -- I'm sure CNN covered it in detail all day long -- the executive actions that this administration took to further reduce gun violence in America. And we continue to hope and we continue to press that Congress will take action. But I think your question should be addressed to those senators who chose to ignore the will of their constituents and ignore the will of the American people.

Q Senators in your own party.

MR. CARNEY: I believe that 85 percent of Democrats or more voted for, right? Am I right? Eighty-five percent, maybe 90 percent of Senate Democrats voted for it. And what percentage of Republicans voted for it?

So the problem here is not Democrats. The problem here is senators overwhelmingly from one party who refuse to do something very simple, which is expand a background check system that everyone believes functions well but needs to function better. And it's their choice. Those questions should be addressed to those senators.

Q And very quickly on Syria, the Russians responded to the U.N. report by saying, well, it's still possible that the rebels might have done this on August 21st. That doesn't bode well, does it, for this process that's underway?

MR. CARNEY: Well, they can believe what they want or say what they want; the facts prove otherwise. They're overwhelming, the facts that we've presented, the facts that the inspection team presented. What matters when it comes to the process going forward is not statements like that. What matters is what the Russians do to ensure that Syria

upholds its commitments, and that Russia upholds its commitment to see this agreement through, which calls for an aggressive timetable in accounting for and securing Assad's chemical weapons inventory.

Q Jay, just a follow-up on yesterday. At the time of the speech, did the President know how bad it was? Did the President know that 12 people had been murdered when he went forward and gave that speech?

MR. CARNEY: We knew what the public knew. And I believe when I came out here, a lot of information was yet to come, and certainly there was a lot of information that turned out not to be true. So we had the same information you did. This was an unfolding event. And the President spoke about it at the top of his remarks on the economy. And he then went on to speak about the economy, which is a matter of central concern to the American people and to their elected representatives here in Washington.

Q Because, of course, at the time of the Aurora shooting, the President cancelled a planned political speech. I'm just wondering if he knew how bad it was, would he have gone forward with that speech the way he did.

MR. CARNEY: Jon, again, we had the information that we had. You can call it a political speech. The President addressed the issue --

Q You wouldn't call it a political speech?

MR. CARNEY: He called for Congress to -- I know that it's a fun thing to do to put everything -- run everything through the political lens. But the President called on Congress to take action to ensure that we fund government and that we don't default.

And you guys report on what's happening on Capitol Hill that has prevented those actions from being fulfilled thus far, which are efforts by Republicans to attach their obligations to fund the government or to ensure that bills are paid to ideological amendments aimed for the 40th, 41st and 42nd time at defunding or derailing or delaying the implementation of the Affordable Care Act -- a law that was passed by the House, passed by the Senate, signed into law by the President and upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States -- three and a half years ago it was passed, and is now already providing benefits to millions of Americans, including tangible financial benefits to millions of Americans.

You guys are reporting that. Those are the facts. So the obstacles to getting something done are clear. The President called on those who are throwing up the obstacles to move them aside so that we can make progress in the economy for the American people.

Q Okay. And on Syria, I know the threat of force is still out there. I'm wondering, when the President spoke to the nation, he said that he asked the military to keep its current posture. Is that going to happen indefinitely? Are those warships that are in the region going to be there indefinitely? Are we still --

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would address questions about force posture to the Defense Department. What I can tell you is that what the President said remains true today, which is that he asked the military to maintain its force posture.

We'll obviously keep you updated on that. But the President made clear, and I will reiterate again today, that it was the credible threat of U.S. military action that helped produce the diplomatic breakthrough that we've seen, a diplomatic breakthrough that needs to be fulfilled, and we are working very closely with our partners in New York at the United Nations as well as obviously with the Russians to move forward on implementing that agreement. But in the meantime, the force posture remains the same and the threat of military force, the military option remains on the table.

Q And just a clarification on Brazil. I understand you regret the leaks that have caused all this. But does the President also regret the fact that the United States spied on the Brazilian President? I mean, that's what her objection was, her and other Brazilians. Is there any regret of the actual underlying issue that has the Brazilians so upset?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I'll say a couple of things. One, the President made clear that he is committed to working together with President Rousseff and her government to move beyond this issue as a source of tension in our relationship. And we've addressed this when it comes to Brazil in the past as well as to other countries.

As a broad matter, obviously this country collects intelligence, as do most countries, and that's a simple fact. But on the issue --

Q But do you think any of this went too far?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I'm not going to get into something that's under review or to get into specific conversations between the President and one of his counterparts. But we have addressed this publicly -- he has addressed it publicly. And the U.S.-Brazil relationship is very important and very multifaceted, especially when it comes to energy issues and economic issues. And I believe both Presidents, and I know this President looks forward to that relationship continuing to strengthen and evolve over the coming months and years.

Bill.

Q You said yesterday that the President continues to support a common-sense approach to gun control, specifically expanded background checks. But it appears that a background check wouldn't have mattered in the case of the shooter yesterday.

MR. CARNEY: That's a very good point and I appreciate it. What the President said at the time when he announced his proposed measures to reduce gun violence, and what he said repeatedly throughout the process of pressing Congress to take it up and pass it when it came to the background check legislation is that he understands and we all should understand that there's no piece of legislation or executive action that alone can resolve this problem or prevent all violent acts from happening in the future.

And I don't know the details and we await the details that the investigation will provide about this incident, but the fact that, generally speaking, there are violent incidents, there are shooting deaths that occur that would not have been prevented by background check legislation, is certainly not a reason not to strengthen and improve our background check system. It's a copout to suggest that that is reason not to do it.

The background check system is an important aspect and an important tool available to law enforcement. And we need to expand it in a way so that there aren't giant loopholes, so that it applies across the board. This is pretty simple stuff, again, supported by overwhelming majorities of the American people. And it was an unfortunate day when a minority in the Senate -- remember, a minority in the Senate blocked that legislation from moving forward.

Q Can you imagine getting that legislation through in this Congress?

MR. CARNEY: I imagine that it will remain the right thing to do, and that with constituents and reporters and others, as well, obviously, as the President and others reminding Congress that this is something that 80 to 90 percent of the American people support, and that it is common sense, and that it in no way infringes upon Americans' Second Amendment rights, that this can and should get done.

But we're obviously aware -- we've witnessed -- we all witness the obstacles here. We all witness the power of a narrow special interest to influence a vote against the will of 80 to 90 percent of the American people. And that's the world that we live in, but we have to keep pressing forward.

Q Next week in New York, will the President be open to meeting -- perhaps not arranged in advance -- with Iran's new President? What if they meet in the hall? This has happened before.

MR. CARNEY: What if they meet in the hall? I mean, I'm not going to anticipate a hypothetical like that. We have no meetings planned or scheduled with the Iranian President.

Q I mean, would he duck into another hall if he saw him coming? (Laughter.)

MR. CARNEY: I doubt it. Again, we have no meetings planned.

Q Jay, what about Netanyahu? Since he's coming to the White House next Monday, will there be -- there are some reports there will be a one-on-one at the U.N. as well.

MR. CARNEY: I'm sorry, a one-on-one with --

Q Netanyahu.

MR. CARNEY: Well, again, obviously the Prime Minister is coming here and the President will be meeting with him and they'll be discussing a range of topics, as they always do.

Q At the White House.

MR. CARNEY: Right. So I'm making note of that as I then say we do not have a schedule to make public yet of bilateral meetings that the President will have in New York while he's attending the United Nations General Assembly. He traditionally does have some bilateral meetings, and when we have that schedule for you, we'll make it available.

Q On Syria, the President, in his interview with ABC, talked about the problem on the policy was how it was sort of rolled out and that Washington is too obsessed with style points. And among other folks who are weighing in on that would be Ruth Marcus in The Washington Post today, who tends to be a little bit more favorable to the President's policies normally, and instead today says that she thinks that it was, in her words, "insulting" that he said this was about style. And she said that the policy itself was marked by "indecision" and "mind changing," and that the real problem was that there were fits and starts to the administration, and that it's unfair to suggest this was a question of style. So can you weigh in on that and explain what the President meant?

MR. CARNEY: You want me to weigh in on Ruth's op-ed?

Q That would be nice. But I would also like to know what the President meant -- more importantly, than commentators on either side of the aisle -- what did the President mean?

MR. CARNEY: The President has been consistent from the beginning in reaction to the horrific use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime on August 21st. He made clear that it was his belief that the United States and the international community could not fail to hold Assad accountable, that there were considerable consequences to not holding Assad accountable. And he made the case that it merited -- the use of chemical weapons -- if all diplomatic channels were closed and options were closed, that the use of military force would be necessary in a limited fashion, both in scope and duration. And he made that case.

And he believed that because the threat was not imminent to the United States, as he articulated in the Rose Garden, that it was the right and appropriate thing to do to seek authorization from Congress, because, as he said, we are stronger when we act together and we are united. He understood on that day and every day forward that this was a tough argument to make to representatives of a people who have grown understandably weary of war after a dozen years of conflict in the Middle East, including two extended land wars. So he understood that clearly.

But the President's position has been clear throughout, and it was because of the positions he took -- which, again, may not have won a lot of points from the judges on style -- but because of those positions that he took and his insistence on the need to hold Assad accountable and the threat of force that he put on the table we see the diplomatic developments that we've seen in the last week. And I think that it's irrefutable.

It is simply the case that until a few days ago, Bashar al-Assad insisted that Syria did not possess chemical weapons. Not only does he now admit that they possess chemical weapons, they're willing -- they're saying they're willing to give them up to international supervision to see them destroyed, and they're willing to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention, a treaty that they, almost alone in the world, refused to sign for 20 years.

The Russians, who have posed significant challenges over the past two years during this conflict, including on the issue of holding Assad accountable for the use of chemical weapons, instead now have moved forward and put their prestige on the line behind an agreement that would relieve Assad of his chemical weapons stockpile, transfer that stockpile to international control for its ultimate destruction. And we will obviously be keenly interested in working with the Russians to ensure that they keep their commitments, as we will keep ours.

So a lot has changed, and I think a lot has changed for the better, even as we make clear that actions are what matter here, agreements need to stick, and people need to be held accountable.

Q Last question. In terms of cooperation with Russia, on another subject, we have not asked recently and you have not offered recently where we are with Edward Snowden. Since there's been more cooperation with Russia on the Syrian situation, is that building any trust toward resolving the Edward Snowden status? Is the U.S. still pressing Russia right now to get him to the U.S.? What is the status?

MR. CARNEY: We have made clear our position to the Russians on this matter, and our position has not changed. And I think the Russians are fully aware of the fact that we believe there's every legal justification for Mr. Snowden to be returned here to the United States to face the charges against him. But beyond that, I have no updates.

Chuck.

Q Jay, does the President -- this is -- people have gone through this -- the fourth major shooting in the last year, mass shooting. Does the President believe that -- does he want to lead another conversation, whether it's on guns, mental health, video game violence -- does he want to lead another conversation on this, sort of what happened after Newtown? Or to sort of follow up on Julie's question, is there an exhaustion and an acceptance that this is the new normal?

MR. CARNEY: Well, he doesn't accept that it's the new normal. He believes that Americans don't and can't accept that. And he continues, as we did just a couple of weeks ago, to press forward in doing what he can through his executive powers to take measures to reduce gun violence, common-sense measures, acknowledging, as he did in the beginning and as he does today, that some of this requires congressional action. And we continue to call on Congress to listen to the voices of their constituents and legislate accordingly.

Q Is this is all guns, though, in the President's --

MR. CARNEY: Absolutely not. And let's be clear. It was very much a part of the report that the Vice President and the President announced in the wake of Newtown that there were many issues associated with gun violence and many avenues that we need to travel in order to tackle that, and that includes mental health matters. And that's very much part of some of the executive actions that the President has taken.

Q Following up on the Brazil question, did the President of Brazil -- did Rousseff ask the President to reconsider some of the NSA policies before she would accept -- they announced a cancellation and you guys announced a postponement. Is there an expectation that the President will reassure her on X when it comes to what the NSA does and doesn't do before she'll accept another invitation?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that the President has talked about the fact that the administration is reviewing some of these matters, and we are discussing in a bilateral way with the countries who have concerns about them the nature of the work that we do. And he believes that it's important that we have those discussions. And he is making clear that he is committed to working together with the Brazilians and the Brazilian government to move beyond this issue as a source of tension.

Q When you say "move beyond" --

MR. CARNEY: He understands the concerns that have been raised and he regrets that those concerns have caused the tension that exists in the relationship. And that's why he believes we ought to have these discussions and then move on.

Q To follow up on Jon's question, does he believe it's the revelations that created the tension or the actions themselves?

MR. CARNEY: I'm not going to get into specific matters of intelligence gathering. I think that we have said -- and I think it's pretty self-evident that the United States, like most other nations around the world, gathers intelligence.

Q Isn't the assumption, though, that the U.S. does this more than other countries?

MR. CARNEY: I think it's fair to say that we have significant capacity. But it's also true that what we do is not dissimilar from what other nations do.

Q But do other countries do it to the extent the United States does?

MR. CARNEY: Well, not being an expert I'm not sure I could answer that question.

Q And just a final question. Some dispute -- when was the last time the President -- what's the status of the President and Speaker Boehner -- sort of last conversation and start talking about all of the things that the President brought up yesterday that are on the plate over the next couple weeks?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a new conversation to read out to you. Obviously, they spoke around the Syria matter. But I'm sure we'll keep you updated on it.

Q And has there been any substantial negotiations going on? Is Rob Nabors and Boehner's chief of staff --

MR. CARNEY: We're in consultations with the Hill constantly. But let's be clear --

Q There are some descriptions that the level of talks are not -- they're not at a high level.

MR. CARNEY: Here's what the President has done in calendar year 2013. He has put forward a budget that represents by any estimation and credible assessment a compromise position on resolving our budget challenges, reducing our deficit in a way that eliminates the sequester and more, and continuing to invest in the areas of the economy that we need to invest in so that it grows and creates high-paying jobs for middle-class Americans.

And that was a compromise position. Most people in this room who covered it acknowledged that in their coverage. There are tough choices in there for a Democratic President. And the President then has spent -- as many of his top advisors have -- much of the year meeting with Republicans who have expressed a willingness to find common ground on these issues. And we believe that those conversations were often constructive and fruitful, and that they demonstrated the fact that there is the possibility of common ground here to be found.

Q But only with Senate Republicans, though. No meeting with House Republicans and the President, right?

MR. CARNEY: Well, that's not true. That's not true. You guys reported on meetings that --

Q That the President had with House Republicans?

MR. CARNEY: I'm not sure about -- the President had numerous meetings. We can get you lists that have already been public. And the obviously other senior members of the President's team, including the chief of staff, have been spotted having meetings with senior Republicans in public places as well as in private places.

Q But the courtship of the Senate Republicans has been a lot different than the courtship of House Republicans.

MR. CARNEY: But, Chuck, what's your point?

Q You have to get this through the House.

MR. CARNEY: What is patently obvious is that we have --

Q You can't do anything until you get it through the House.

MR. CARNEY: Have you seen a counter proposal from Senate Republicans?

Q So you're waiting for the Senate Republicans?

MR. CARNEY: I'm just asking. Have you seen any proposal from any Republican beyond a proposition --

Q You tell us.

MR. CARNEY: -- beyond a proposition that we should move forward --

Q So you guys have not, is what you're saying.

MR. CARNEY: Have not what?

Q Have you guys gotten one? Isn't the negotiation going on between you and them, not through us?

MR. CARNEY: We have made clear our willingness to be reasonable and compromise. The President did that again on ABC over the weekend. What we haven't seen thus far is anything from the Republicans that represents a similar willingness to compromise when it comes to a broader, more comprehensive budget agreement.

In the meantime, Congress needs to fulfill its responsibility to ensure that government functions are funded and fulfill its responsibility to ensure that for the first time in the history of this country the United States does not default on its obligations.

Carol Lee.

Q Has the President made a decision on a Fed nominee?

MR. CARNEY: No.

Q Can you talk more broadly about how you would assess the effectiveness of the White House's strategy on both Syria and the Fed, given that it's come under such criticism?

MR. CARNEY: I think that as I just said with regard to Syria, what matters here is the result. And the result is that the positions the President took both in his negotiations and in his consultations and in his public presentations helped produce the result that we see today, which is at least the possibility that we can achieve the goal of military force and then some without the use of military force by relieving Assad of his chemical weapons and destroying them.

That's far more significant than assessments about how it looked as it unfolded. What's important is the result. And the result of his consistency has been the potential for a diplomatic breakthrough.

Q And what about the Fed and one of the -- by all accounts, the President is not going to be choosing the person whom he wanted to choose?

MR. CARNEY: Well, again, you guys have reported a lot of things about personnel matters. We have never confirmed anything that you say about who he wants to choose on any position. He makes the announcement when he makes the announcement. And

that's as true of his decision for the Fed Chairman as it is for any other senior position in his administration or elsewhere, where he's able to make nominees.

And I would just say on the Fed matter, I'll simply say that the President will have an announcement when he is ready to make one. We're not going to get into his decision-making process or into lists beyond what the President himself said when he talked about both Larry Summers and Janet Yellen. When the President is ready to make an announcement in the fall, as we said he would, he'll make an announcement.

Mark.

Q Jay, in that phone call yesterday, did President Obama make one last effort to persuade President Rousseff not to cancel?

MR. CARNEY: No, the President agreed with President Rousseff that it was important to celebrate our broad relationship and that that relationship should not be overshadowed by a single bilateral issue, no matter how important or challenging the issue may be. And for that reason, the two Presidents agreed to postpone President Rousseff's state visit here to Washington scheduled for October 23rd.

Q So he knew that she was going to say no, she's not coming?

MR. CARNEY: The President, as you know, had a conversation with President Rousseff at the G20 and there have obviously been consultations with and discussions with the Brazilian government ongoing since then and prior to that.

Q Do you know if the state dinner invitations had gone out yet?

MR. CARNEY: I would refer you to the East Wing.

Q The President is going to speak to the Business Roundtable tomorrow. You've already talked to us a little bit about that. Do you have any more specifics in terms of the substance of what he is going to be presenting to them? And can you tell us, is he going to have any private time with some of those executives and do you expect a conversation about the next Fed nomination to come up privately?

MR. CARNEY: I would not anticipate that the President will be having conversations about personnel matters. Obviously, anybody that meets with him is free to raise any issue that he or she wants. The President's focus, as is always the case when he meets with this group, is on what we can do together to keep the American economy growing; what we can do to make it grow in a way that creates more good-paying jobs for middle-class Americans; what we can do together to, for example, move forward on comprehensive immigration reform, which has enormous economic benefits for the country and for the middle class, and which I think many of those affiliated with the Business Roundtable would support. So there will be a host of topics the President will discuss, and he looks forward to the meeting.

Q I wanted to ask you, since the President has not made a decision yet on the Fed, is he continuing to interview potential candidates?

MR. CARNEY: I will not get into the President's personnel process. I will point you to what the President has said in the past, because he was asked about it and talked about Larry Summers and the Vice Chair of the Fed, the number-two person at the Fed, Janet Yellen.

Q It's ongoing --

MR. CARNEY: Again, yes. And beyond that, I'm certainly not going to get beyond the President and what he said about potential nominees. And obviously Larry Summers has asked not to be considered and the process moves forward. And when the President has an announcement, that's when you'll hear what his decision is.

Q Two questions. On Brazil, you say that you don't want the multifaceted relationship to be overshadowed by one issue. But wouldn't the best way to do that, to prove that the relationship isn't overshadowed by one issue, to go ahead and have the visit and want a visit to prove that this one issue isn't overshadowing it?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think that currently this one issue is a matter of intense focus, especially in the Brazilian media and obviously of concern for the Brazilian government. And we are working with the Brazilian government to discuss those concerns and we'll continue to do that. The Presidents felt -- and certainly President Obama felt -- that it was the right choice to postpone the visit.

Q So the White House is acknowledging that it would have been overshadowed, that the rest of the issues wouldn't have gotten any -- even if she had come --

MR. CARNEY: I think there's no question that the other very important issues would have received less attention at least from the media than they might otherwise have received. But also, this continues to be an issue that is a serious matter and we understand it, and that's why we're engaging with the Brazilians in discussions about it. And we'll continue to do so.

Q And one other question on Obamacare. We've got I think two weeks before the enrollment period begins. Is there any concern that the events out of the President's control -- Syria, the shooting yesterday, NSA issues -- have made it harder and overshadowed the administration's attempt to kind of get the message out, and that, as a result, there is likely to be more problems or fewer people signing up than desired?

MR. CARNEY: I haven't heard that expressed. I think obviously we live, in general, in an environment filled with a lot of issues that are getting people's attention. And I don't think any year that I've been here would be an exception to that. Certainly, this has been a year of many, many things happening that the American people are paying attention to.

Meanwhile, we've gone about the business of making sure that enrollment can and will begin on October 1st. And the fact is the public education campaign kicks off in earnest at the beginning of October from staff and community health centers to public service announcements and outreach efforts. The six months from October to March will be key to raising awareness about the new marketplaces and the benefits of the law for Americans.

Ads from outside groups, as you know, for years now attacking the law have been airing. CMS ads and ads from insurance companies haven't, but they will be part of that public education campaign. There are also some efforts actively working to undermine helping people get the facts they need. It's rather extraordinary, if you think about it, that there are efforts underway to prevent Americans from getting benefits that they lawfully could enjoy and should enjoy.

Insurers alone say they'll spend \$1 billion on advertising. Meanwhile, there will be outreach from HHS, from insurers, grassroot groups, the White House, celebrities and pharmacies like CVS and Rite Aid. So this will be an ongoing effort.

And the fact of the matter is, as I noted at the top of the briefing, there are significant benefits that will be available to Americans who are uninsured and until the arrival of the marketplaces will not have had affordable options available to them. But when six in 10 of those Americans will now have the option of purchasing health insurance for less than \$100 a month, that's a significant development, and is in line with the goals set out by the President when he first signed the Affordable Care Act into law.

Q And you guys are comfortable that the effort -- the public relations effort is on track?

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Christi.

Q Is the Brazilian President seeking anything in terms of U.S. policy or accommodations from U.S.-based Internet companies in advance of --

MR. CARNEY: You would have to ask the Brazilian President. I don't have any more details on the President's conversation with President Rousseff, except for what I've read out to you already.

This is an important relationship. We understand, the President understands the concerns raised by these disclosures. And we're working with the Brazilians on this matter and we'll continue to do that.

Q And do you think any of those other bilateral issues that you mentioned are at risk now because of this?

MR. CARNEY: We have a broad and important relationship. And I think that relationship was highlighted when the President visited Brazil and is reflected in the increasing economic ties we have with Brazil. And we will continue to try to build that

relationship and cement the ties between our nations -- our two nations moving forward.

Q I'm interested to know if you think this is related. But do you think that the U.S. interests were advanced by the President's decision to cancel his visit to Moscow? I mean, would, for example, the Syria resolution be where it is now if the President had gone to Moscow?

MR. CARNEY: Counterfactuals are always hard to prove, so I don't know. What we --

Q Did it have an effect? Do you think it had an effect?

MR. CARNEY: Look, I think that what we know is where we were three weeks ago and where we are today when it comes to Syria, when it comes to the Assad regime's representations about its possession of and use of chemical weapons, when it comes to Russia's approach to Assad's chemical weapons stockpile. And we made an announcement about why we didn't think that it was the right time for a bilateral summit in Moscow, but the fact is President Obama and President Putin spoke at the G20 in St. Petersburg and they spoke about this very issue, as had Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov.

So how the fact that we didn't go forward with the Moscow meeting played into that is really impossible to know. What we focus on is the results that we've seen thus far of the approach that we've taken.

Q Thanks, Jay.

MR. CARNEY: Ari, last one.

Q On some of the specific bilateral issues that Brazil and the U.S. were planning to discuss -- oil, biofuels, jets from Boeing and so on -- how do you expect this to change the course or timeline?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't think that either nation believes -- but again, I will speak for the United States -- that these important matters in our bilateral relationship ought to be overshadowed or sidetracked by this other serious matter. We're going to continue to work with the Brazilians on it, but we will also continue to work at a variety of levels on the broader bilateral relationship.

Q But I mean, often there's a deal announced when a state dinner happens. There's some sort of joint agreement. It seems safe to assume that without the state visit, those deals or joint agreements won't be announced on the same timeline.

MR. CARNEY: Again, you're presenting something as a hypothetical and then knocking it down because the meeting is not happening, so --

Q So you're saying everything is on track, everything will go as it would have?

MR. CARNEY: I'm saying that this is obviously a matter of significant concern to the Brazilians and in our relationship, and we are addressing it directly in our conversations with the Brazilians, as we should.

April, Leslie -- sorry, I feel bad that I didn't call on you two, so go ahead.

Q Thank you. Jay, just moving ahead to this weekend, the President will be addressing the Congressional Black Caucus at their Phoenix Awards dinner Saturday night. And the President recently had the Congressional Black Caucus in for a classified briefing on Syria. They're also a group with strong supporters of new gun control legislation. What is the President expected to talk about Saturday, and is this speech in the process, in the throes, or is it already finished? What?

MR. CARNEY: I don't know the answer to the last question. I mean, the remarks are always in process until they're delivered. But the meeting on Syria was part of a broad outreach that the White House undertook with Congress on Syria, and appropriately included the meeting that you referenced. And when it comes to the matter of reducing gun violence in America, the President appreciates the support he gets from many in Congress, including the CBC, and I'd certainly anticipate that could be a topic of conversation.

But the President's views on this have been consistent and are known, and when people ask, okay, now what do we do in the wake of another mass shooting, I think that question is appropriately asked not just here but in Congress of those senators who voted no to a bill that was pure common sense, that enjoyed the support of an overwhelming majority of the American people.

Q Jay, I'm sorry, just to follow. I want to drill down a little bit more. When you say the CBC was part of a broad spectrum the President met with, he met with them specifically and gave them classified information because this White House understood that many of the constituents of the CBC members were weary of war. That's one. And number two, again, the CBC members, their constituents are pretty much in support of gun control because they see rampant gun violence throughout their communities constantly, not just around mass shootings, but on a constant basis. So once again, there are specific issues. And also unemployment in the black community -- once again, that is higher than the average. So what specifics do you believe the President will address Saturday?

MR. CARNEY: Well, again, I just don't have a preview of what the President is going to say on Saturday, it being Tuesday. But I can tell you that all of those issues are ones that concern the President and where he shares the concerns of the CBC.

When it comes to the Syria briefings, members of the CBC were not alone in being reluctant to entertain another military action by the United States in the Middle East, which is why the President personally, with his team, held so many consultations with members of Congress and groups and more broadly to discuss why the action that was being proposed was not Iraq and was not Afghanistan, was not even Libya or Kosovo, but was an action designed to be narrow in scope and duration that would have a specific

impact on Assad's capabilities; but was not involving boots on the ground and was not an attempt to engage military in the civil war that's ongoing and that can only be resolved in Syria through political settlement.

Last question.

Q You said that the OMB is reviewing the standards for hiring contractors. Is that something that the President has directed? Did he do so after the shooting yesterday? And can you give a little bit more about what the scope of the review will be?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have more on the scope. I think that the DNI review obviously focused on matters within the purview of the ODNI, and this is a broader look at clearance procedures with contractors, and it is something that's being launched today.

Thanks very much.

END

2:35 P.M. EDT