Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

In your State of the Union address on Tuesday night you said, "let's make this a year of action." We agree. Of course, under our Constitution, most action requires the Congress and the President to work together. Naturally, we don't agree with all of the proposals you outlined in your speech, but where there is the potential for agreement we believe it is critical that we come together to advance the interests of the American people. In that spirit, we have identified four initial areas covered in your speech where the House has already acted and we believe we can work together without delay. In each area, a House-passed bill is already sitting in the Senate so there is no reason for further delay.

Skills Training

On Tuesday night you stated:

> So tonight, 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 Americans 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 connecting companies to community colleges that can help design 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.

We agree, and we don't believe we need to wait. Last March, the House of Representatives passed the *SKILLS Act* which would consolidate the myriad of federal job training programs to focus resources on the programs that work, more closely link employment training to available jobs, eliminate red tape that delays individuals from receiving the training they need, and strengthen the relationship between community colleges and job training programs. The *SKILLS Act* was endorsed by governors,

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associations representing employers, and community colleges. Unfortunately, the Senate has yet to even debate this proposal.

The General Accounting Office has already produced the review you asked for on Tuesday evening. If you want action, we respectfully request that you or the Vice President urge Senator Reid to schedule this legislation for immediate consideration in the Senate and convene a meeting of the relevant parties as soon as possible so that we may resolve any differences that exist and send you a bill for your signature by the end of February.

Natural Gas

On Tuesday night you stated:

> Now, one of the biggest factors in bringing more jobs back is our commitment to American energy….One of the reasons why is natural gas – if extracted safely, it's the bridge fuel that can power our economy with less of the carbon pollution that causes climate change. Businesses plan to invest almost $100 billion in new factories that use natural gas. I'll cut red tape to help states get those factories built…

We agree. Increased natural gas production is good for the economy and good for jobs, including, as you note, in the area of manufacturing. In addition, areas of this country with a high demand of natural gas for electricity generation have already seen massive spikes in price, in part due to a shortage of natural gas pipeline capacity.

That is why, in November, the House passed the bipartisan *Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act*. This legislation would cut red tape to ensure that pipelines can be built to connect our growing natural gas supplies with the new manufacturing plants you spoke of in your speech. To date, the Senate has not acted on this important proposal. We respectfully request that you urge Senator Reid to take up this legislation and set a goal for Congress to get this bill to your desk within the next two months.

Workplace Rules

On Tuesday night you stated:

> A mother deserves a day off to 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 belong in a 'Mad Men' episode.

Since 1938, federal law has prohibited hourly workers in the private-sector from electing to take compensatory time (also known as "comp time") in lieu of overtime pay. In 1985, Congress changed the law to give state and local government workers the right to elect to receive comp time in lieu of overtime pay. Comp time gives mothers and fathers who are hourly workers the flexibility to take a day off to care for a sick child or parent without seeing a reduction in their pay. It is wrong that federal law from the pre-"Mad Men" era denies these mothers and fathers this flexibility. And it is especially wrong that federal law gives this flexibility to government employees but not private sector employees.

Last May, the House passed the *Working Families Flexibility Act* to fix this injustice. At the time, your Administration released a statement saying that your senior advisors would recommend that you veto the bill "in its current form." In light of your comments on Tuesday night, we ask you to revisit this decision. We further request that if you have specific concerns about the legislative text, we meet at your earliest convenience to discuss those differences. Working moms and dads deserve action now, not more delay.

Federally-funded Research

On Tuesday night you stated:

> Federally-funded research helped lead to the ideas and inventions behind Google and smartphones. That's why Congress should undo the damage done by last year's cuts to basic research so we can unleash the next great American discovery – whether it's vaccines that stay ahead of drug-resistant bacteria, or paper-thin material that's stronger than steel.

We agree. More must be done to prioritize limited federal funds towards basic research and medical research. That is why the House overwhelmingly passed the *Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act* which would eliminate public funding for political party conventions and instead fund pediatric research at the NIH. This week, Senators Kaine, Warner, and Hatch announced that they will introduce the companion bill in the Senate. Our goal is to get this bill to your desk for your signature within the month. But this bill is just a first step. We should, in a bipartisan fashion, seek out other lower priority programs where funds can be reprogrammed to medical research. We ask that the appropriate members of your Administration be tasked with meeting with the relevant Members of the House and Senate to identify these opportunities so that we may act this year to make these critical investments in our nation's future.

Mr. President, as you reminded us all on Tuesday night, sometimes things don't come easy, but we should never give up and never quit. We haven't given up on working with

you to find areas of common agreement where we can do good things for the American people. There is no reason that we cannot accomplish our objectives in these areas of common agreement, and we are confident that success in these areas will open even more avenues for success. The American people are counting on us. Let's get to work.

Sincerely,

John Boehner
Speaker

Eric Cantor
Majority Leader

Kevin McCarthy
Majority Whip

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Conference Chairman