

# THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

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**July 1, 2010**

This week, President Obama traveled to Racine, Wisconsin, where he talked about the economy in a town hall meeting with local residents. Also this week, the President addressed the need for comprehensive immigration reform in a speech at the American University School of International Service. In addition, the President attended the G-8 and G-20 Summits in Canada, where he discussed international efforts to improve the global economy. Meanwhile, the House of Representatives approved the conference report of Wall Street reform legislation, Elena Kagan demonstrated her legal brilliance and displayed a comprehensive grasp of the law in her confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the Administration continued its ongoing response to the BP oil spill.

## What's Happening?

**Town Hall in Wisconsin:** On Wednesday, President Obama traveled to Racine, Wisconsin for a town hall meeting on the economy. During the town hall, the President spoke about the Administration's efforts to combat the economic crisis and encourage economic recovery. To date, those efforts have included tax cuts for the vast majority of working families, expanded and extended unemployment benefits to help those hardest hit by the crisis, support for small businesses, and Recovery Act projects that are fueling jobs and supporting economic growth across the country.



Unfortunately, the President and Democrats in Congress had little Republican help in enacting those measures. And this week, Minority Leader John Boehner made it clear just why that was: he considered the economic crisis to be little more than an "ant." And now, Republicans are standing opposed to Wall Street reforms that would rein in the risky behavior that led to the economic crisis in the first place. At the town hall, the President emphasized the dangers of such obstructionism, saying:

"We're on the verge of passing the most comprehensive financial reform since the Great Depression – reform that will prevent a crisis like this from happening again...But most of our friends in the other party are planning on voting against this reform...I was stunned to hear the leader of the Republicans in the House say that financial reform was like using a nuclear weapon to target an ant. That's right. He compared the financial crisis to an ant. The same financial crisis that led to the loss of nearly eight million jobs. The same crisis that cost people their homes and their lives savings.

"Well if the Republican leader is that out of touch with the struggles facing the American people, he should come here to Racine and ask people if they think the financial crisis was an ant...These Americans don't believe the financial crisis was an ant. They know that it's what led to the worst recession since the Great Depression. And they expect their leaders in Washington to do whatever it takes to make sure a crisis like this never happens again. The Republican leader might want to maintain a status quo on Wall Street. But we want to move America forward."

**Comprehensive Immigration Reform:** On Thursday, President Obama delivered remarks on immigration reform at the American University School of International Service. In those remarks, the President emphasized the broad support from Americans of both parties for comprehensive reform that fixes our broken immigration system, and he laid out a blueprint for change based on responsibility and accountability. The President said:

"My administration has refused to ignore some of the fundamental challenges facing this generation...And while this work isn't easy, and the changes we seek won't always happen overnight, what we made clear is that this administration will not just kick the can down the road. Immigration reform is no exception. In recent days the issue of immigration has become once more a source of fresh contention in our country, with the passage of a controversial law in Arizona, and the heated reactions have been seen across America. Some have rallied behind this new policy. Others have protested and launched boycotts of the state. And everywhere people have expressed frustration with a system that seems fundamentally broken...

"Unfortunately reform has been held hostage to political posturing and special interest wrangling and to the pervasive thought in Washington that tackling such a thorny issue is inherently bad politics. And just a few years ago when I was a senator, we forged a bipartisan coalition in favor of comprehensive reform...We worked across the aisle to help pass a bipartisan bill through the senate. But that effort eventually came apart. And now under the pressures of partisanship and election year politics, many of the 11 republican senators who voted for reform in the past have now backed away from their previous support...Our task [now] is to make our national laws actually work. To shape a system that reflects our values as a nation of laws, and a nation of -- and that means being honest about the problem and getting past the false debates that divide the country rather than bring it together."

**The G-8 and G-20 Summits:** Last Friday, President Obama traveled to Muskoka, Canada, where he met with world leaders at the G-8 Summit. At that summit, the President emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability among G-8 members in honoring their commitments to each other and joined with other G-8 leaders in support of the *Muskoka Initiative* to improve maternal and child health worldwide.



On Saturday, the President traveled to Toronto, Canada, where he continued his meetings with world leaders at the G-20 Summit, discussing global efforts to combat the economic recession and revitalize the world economy. The President and other G-20 leaders agreed to carry through with plans to support economic recovery and stabilize the global financial system through national financial reforms. The United States is at the forefront of such efforts with Wall Street reform nearing final passage this week. In a press conference at the Summit, the President noted the economic progress made to date and emphasized the work still to be done:

"In the United States, we are committed – above all – to leading by example. Because of the steps that we've taken to get our economy moving, we are growing again, and this growth is beginning to translate into job creation. And we are now also poised to pass the toughest financial reform since the aftermath of a Great Depression.

"Globally, economic contraction has given way to economic growth. Trade that had plummeted is rebounding. Emerging economies in particular are seeing impressive growth. So we have pulled ourselves back from the brink, and begun to move forward with economic recovery.

"But as we all know, this is not good enough. In the United States and around the world, too many people are still out of work. In too many economies, demand for goods and services is still weak. As we have been reminded in recent months, a financial crisis in one country can have consequences far beyond its borders. And as history teaches us, growth and prosperity is never guaranteed. It requires constant effort. It requires continued leadership."

**Wall Street Reform:** On Wednesday, the House of Representatives voted to approve the conference report on Wall Street Reform legislation – bringing reform one step closer to being law. Now the Senate must vote on the final legislation and send it to the President for his signature. In response to the House vote, President Obama celebrated the tough new regulations established by the bill:

"[The] House vote in favor of Wall Street Reform puts us on the cusp of passing a law that will give consumers greater protection and safeguard our economy against future financial crises. It has been a long fight against the defenders of the status quo on Wall Street, but today's vote is a victory for every American who has been affected by the recklessness and irresponsibility that led to the loss of millions of jobs and trillions in wealth...

"It will put in place the strongest consumer financial protections in history, curbing abuses by banks, mortgage and credit card companies and giving their customers the information they need to make responsible financial decisions. It will make our financial system more transparent, so that complex transactions that escaped scrutiny in the past will now be done in the light of day. And it will put an end to the idea that any financial firm is too big to fail, and therefore entitled to taxpayer bailouts."

**Elena Kagan Confirmation Hearings:** This week, Solicitor General Elena Kagan sat down before the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee to answer questions about her judicial philosophy and professional history – a history that includes years of government service in multiple Presidential Administrations, a celebrated tenure as the first woman Dean of Harvard Law School, and plaudits from people across the political spectrum for her ability to build consensus and consider various points of view. As she answered questions from Senators on both the right and the left, Kagan's brilliance shone through as she clearly and repeatedly touted the importance of respecting legal precedent, which she called "a measure of humility," and emphasized her fidelity to the Constitution over any personal or political positions she may hold.



You can see highlights from Solicitor General Kagan's testimony in a DNC video entitled "What Kind of Justice Would She Be?" at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsBDGvTF-mc>.

Unfortunately, as Donna Brazile noted in an email to Democratic supporters, Senate Republicans continue to attack Solicitor General Kagan's credibility, her credentials, and her character. Help us show Republicans that she has America's support by visiting <http://my.barackobama.com/elenakagan> and adding your name in support of her swift confirmation.

**Ongoing Response to the Oil Spill:** This week, the Administration continued its efforts to contain and clean up the BP oil spill. Nearly 40,000 personnel are currently responding to the spill and working to protect the shoreline and the Gulf Coast environment. In addition, more than 6,800 vessels and dozens of aircraft are assisting in containment and cleanup efforts. Approximately 2.75 million feet of containment boom and 4.9 million feet of sorbent boom have been deployed to contain the spill, and more than 28 million gallons of an oil-water mix have been recovered. As the recovery efforts move forward, the President will continue to prioritize the lives and livelihoods of the people of the Gulf Coast and will work to ensure that those who have been affected by the spill are compensated for their losses.

### **Organizing for America**

**The Final Push For Wall Street Reform:** This week, as Democrats in the House and Senate worked to pass final Wall Street reform legislation, OFA reached out to supporters to thank them for all their hard work on this issue and to ask them for their help in taking Wall Street reform over the finish line. In an email to supporters, OFA Political Director Yohannes Abraham said:

"So much has happened in the past year that it's easy to forget how much OFA supporters have done to get to this point.

"In key districts around the country, we organized to win a 223-202 vote in the House last December. OFA supporters poured in nearly tens of thousands of calls to Capitol Hill offices the day before last month's vote to get it through the Senate.

"This is your bill -- the strongest and boldest overhaul of the financial system since the aftermath of the Great Depression. It's the change we fought the big banks to make -- and we've almost won."

You can join with OFA supporters across the country to help make Wall Street reform a reality by visiting <http://my.barackobama.com/WSRFinalPush>, where you'll find all the information you need to write a letter to your Senators urging swift final passage of reform legislation.

### **Holding Republicans Accountable**

**The Accountability Project:** This week, the DNC launched The Accountability Project, a new initiative that will give Democratic supporters the opportunity to shed light on Republican hypocrisy in their home towns. The Accountability Project's website, <http://accountabilityproject.com>, will serve as a central clearinghouse for user-uploaded video, audio, and published accounts of Republicans' misdeeds. Emphasizing the potential impact of this project, DNC Research Director Shauna Daly said:

"In 2006, at a campaign event in Breaks, a small town in southwest Virginia, then-Senator George Allen used an offensive slur, 'Macaca,' to refer to an employee of his opponent. Luckily, it was caught on camera.

"The incident sparked a large swing in the polls, helped Democrat Jim Webb get elected, and, ultimately, played a crucial role in Democrats taking back the senate in 2006. It was just one moment. Who knows what else is being said when the cameras aren't running?"

"We don't -- but I sure wish we did. That's where the new Accountability Project comes in."

To become a part of The Accountability Project and submit your own videos, recordings, or other material and shed light on Republicans' dishonesty, please visit <http://accountabilityproject.com>.

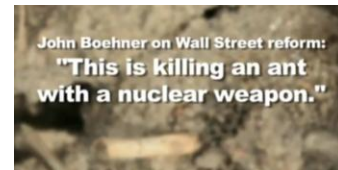
**'On Their Side':** Last week, the DNC released "On Their Side," a web ad that highlights some of the Republicans' apologies to and for big oil, big banks, and big insurance companies. With video of Mitt Romney, Michael Steele, and others, "On Their Side" clearly illustrates the Republican Party's insistence on standing up for big corporations and special interests at the expense of the American people – and it drew rave reviews from online viewers. As a result, we decided to turn our 50-second web ad into a 30-second TV spot that we think is even more effective than the original. Now, we're working to get that ad up on the air. If you have a few minutes, you can check it out at



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLGtNI5BJn8&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLGtNI5BJn8&feature=player_embedded), and if

you think it's as effective as we do, please visit <https://my.democrats.org/page/contribute/gspotobp> to help us get it on TV.

**'Ants? Really John Boehner?':** On Wednesday, the DNC released a new web video entitled "Ants? Really John Boehner?" That ad highlights John Boehner's declaration this week that the financial crisis was tantamount to an "ant" and his argument that Wall Street reform is like "killing an ant with a nuclear weapon." Following the ad's release, DNC National Press Secretary Hari Sevugan pointed to the relevance of John Boehner's comments to this fall's upcoming elections:



"That John Boehner would minimize the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression and all the pain, suffering and sacrifice that hard-working Americans endured as a result of Wall Street's greed shows just how out-of-touch Republicans are with the lives of Main Street Americans. This fall's elections will be a choice. A choice between a party who seeks to hold Wall Street accountable for the lives they ruined and the hardship they caused, a party which will put in place new rules and standards to ensure that we never again find ourselves on the brink of economic collapse - or - a party who believes that tougher rules and stricter standards for Wall Street are an overreaction, a party who would rather buddy-up to the banking lobby than stand-up for the families they represent. In the process of trying to turn a mountain into an ant-hill by diminishing the need for reform, John Boehner just made that choice a little clearer."

You can check out the ad for yourself at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJFJ4Hkeb4>.

### **Key Issues in the News and Background**

#### **Talking Points: The President's Wisconsin Town Hall**

- This week, President Obama spoke with Wisconsinites at a town hall in Racine. In his remarks, he talked about the American economy – where we are, where we need to go, and how we can get there.
- Ever since the President took office, the economy has been a top priority. Over the last year and a half, he has made bold choices to stop the economic freefall and get America back on track – and as a result of those actions the American economy is growing again.
- But although our economy is headed in the right direction, the President understands that it can't recover fast enough for the millions of Americans who are out of work and looking for a job. And as he's said time and again, this recovery won't be real until all Americans can feel the improvement in their lives.
- That's why he has continued to fight for legislation that would speed recovery and boost economic growth. Specifically, the President is fighting for legislation to extend unemployment benefits for Americans who

continue to look for work; to help small businesses get the loans they need to get off the ground or expand; and to provide additional funding to states that would help keep thousands of teachers, cops, and firefighters on the job.

- But unfortunately, a minority of Republicans in Congress continues to oppose this much-needed relief for the American people, and they are working hard to prevent recovery legislation from coming to a vote. In so doing, they are playing politics with Americans' lives.
- Republicans have said time and again that they believe government has little or no role to play in helping America to meet our nation's collective challenges. But we've tried Republicans' way of governing – and we've seen where that took us.
- Republicans created an atmosphere of lax regulation that led to the financial meltdown; they helped the oil industry to write its own rules and do its own safety inspections; and they supported huge tax breaks for millionaires while doing little to help middle class families.
- Right now, Democrats are close to passing the most comprehensive financial reform since the Great Depression. That reform would hold Wall Street accountable, end taxpayer-funded bailouts permanently, and enact the strongest-ever consumer financial protections. But Republicans continue to deride reform legislation and defend the status quo.
- At the same time, Republicans are arguing to repeal health insurance reform legislation and put insurance companies back in the driver's seat – denying Americans increased choice, increased security, and lower health care costs.
- And they are seeking to maintain a status quo in which America continues to rely on 20<sup>th</sup> century energy sources, denying our country the opportunity to create new green jobs and pursue energy independence.
- Our debate is not between big government and small government. It's about responsible and accountable government – a government that stands up for the American people and helps to create opportunity and prosperity.
- President Obama knows government doesn't have all the answers, but he thinks that government is capable of doing what individuals can't and corporations won't – everything from protecting consumers to investing in the future.
- America has a choice – we can maintain the status quo, or we can enact real reform that helps to move America forward. We can rehash the failed economic policies of the past, or we can work to build a stronger future. The President believes we must do the latter, that we must find the courage to move America forward.

#### **Talking Points: Kagan Confirmation Hearings Day One**

- On the first day of her confirmation hearings, Solicitor General Elena Kagan put forward her belief that the role of the Supreme Court is to safeguard the rule of law through a commitment to impartiality, principle, and restraint. In addition, Solicitor General Kagan noted that the role of a Supreme Court Justice is to ensure that every person who comes before the Court is given a full measure of justice and that every case is decided as even-handedly as possible.
- In her opening statement, Solicitor General Kagan highlighted her experience working in other branches of government, experience that has contributed to her belief that the Supreme Court must be deferential to the decisions made by the American people and the policies implemented by America's elected officials.
- She also established her belief in cooperation and collaboration, discussing how the simple act of listening to one another without regard for ideology or political persuasion can lead to progress. And she said that she would approach decision-making by first listening to all sides with an open mind.
- She pledged that, if confirmed, she would do everything within her power to consider cases impartially, modestly, and in keeping with both principle and the law.

- Also on the first day of Kagan's confirmation hearings, Republican Senators on the Judiciary Committee criticized Solicitor General Kagan by making false attacks that have already been debunked time and again. In their search for any reason to oppose Solicitor General Kagan's nomination, they called her inexperienced – a claim that has been disputed by conservative legal thinkers and the last eight Solicitors General, who have endorsed Kagan, lauded her record, and noted that she has exactly the experience needed to be an effective Justice.

### **Talking Points: Kagan Confirmation Hearings Day Two**

- In more than ten hours of testimony on the second day of her confirmation hearings, Elena Kagan clearly showed that she is one of America's most brilliant legal minds. In addition, her forthcoming answers demonstrated that as a Supreme Court Justice her approach to cases would be within the mainstream of judicial philosophy.
- Kagan also exceeded all expectations with her thorough and substantive answers on tough legal questions posed throughout the day – more than living up to her standard for judicial nominees. In fact, Kagan's answers won praise from a number of Senators:
  - Chairman Leahy said, "I can't remember anybody that's been asked such a wide variety of questions or answered them as forthrightly as you have."
  - Senator Cornyn noted Solicitor General Kagan had "done a good job of explaining from the witness chair how [she] would decide cases."
  - And Senator Specter called Kagan "a lot more forthcoming than most."
- In her testimony, Elena Kagan noted that "the military had full access to our students at all times" while she was Dean of Harvard Law School, and Senator Sessions conceded, saying "I know that." In addition, despite Senator Sessions' consistent accusations regarding Kagan's treatment of the military, he told her: "I don't deny that you value the military. I really don't."
- Kagan once more made it clear that she would approach her duties as a Justice without regard to her personal views, saying, "what I do know is that my politics would be, must be, have to be completely separate from my judging."
- Kagan told the Senate Judiciary Committee that the Second Amendment right to bear arms is "binding precedent" and "settled law."
- Senator Graham lauded Kagan's work as Solicitor General on *Al Maqaleh v. Gates*, an important national security case. Specifically, Senator Graham said, "I want every conservative legal scholar and commentator to know that you did an excellent job, in my view, of representing the United States when it came to that case."

### **Talking Points: Kagan Confirmation Hearings Day Three**

- During three days of testimony before the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Solicitor General Kagan demonstrated her brilliance, her dedication to the rule of law, and her commitment to the constitutional promise of equal justice under the law.
- In advance of Solicitor General Kagan's hearings, President Obama expressed his expectations that members of the Senate would carefully review Kagan's record, closely listen to her testimony, and consider her nomination on its merits.
- During her testimony, Solicitor General Kagan answered difficult questions from Senators of both parties. Her informed and intelligent answers to those questions strengthened the belief among many supporters that Solicitor General Kagan's confirmation should receive strong bipartisan support, and that her confirmation vote should take place prior to the Senate's August recess.



- Before Solicitor General Kagan's hearings began, Republicans pledged to hold her to a high standard and to question her aggressively about her professional history and judicial philosophy. The reactions of Senators from both parties suggest that she met the Senate's standards:
  - Chairman Leahy said: "I can't remember anybody that's been asked such a wide variety of questions or answered them as forthrightly as you have."
  - Senator Specter said: "She was more forthcoming than most. She would answer the television [cameras in the Supreme Court chambers] question. Nobody would answer that."
  - Senator Graham said: "I think you've accorded yourself well for the last several days."
  - Senator Whitehouse said: "I thank you again for the candid and complete nature of the way in which you are responding to questions here today."
  - Senator Coburn said: "You're doing quite well."
  - Senator Cornyn said: "I think you've done a good job of explaining from the witness chair how you would decide cases."

### **Talking Points: President Obama's Speech on Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

- There has been a great deal of debate regarding immigration – and often the facts have gotten lost in the rhetoric. So it's great that the President is speaking plainly and candidly with the American people about this critical issue.
- Commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform is the best way to fix our broken immigration system. And the President made it clear that comprehensive reform should include a number of crucial elements that are based on the principles of responsibility and accountability:
  - Responsibility from the federal government for securing our national borders – President Obama has already taken steps to make our border more secure, has dedicated unprecedented resources toward that pursuit, and will continue to take border security seriously.
  - Responsibility from companies that break the law by hiring undocumented workers, a practice that is known to undermine American workers and exploit illegal immigrants – the President is committed to holding such businesses accountable.
  - Responsibility from immigrants who are living illegally in the United States – those immigrants must admit they broke the law, pay taxes and a penalty, learn English, and take other measures to get on the good side of the law before they can apply for citizenship.
- It is clear that comprehensive immigration reform can no longer wait. Americans from both parties agree that our current immigration system is broken and that it is unacceptable that we have 11 million people living illegally in the United States.
- In order to fully secure the borders, we must enact comprehensive immigration reform. Such reform is also necessary to guarantee a level playing field for American workers and to continue the tradition of innovation by immigrants who have brought new ideas and new prosperity to the American economy.
- But in order to enact such reforms, we need bipartisan Congressional support – the same kind of support that has existed in the past. President Obama simply cannot fix America's immigration system by himself. But his leadership on the issue is commendable, as are the good faith efforts of Congressional leaders who have worked to move forward with immigration reform based on a bipartisan framework.
- Among the American people, there is a great deal of support for comprehensive immigration reform. That support was evident in the audience in attendance at the President's speech, which included law enforcement officials who know immigration reform will make it easier for them to keep their communities safe; religious men and women including Catholics, Jewish people, evangelicals and others who believe in the moral imperative of reform; and business and labor leaders who hope to enact reform in order to strengthen the American economy.
- Immigration reform has been put off for too long. Today, it's a symptom of a more systemic problem – Republican obstructionism in the Senate. Right now, America is facing a number of challenges, and we need our leaders to come together cooperatively and with common purpose in order to address those challenges.

- Unfortunately, instead of such cooperation, Republicans in the Senate have stonewalled everything from extending unemployment benefits to tax cuts; they've opposed holding oil companies accountable for the damage caused by the spill in the Gulf; and they are blocking 63 of the President's highly qualified nominees, many of whom have great support from both parties.
- The American people want their leaders to work together to tackle the challenges we're facing – not push those issues down the road to the next Congress or government.