

Obama Administration Record for the African American Community

“African American men and women have persevered to enrich our national life and bend the arc of history toward justice. From resolute Revolutionary War soldiers fighting for liberty to the hardworking students of today reaching for horizons their ancestors could only have imagined, African Americans have strengthened our Nation.”

-President Barack Obama, February 1, 2011

President Obama believes we need to do more than just recover from the economic crisis that has hit the African American community especially hard. We need to restore security and opportunity for working Americans with the fundamental values that made our economy the strongest in the world – making sure everyone does their fair share, everyone gets a fair shake, and hard work and responsibility are rewarded. That’s why President Obama has worked to protect African Americans from financial abuses, help them weather the financial crisis, and make health care and a college education more affordable and available. President Obama has also continued to press for equal rights for all Americans, through enhanced enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and promotion of civil rights. The Obama Administration’s record on supporting and strengthening the African American community includes:

- **Restoring Economic Security to African American Families:** In the last 23 months, 3.7 million private sector jobs have been created and putting Americans back to work and restoring economic security for middle class families remain the President’s top priorities. He’s taken a series of steps to spur economic growth, get Americans back to work, and restore middle class security.
 - **Putting Americans Back to Work and Helping Those Struggling Because of the Economic Crisis:** In 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, creating jobs, spurring economic growth, and investing in our communities. The Recovery Act has been vital to the African American community, especially because African Americans are experiencing higher rates of unemployment than the national average. A report from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office showed that the Recovery Act has increased the number of people employed by as many as 3.5 million as of the end of 2010. According to a study released by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, policies in the Recovery Act, including tax cuts for working families and improvements in unemployment insurance, have kept 1.4 million African Americans out of poverty.
 - **Taking Action to Strengthen the Recovery:** The President fought to continue the payroll tax cut, ensuring that taxes do not go up on nearly 20 million African-American workers, and to extend unemployment insurance so that Americans looking for work do not lose this crucial support. In addition, the President has put forward a broader jobs package that would cut taxes for small businesses, put teachers and first responders back on the job, help the unemployed get back to work, and rebuild our infrastructure.

- **Providing Tax Relief for African American Families:** In December 2010, the President signed a bipartisan tax cut agreement that not only secured vital tax relief and investments for our workers, but is also creating jobs and accelerating economic growth. Building off the Recovery Act, the tax agreement extended key expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) that are benefitting an estimated 2.2 million African American families.
- **Expanding Access to Federal Contracting for Minority-Owned Businesses:** More than 20 Cabinet and Senate-confirmed Obama Administration officials have participated in 19 small business matchmaking events around the country, which has helped more than 10,000 small, minority- and women-owned businesses by promoting access to capital and access to Federal government contracting opportunities. These efforts are part of the President's broader agenda to support small businesses, including his signing of 17 small business tax cuts into law and taking action to expand access to credit.
- **Protecting Families from Financial Abuses, Hidden Fees, and Deceptive Practices:** Too many responsible African Americans have paid the price for an outdated regulatory system that has left families without adequate protections against financial abuses and deceptive practices. That's why President Obama fought to overcome a furious lobbying campaign by big banks to pass the most far reaching Wall Street reform in history which created the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), to prevent mortgage companies, credit card lenders, and payday loan companies from exploiting consumers with hidden fees and other deceptive practices. The CFPB is also charged with enforcing fair lending laws that protect African Americans from discriminatory lending practices. Additionally, President Obama put in place the most sweeping credit card protections in history which protect ordinary Americans from unfair rate increases and hidden fees and penalties.
- **Improving the Quality of Education and Expanding Access to College:** President Obama has improved the quality of education – particularly in our lowest-performing schools – and has expanded access to college because every child deserves an education that equips them with the skills to find a good-paying job and succeed in the workforce.
 - **Fixing Our Lowest-Performing Schools:** The Obama Administration has dedicated over \$4 billion to challenge states and districts to transform the lowest-performing schools in America. School Improvement Grants have provided up to \$6 million per school for 1,000 schools to change them into safe environments where students can learn.
 - **Helping Students Pay For College:** By re-directing subsidies from private lenders to students, the Administration has already raised the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,550 and it will increase again to \$5,635 in 2013. Meanwhile the number of Pell Grant recipients has risen by 3 million – a 50 percent increase since 2008 – demonstrating the need for the critical program. Also, for families struggling with the cost of college, we have created the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC)—a

partially refundable tax credit worth up to \$10,000 over four years of college.

- **Strengthening Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Community Colleges:** The student loan reform bill signed by President Obama provided \$2 billion for community colleges and other eligible institutions of higher education to improve education and career training programs.
- **Building Stronger Neighborhoods and Communities:** President Obama has strengthened neighborhoods and communities in order to improve the lives of residents, particularly in America's inner-cities.
 - **Transforming Distressed Areas through Choice Neighborhoods:** In 2011, the Choice Neighborhoods program provided \$126 million to 22 communities to plan and implement the transformation of high-poverty areas where distressed HUD-assisted housing is located into sustainable, mixed-income neighborhoods by linking housing improvements with services, schools, transportation, and access to jobs. The Administration also expanded the Neighborhood Stabilization Program through the Recovery Act: to date the program has provided \$7 billion in funding to communities to manage the vacant and foreclosed residential properties that are creating blight and bringing down local home values.
 - **Improving Educational Outcomes through Promise Neighborhoods:** Seeking to build on the success of the Harlem Children's Zone, the Promise Neighborhoods program supports communities as they develop cradle-to-career services to improve educational outcomes for students in distressed, high-poverty neighborhoods. In 2010 and 2011, the program awarded \$40 million in grants to support 37 communities in developing or implementing plans for a range of services with a high-quality education at the center.
 - **Empowering Local Governments to Help Their Communities:** Strong Cities, Strong Communities is an interagency pilot initiative to strengthen the capacity of local governments by partnering with them to execute their economic visions. The program was launched in July, and interagency teams of Federal officials have been working in six pilot cities – Fresno, Memphis, Detroit, New Orleans, Chester, and Cleveland – to help leverage Federal investments, advance specific economic development projects and build collaboration to encourage economic growth.
 - **Helping Americans Stay in Their Homes:** African-American families have been particularly hard-hit by the housing crisis, with nearly 10 percent of African-American borrowers who took out loans between 2004 and 2008 having lost their homes to foreclosure. The President has taken action to help responsible homeowners and strengthen the housing market, including expanding access to refinancing – allowing responsible borrowers who are current on their payments to save an average of \$3,000 per year. The Administration has also taken measures to allow homeowners behind on their payments to modify their mortgages to avoid foreclosure – with over 4.6 million borrowers having received permanent modifications.

- **Increasing Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Funds:** The Administration increased the CDFI budget more than 135 percent over 2008 levels, providing grants and tax credits to finance community development projects in distressed areas.
- **Ensuring Access to Healthy Food:** The Administration is committed to ensuring families have access to healthy food. This year, we are committing \$35 million to our Healthy Food Financing Initiative. Several food retailers have agreed to build or expand over 1,500 grocery stores in underserved communities within five years.
- **Expanding Access to Affordable, Quality Health Care for the 8 Million African Americans Who Currently Lack Coverage:** The Affordable Care Act will, by 2014, make health care more accessible and affordable for the 8 million African Americans who currently lack coverage. The law will reduce health costs and give families more control over their care. As a result of the Act, nearly 6 million more African Americans are receiving expanded preventative services coverage in the private health insurance market and more than 2 million African Americans received free preventative services through Medicare in 2011.
 - **Reducing Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities:** The Affordable Care Act moves toward eliminating disparities that African Americans currently face both in their health and in their health care by investing in data collection and research about health disparities. The law also promotes increased racial and ethnic diversity of health care professionals and strengthens cultural competency training among health care providers. Building upon these provisions in the Affordable Care Act, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched two strategic plans aimed at reducing health disparities in April 2011: the *HHS Action Plan to Reduce Health Disparities*, which outlines goals and actions HHS will take to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities, and the *National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity*.
- **Protecting and Defending the Civil Rights of All Americans:** President Obama has taken steps to protect and defend civil rights because every American deserves equal justice under the law.
 - **Combatting Racial Discrimination:** The Department of Justice (DOJ) is vigorously enforcing the law to combat racial discrimination in schools, housing, and the workplace. President Obama provided two years of double-digit budget increases to the DOJ's Civil Rights Division, which was previously hamstrung by drastic budget cuts. DOJ has also reached three multi-million dollar settlements, including the largest rental discrimination and fair lending settlements in its history.
 - **Reinvigorating the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education:** The Office of Civil Rights has increased civil rights compliance reviews, issued policy guidance supporting an agenda of equal access to a quality education for all students,

and collected and reported additional data from school districts on key education and civil rights issues in America's public schools.

- **Reforming Sentencing and Prisoner Reentry:** President Obama successfully pushed to reduce the disparity in sentencing between those convicted of crack versus powder cocaine. The Administration has convened a Cabinet-level "Reentry Council" to advance effective prisoner reentry strategies. Communities of color are most broadly impacted by these efforts; one in nine African American children has an incarcerated parent.
- **Promoting Responsible Fatherhood:** The President launched a new agenda to support responsible fatherhood in America. One out of three American children grows up without their father, and encouraging more fathers to play active roles in their children's lives is a priority for President Obama. The Obama Administration has encouraged the private sector to offer discounted opportunities for dads and kids to connect at ballparks, bowling alleys, and museums across the country. The Administration has also worked with Congress to increase fatherhood funding that supports nonprofit and faith-based organizations around the country that help fathers reconnect with their families. The Administration has also hosted events across the country, in partnership with faith-based and neighborhood organizations, to encourage personal responsibility.

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