

THE OBAMA RECORD



Like all presidents, Barack Obama has enjoyed accomplishments but also made mistakes. As a presidential historian, however, I have been struck by claims being put forward by Obama's many critics and the news media that he has accomplished little when, in fact, his presidency is easily one of the most active in history. As such, with all the misinformation circulating on talk radio, at town hall meetings, and in the blogosphere about the President, here is a fact-checked list of some of President Obama's initiatives.

Robert P. Watson, Ph.D.
Lynn University
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BUDGETING

- Ordered all federal agencies to undertake a study and make recommendations for ways to cut federal spending (2009)
- Ordered a review of all federal operations to identify wasteful spending and practices (2009)
- Established a National Performance Officer charged with saving the federal government money and making federal operations more efficient (2009)
- Signed Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act (May 22, 2009)
- Overturned the Bush-era practice of not listing certain federal programs in the federal budget (2009) (2010) * *Note: Bush did this (so did Reagan) in an effort to hide programs and make the budget look smaller; such "off budget" items are now included in the annual budget*
- Full appropriations for war are now included in the budget (2009-2011) * *Note: Bush did not list many of the appropriations for Iraq, Afghanistan, and the War on Terror*
- Funds for emergency appropriations are now included in the budget (2009-2011)

- Signed statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act (Feb 12, 2010) after urging Congress to adopt “Pay-Go” (whereby each dollar of spending is offset by a dollar in cuts or revenues, which was used in the `90s but abandoned in the `00s)
- Proposed a three-year freeze on federal discretionary spending beginning in 2011 (2010)
- Is in the process of cutting 120 federal programs identified as either wasteful or unnecessary (2010-2011)
- Established a bipartisan commission on fiscal responsibility, staffed by House and Senate members and private citizens, tasked with submitting proposals to balance the budget (2010) *
Note: In the face of Republican opposition, the powers of the commission were watered down
- Established a bipartisan commission on the future of Social Security, tasked with submitting proposals to preserve and strengthen Social Security (2010) * *Note: In the face of Republican opposition, the powers of the commission were watered down*
- Cut \$20 billion from federal budget and has pledged to cut at least this much every year (2010-2011)
- Signed Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act (July 22, 2010)
- Ultimately decided to cancel planned new presidential helicopter fleet and stick with Marine One (2010)
- Freezing all discretionary spending for next three years, except on national security (2010-2011)
- Presidential Memoranda to freeze discretionary awards, bonuses, etc. for federal political appointees (2010)
- Measures to promote savings in government contracting (Jan 30, 2011)
- Measures to reduce size of federal budget/signed Budget Control Act (Aug 3, 2011)



CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

- Ended the Bush-era policy of protecting credit card companies (2009); signed Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act (May 22, 2009); credit card companies are prohibited from raising rates without advance notification or arbitrarily if customers are paying bills on time (2010) * *Note: In place of the old policy, new consumer protections were instituted and the industry's predatory practices were banned*
- Instituted a new focus on mortgage fraud (2009)
- Signed the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act (May 20, 2009)
- Signed Prevent Deceptive Census Look Alike Mailing Act (April 7, 2010)
- Signed measures detailing what mailed items can be marked "Census" (May 24, 2010)
- Signed Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (July 21, 2010)
- Signed Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act (July 27, 2010)
- Signed Social Security Number Protection Act (Dec 18, 2010)
- Signed Truth in Caller ID Act (Dec 22, 2010)
- Protections from online shopping fraud (Dec 29, 2010)
- Signed FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (Jan 4, 2011)
- Enhancements to Consumer Protection Safety Commission (Aug 5, 2011)



DISASTER RESPONSE

- Ordered a review of hurricane and natural disaster preparedness (2009)
- FEMA once again reports directly to the president (2009) * *Note: Bush removed FEMA (prior to the Hurricane Katrina disaster) from this status*
- Demonstrated an immediate and efficient response to the floods in North Dakota and other natural disasters (2009)
- Ordered that funds be released and red tape be streamlined for the ongoing Hurricane Katrina recovery effort in the Gulf Coast (2009)
- Timely and massive relief effort in response to the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti and ensuing humanitarian crisis; signed emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act (Jan 27, 2010)

Components of the response:

- *The FBI's National Center for Disaster Fraud was tasked to look into possible fraud with organizations soliciting funds for relief*
 - *Announced the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund*
 - *Established an emergency Haiti Task Force in the State Department*
 - *Established a website with information, resources, and a posting of a "person finder" online to help families and friends to locate loved ones*
 - *Joint aid and relief planning with the U.K.*
 - *Sponsored a resolution in the UN Security Council for additional security and police forces in Haiti*
 - *Dispatched the US Navy floating hospital (USNS Comfort) and, within 5 days, 9 naval and relief ships, 5 Coast Guard cutters, 8 Coast Guard aircraft, and 12,000 US military personnel*
 - *Initial dispatch of several ships and cargo planes full of humanitarian aid and supplies, 6 search/rescue teams (500 personnel), and 265 Department of Health & Human Services personnel for emergency medical and aid support*
 - *Established a mobile US air traffic control center at the destroyed airport in Port-au-Prince*
 - *Signed Tax Breaks for Haiti Donations Act (Jan 22, 2010)*
- Signed Haiti Debt Relief and Earthquake Recovery Act (April 15, 2010)
 - Signed Haiti Economic Lift Program Act (May 24, 2010)
 - Signed Help Haiti Act (Dec 8, 2010)

- After the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, a freeze was placed on new deep water projects (2010); established a national commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon spill to examine facts and report a plan of action; new efforts to prevent offshore spills (2010)
- Executive Order to establish new security measures to minimize accidental release of bio and chemical agents; new strategies for public health and bioterrorism response (2010)
- After a slow start in responding to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the White House is promoting a long-term plan to reconstruct the damaged Gulf and negotiated with BP the establishment of a multi-billion dollar trust fund for victims of the spill (2010-2011)
- Signed Disaster Relief and Summer Jobs Act (June 3, 2010)
- Extended national flood insurance program for those in need during current economic crisis (2010); signed National Flood Insurance Program Extension (July 2, 2010)



ECONOMY

- Increased infrastructure spending (roads, bridges, power plants...) (2009-2010) * *Note: Bush was the first president since Herbert Hoover to not make infrastructure a priority*
- Authorized the US auto industry rescue plan and two GMAC rescue packages (2009)
- Authorized the housing rescue plan and new FHA residential housing guarantees (2009)
- Authorized a \$789 billion economic stimulus plan (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) (Feb 17, 2009) * *Note: 1/3 in tax cuts for working-class families; 1/3 to states for infrastructure projects; 1/3 to states to prevent the layoff of police officers, teachers, etc. at risk of losing their jobs because of state budget shortfalls*
- Instituted a new rule allowing the public to meet with federal housing insurers to refinance (in as quickly as one day) a mortgage if they are having trouble paying (2009)
- Signed the Serve America Act (April 21, 2009)
- Authorized a continuation of the US financial and banking rescue plans initiated at the end of the Bush Administration and authorized TARP funds to buy “toxic assets” from failing financial institutions (2009)
- Authorized the “Cash for Clunkers” program that stimulated auto sales and removed old, inefficient, polluting cars from the road (2009); due to large response to program, signed Cash for Clunkers Extension (Aug 6, 2009)
- Convened a “jobs summit” to bring experts together to develop ideas for creating jobs (2009)
- Placed a 35% tariff on Chinese tires and a few other products such as pipes after China was found to be illegally “dumping” exports below cost (2009) * *Note: Clinton, Bush I, and Reagan all refused to “get tough” on China’s predatory trade practices; Bush II refused four times during his presidency*
- Ordered the FDIC to beef up deposit insurance (2009)
- Authorized the federal government to make more loans available to small businesses and ordered lower rates for federal loans to small businesses (2009) and signed a temporary extension of the Small Business Act (March 20, 2009)
- Signed Jobs for Main Street Act (Feb 24, 2010)

- Efforts to protect US firms' trademarks, patents, and copyrights; signed Trademark Technical and Conforming Amendment Act (March 17, 2010)
- Secured authority to compensate certain furloughed federal employees (March 11, 2010)
- Signed Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act (March 18, 2010)
- Signed Airport and Airway Extension Act (April 30, 2010)
- Enhanced antitrust penalties and reforms (June 9, 2010)
- Signed Small Business Investment Act (June 17, 2010)
- Homebuyer Assistance and Improvement Act (July 2, 2010)
- Extension of Unemployment Compensation (July 22, 2010)
- FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act (Aug 10, 2010)
- Signed US Manufacturing Enhancement Act (Aug 11, 2010)
- Signed Small Business Jobs Act (Sept 27, 2010)
- Signed Worker, Homeowner, and Business Assistance Act (Nov 6, 2010); signed
- Extended unemployment benefits for one million workers and expanded coverage for some existing homeowners who are buying again (Nov 2010)
- Called on Congress to deliver a comprehensive "Jobs bill" (2010)
- Signed a bill to extend unemployment benefits set to expire (2010)
- Signed historic Wall Street reform bill (2010) * *Note: Designed to reregulate and end abusive practices and promote consumer protections*
- Signed the HIRE Act to stimulate the economic recovery (2010) * *Note: The bill includes: tax cuts for small businesses who hire someone unemployed for at least two months; small businesses can write off their investments in equipment this year; etc.*
- National Export Initiative established to enhance federal support (technical assistance, training, trade missions, etc.) and coordination efforts to help US businesses export products and services (2010)
- Forwarded initiatives to promote a "Wireless Broadband Revolution" (2010) * *Note: Among other things, broadband is finally being considered as necessary infrastructure, with efforts to expand use, access, and spectrum...*
- Expanded agricultural credit to farmers during current economic crisis (2010)

- Signed US Manufacturing Enhancement Act (2010)
- Signed Single Family Housing Mortgage Insurance (2010)
- Signed Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act (Dec 17, 2010)
- Signed America Competes (Reauthorization) Act (Jan 4, 2011)
- Extension of funding for federal support of transportation programs (Sept 16, 2011; March 4, 2011...); extension of funding for airports and airways (several piecemeal increases Aug 5, 2011; June 29, 2011; May 31, 2011 March 21, 2011... because of Republican opposition to full funding of construction, expansion, and improvements)
- Announced a comprehensive jobs proposal: cut payroll taxes for working families; incentives to hire the unemployed; reform unemployment insurance; incentives for businesses to hire “returning heroes,” federal supports to states to prevent loss of thousands of teachers and essential public workers; funding for infrastructure repair and construction and school modernization and construction projects; temporary payroll tax holiday... (September 2011)



EDUCATION

- Authorized construction funds for high-speed, broadband Internet access in K-12 public schools (2009)
- Increased funding for school construction (2009)
- Increased funding available for student loans (2009)
- Expanded the national youth service program (2009)
- Streamlined the federal student loan process to save \$87 billion over the next 10 years (2009)
- Changed the rule to allow students struggling to make college loan payments to refinance their loans (2009)
- Discussions with Congress for education reform (2009-2011) * *Note: Much of Obama's education reform has been sidelined by opposition in Congress*
- Initiated a "Race to the Top" competitive federal grant program for states who develop innovative policies (2009)
- Instituted a "judgment review" allowing families with student loans to petition to have their current financial status determine the loan rather than the previous year's finances (2009)
- Launched "Educate to Innovate," a public/private partnership making \$236 million available for science, mathematics, and technology education programs (2009)
- Proposed capping the maximum amount students must pay on student loans (as percentage of their income) (2010)
- Proposed reducing student loan obligations for individuals going to work in community and public service jobs (2010)
- The federal government changed the system to offer direct student loans, cutting out the cost of private banks ("middle man") who increase the costs in order to make a profit (2010)
- Increased investment in technologies for schools/education (2010)



ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Removed a ruling that now allows individual states (like California) to enact automotive fuel efficiency standards above federal standards (2009)
- Offered attractive tax write-offs for those who buy hybrid automobiles (2009)
- Overturned Bush-era rule that weakened the Endangered Species Act (2009)
- Announced plans to purchase fuel efficient American-made fleet for the federal government (2009)
- Ended the Bush-era policy of not regulating and labeling carbon dioxide emissions (2009)
- Signed a measure requiring energy producing plants to begin producing 15% of their energy from renewable sources (2009)
- Announced that the federal government would reengage in the long-delayed effort to clean up “Superfund” toxic waste sites (2009)
- Announced the long-term development of a national energy grid with renewable sources and cleaner, efficient energy production (2009) * *Note: Much of Obama’s energy reform was killed by Senate Republicans*
- Proposed a new refuge for wild mustangs (2009)
- Cancelled several Bush-era mountain-top removal and mining permits (2009)
- Reengaged in international treaties and agreements to protect the Antarctic (2009) * *Note: Bush had withdrawn from such efforts*
- Asked Congress for an energy reform and “cap and trade” bill (2009) * *Note: The Congress failed to pass such a bill*
- Developing plan to lease US coastal waters for wind and water-current energy production (2009-2011)
- Signed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act that protects millions of acres of scenic, historic, and recreational lands and trails (March 30, 2009)
- Signed Energy and Water Development Act (Oct 28, 2009)
- Overturned Bush-era policies that allowed uranium mining near national parks such as the Grand Canyon (2009)

- Expanded the Petrified Forest National Park (2009)
 - Requiring that government buildings and facilities be retrofitted to save energy costs (2009) *
- Note: These green retrofits are moving very slowly*
- Authorized studies in several western states to determine how to support large-scale solar installations (2009)
 - Attended the Copenhagen talks and, after the talks were stalled, negotiated an international (voluntary) agreement on reducing carbon emissions and raising funds to assist developing nations in offsetting carbon emissions (2009)
 - Banned importation of pythons in response to a growing population of pythons damaging the Florida Everglades (2009)
 - Committing the federal government to increasing research and use of renewable, clean energy sources such as wind, biomass, etc. (2009)
 - Executive orders establishing a federal initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all federal operations (2009-2011)
 - Called for exploring the possibility of additional off-shore oil drilling in the Gulf, Atlantic, and off Alaska (but not in ANWR) (2010)
 - Authorized use of funds for Deepwater Horizon oil spill from Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (June 15, 2010)
 - Signed North American Wetlands Conservation Act (March 25, 2010)
 - Agreed to consider increases in nuclear energy production and requested a study on the feasibility of nuclear power plant construction (2010) * *Note: Nearly all energy initiatives were defeated by Republican opposition in Congress*
 - Increased investment in clean energy projects (2010)
 - Executive Order to develop a new strategy for and commitment to ocean and lake resources, and for scientific research on water quality (2010)
 - Signed Asian Carp Prevention and Control Act (Dec 14, 2010)
 - Signed Truth in Fur Labeling Act (Dec 18, 2010)
 - Species protection measures for sharks and other animals (Jan 4, 2011)
 - Signed Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (Jan 4, 2011)

- Measures to reduce levels of lead in drinking water (Jan 4, 2011)
- Signed Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (Jan 4, 2011)
- Executive Order for an interagency effort on domestic energy sources (July 12, 2011)

ETHICS

- Ordered the White House and all federal agencies to respect the Freedom of Information Act and overturned Bush-era limits on accessibility of federal documents (Jan 2009)
- Instructed all federal agencies to promote openness and transparency as much as possible in the release and availability of government documents (Jan 21, 2009)
- Placed limits on lobbyists' access to the White House (Jan & Feb 2009)
- Placed limits on White House aides working for lobbyists after their tenure in the administration (Jan 21, 2009)
- Signed a measure strengthening registration and reporting requirements for lobbyists (2009)
- Ordered that lobbyists must be removed from and are no longer permitted to serve on federal and White House advisory panels and boards (2009) * *Note: After saying he would not hire lobbyists, a few have been hired in the Administration*
- Companies and individuals who are delinquent on their taxes or owe back taxes are no longer allowed to bid for federal contracts (2009)
- Established a special inspector general for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) (April 24, 2009)
- Enhanced the role and powers of the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (June 30, 2009)
- Signed the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act (May 20, 2009)
- Initiated the "e-Rulemaking Initiative" (in cooperation with Cornell University) to allow for online public "notice and comment" of federal laws and initiatives (2010)
- Issued the "Open Gov Directive" ordering all Cabinet departments to promote transparency and citizen participation in their policies (2010)
- Signed extensions on banning lobbyists from serving on agency boards (2010)
- Developed the "Do Not Pay List" with data on contractors and recipients of federal funds who are deemed to be ineligible because of fraud and abuse (2010)
- Signed the Anti-Border Corruption Act (Jan 4, 2011)
- Opened additional presidential records to the public (Jan 21, 2011)



FOREIGN POLICY

- Closed the Bush-era “secret detention” facilities in Eastern Europe (2009)
- Ended the Bush-era policy allowing “enhanced interrogation” (torture); the US is again in compliance with Geneva Convention standards (2009) * *Note: Obama has permitted some controversial interrogation techniques to continue*
- Restarted international nuclear non-proliferation talks and reestablished international nuclear inspection protocols (2009) * *Note: Bush withdrew from non-proliferation talks and dismantled the inspection infrastructure*
- Reengaged in the treaties/agreements to protect the Antarctic (2009) * *Note: These were suspended under Bush*
- Reengaged in the agreements/talks on global warming and greenhouse gas emissions (2009) * *Note: These were suspended under Bush*
- Visited more countries and met with more world leaders than any president in his first six months in office (2009)
- Banned the export of cluster bombs (2009)
- Overturned Bush-era plans to increase the US nuclear arsenal (2009)
- Authorized the Navy SEALs operation that freed by force the US shipping captain held by Somali pirates (2009)
- Restored the US commitment to the UN population fund for family planning; overturned the ban on providing funds internationally for family planning (2009) * *Note: The family planning efforts were suspended under Bush*
- Instituted a new policy on Cuba, allowing Cuban families to return “home” to visit families (2009)
- Extended an offer of engagement (free from sanctions and penalties) to Iran through December 31, 2009 (Iran did not accept the offer) (2009)
- Sent envoys to the Middle East and other parts of the world, reengaging in multilateral and bilateral talks and diplomacy (2009)

- Authorized discussions with North Korea and the private mission by former president, Bill Clinton, to secure the release of two Americans held in prisons (2009)
- Authorized discussions with Myanmar and the mission by Senator Jim Web to secure the release of an American held captive (2009)
- Renewed lucrative loan guarantees for Israel (2009-2011)
- Signed the USIFTA trade agreement with/for Israel, which offers Israeli products preferred status (2009-2011)
- Authorized a \$550m advance for Israel (six months prior to the scheduled date) in order to accommodate Israeli's economic and financial needs (2009)
- Continued agreements with Israel for cultural exchanges, immigration, commercial cooperation, security/military cooperation, counterterrorism supports, joint military exercises ("Juniper Cobra" in Oct 2009), etc. (2009-2011)
- Spoke on Arab television, spoke at an Egyptian university, and met with Arab leaders in an effort to change the tone of US-Arab relations (2009)
- Ordered the US to finally pay its dues to the United Nations (2009)
- Attended the Summit of America's meeting in Trinidad and Tobago (2010)
- Provided missile defense supports to Israel (2010); including \$205 million for Israel to develop short-range rocket defenses ("Iron Dome") (2010-2011)
- Dispatched several envoys and initiated talks with numerous nations (2010-2011)
- Signed a nuclear limitation treaty with Russia (2010) * *Note: The agreement calls for both countries to reduce their nucs by one-third (1,500) and launch systems by half (800)*
- Hosted nuclear non-proliferation summit for several nations (2010)
- Rejected international calls to condemn or use sanctions on Israel after the "Turkey flotilla" incident (2010)
- Executive Order to establish support offices in the State Department to assist the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan (2010)
- Issued memoranda to continue drug interdiction support with Columbia (2010)
- Secured largest "foreign military funding" allocation to Israel in history (2011)

- Proposed a two-state solution in Mideast based on the 1967 borders with clauses for either side to amend the borders (“Mutually agreed upon swaps”) and develop security arrangements, designed to move the process forward before the UN (in Sept 2011) proposes and votes on a Palestinian state (May 2011)
- Executive Order for additional sanctions on Iran (May 23, 2011); ditto with North Korea (April 18, 2011)
- Initiative to promote US exports (June 15, 2011)
- Executive Order imposing certain sanctions/transaction prohibitions on Syria (Aug 18, 2011)



GOVERNANCE

- The White House website now provides information on all economic stimulus projects and spending, along with an unprecedented amount of information on our government (2009)
- Ended the Bush-era practice of circumventing established FDA rules for political reasons (2009)
- Ended the Bush-era practice of having White House staff rewrite the findings of scientific and environmental regulations and reports when they disagreed with the results (2009)
- Limited the salaries of senior White House aides (salaries cut to \$100,000) (2009)
- Has been holding open meetings with Republican leaders, although they complain of a lack of access and information (2010)
- Signed the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act (2010) * *Note: To curb wasteful spending*
- Tasked federal agencies to develop plans for disposing of unneeded real estate and then to eliminate unnecessary or non-economical lands, properties, etc. (2010)
- Signed Fair Sentencing Act (Aug 3, 2010)
- Signed Federal Judiciary Administrative Improvements Act (May 27, 2010)
- Mandated federal agencies to write in “plain English” and documents be written in “plain writing” (Oct 13, 2010)
- Signed Access to Criminal History Records for State Sentencing Commission Act (Jan 4, 2011)
- Initiative to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of federal government (June 13, 2011)



HEALTHCARE

- Removed Bush-era restrictions on embryonic stem cell research (2009)
- Federal support for stem cell and new biomedical research (2009)
- Expanded the SCHIP program to cover health care for 4 million more children and signed Children's Health Insurance Reauthorization Act (Feb 4, 2009)
- Established an independent commission to make recommendations on slowing the costs of Medicare (2009)
- The First Family initiated several personal projects to promote healthy lifestyles, including planting a garden for the White House's vegetables and flowers, installing a swing set/ playground for the Obama daughters and children of White House employees, and promoting exercise and fitness for children (2009)
- Reversed some of the Bush-era restrictions that prevented Medicare from negotiating with pharmaceutical firms for cheaper drugs, allowing government to again competitively bid (2009)
- * Note: Obama had promised to lift all restrictions but, while he did negotiate with drug companies for them to lower their costs, the deal only lifted some restrictions*
- Expanding government vaccination programs (2009-2011)
- Issued new disease prevention guidelines and priorities for the CDC (2009)
- Authorized the FDA to finally begin regulating tobacco (2009)
- Tasked federal labs to prioritize research on and deployment of H1N1 vaccines (2009)
- Signed Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (June 22, 2009)
- Established a new council on National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health to be chaired by Surgeon General and charged with promoting healthy lifestyles and integrative healthcare (2010)
- Assisted Social Security recipients with claims; signed Social Security Disability Applicants' Access to Professional Representation Act (Feb 27, 2010)
- Signed Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act (Feb 27, 2010)
- When accusations to the contrary arose, an Executive Order was signed to reaffirm that federal funds are not to be used for abortion services (2010)

- Signed the Prevent All Cigarette Trafficking Act (March 31, 2010)
- Signed the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act (Oct 8, 2010)
- Signed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Dec 13, 2010)
- Signed the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act (Dec 22, 2010)
- Extended healthcare and compensation for 9/11 responders (Jan 2, 2011)
- Established National Alzheimer's Project (Jan 4, 2011)
- Signed a reauthorization of the Combatting Autism Act (Sept 20, 2011)
- Asked multiple congressional committees to bring forward a healthcare reform bill; held dozens of public hearings and town halls on the issue (2009-2010); signed Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (March 23, 2010); healthcare reform bill is \$940 billion over 10 years (2010) * Note: 32 million additional Americans will receive healthcare coverage and costs will be lowered for most Americans, but many of the goals are phased in over four years

Components of the bill:

- Prevents insurance companies from denying coverage to individuals/family members with pre-existing health conditions; a temporary plan is being developed to cover high-risk individuals with pre-existing conditions until the full reforms go into effect in 2014
- Prevents insurance companies from placing lifetime limits on benefits
- Bans "rescission" so insurance companies can't cancel coverage if individuals keep their policies current or if they become ill
- An individual's out-of-pocket healthcare expenses are capped
- Closes the "donut hole" (Part D) for Medicare prescription drug coverage (under Bush, Medicare helped pay for drugs up to \$2,600 and above \$4,550, but individuals had to pay 100% of the costs in between these amounts); now Medicare helps cover costs irrespective of the amount – seniors will now pay only 25% of drug costs up to \$4,550 and only 5% of drug costs above that amount
- In 2010, an emergency provision will offer seniors a \$250 rebate on the costs incurred within the "donut hole"
- Individuals living at or below the poverty line were eligible for healthcare under Medicaid, but by 2014 individuals/families living slightly above (making up to \$14,404/\$29,327) the poverty line will also be eligible for benefits
- Individuals/families making less than \$43,320/\$88,200 per year will qualify for government subsidies to help purchase health insurance
- All individuals must have health insurance or face a government fine; all large (over 50 employees) employers must offer health insurance to employees or pay a fine
- Small businesses can get a tax credit if they offer health care
- There are hardship exemptions if individuals can't afford health insurance
- Families can keep their children in college on their plans through age 26

- Promotes health insurance “exchanges” so consumers can buy “wholesale”
- Creates consumer assistance offices to help consumers file complaints or appeal decisions from insurance companies; beginning in 2011, insurance companies can no longer make excessive rate hikes without justification and approval, and those doing so may be barred from participating in new health insurance exchanges

Funding sources:

- Large employers (over 50 workers) that don't offer health benefits will be charged a \$2,000/worker fee; if the employer offers coverage but employees instead purchase federally subsidized insurance the fee is \$3,000/worker receiving federal subsidies or \$750/worker (whichever is lower)
- Annual fees on pharmaceutical companies (\$27 billion), health insurance companies (\$60 billion), and medical device-makers (\$20 billion)
- Annual penalties on individuals who do not have health insurance (up to a maximum of \$695/person)
- Increase in the Medicare payroll tax from 1.45% to 2.35% for individuals making \$200,000+ and families making \$250,000+
- 3.8% tax on unearned income for millionaires
- Insurance companies will be subject to a tax on each high-end insurance plan (so-called “Cadillac” plans) they offer

Miscellaneous:

- Illegal immigrants are not eligible for insurance or subsidies
- By Executive Order, such federal funding can't be used for abortion
- The federal government will assist states by covering all of the increased expenses of expanding Medicaid coverage (90% of costs after 2020)



IRAQ & AFGHANISTAN

- Began the phased withdrawal of US troops from Iraq (2009); fulfilled campaign promise to have combat troops (90,000) out of Iraq by August 31, 2010; over 100,000 combat troops withdrawn by late 2010; continuing the withdrawal (2011)
- Authorized the deployment of 17,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, which had been pending for months during the Bush Administration (2009); begin withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan (August 2011)
- Changed the US military command in the Afghan conflict (2009)
- Tasked the Pentagon to reorganize US policy in Afghanistan; the new policy included 30,000 additional troops deployed, priority training of Afghan forces, developing agriculture and infrastructure, limiting aerial bombing, etc. (2009-2010)
- Ordered the Pentagon to send additional helicopters to assist US Marine units and Special Forces in Afghanistan (2009)
- Increased unmanned drone strikes on Taliban and al-Qaeda targets in Afghanistan (2009-2011)
- Ended the Bush-era “stop-loss” policy that kept soldiers in Iraq/Afghanistan longer than their enlistment date (2009)
- Visited US soldiers in Afghanistan (2010)



MILITARY & VETERANS

- Ordered the Pentagon to cover expenses of families of fallen soldiers if they wish to be on site when the body arrives back in the US (2009)
- Ended the Bush-era “blackout” imposed on media coverage of the return of fallen US soldiers (2009) * *Note: The media is now permitted to cover the story pending adherence to respectful rules and with the approval of the fallen soldier’s family*
- Ended the Bush-era “black out” policy on media coverage of war casualties (2009) * *Note: Full information is now released for the first time in the War on Terror*
- Ordered better body armor to be procured for US troops (2009)
- Signed Korean War Veterans Recognition Act (July 27, 2009)
- Signed Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act (Oct 22, 2009)
- Funding new Mine Resistant Ambush Vehicles (2009) * *Note: The old Hummers were very vulnerable to roadside explosives and an alarming percentage of our soldiers lost in Iraq were on account of IEDs*
- Increasing pay and benefits for military personnel (2009-2010)
- Improving housing for military personnel (2009-2010)
- Signed Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act (Oct 22, 2009)
- Signed Military Spouses Residency Relief Act (Nov 11, 2009)
- Expanded veterans’ reimbursement for non-VA emergency care (2009 & 2010)
- Initiating a new policy to promote federal hiring of military spouses (2009-2010)
- Ordered that conditions at Walter Reed Military Hospital and other neglected military hospitals be improved (2009)
- Beginning the process of reforming and restructuring the military to a post-Cold War, modern fighting force (2009-2011) * *Note: Bush announced in 2001 his intention to do this but backed off the reforms after 9/11, which include: new procurement policies; increasing the size of Special Ops units; deploying new technologies; creating new cyber security units; etc.*
- Ended the Bush-era practice of awarding “no-bid” defense contracts (2009)
- Improving VA staffing, information systems, etc. (2009)

- Authorized construction of additional health centers to care for veterans (2009-2011)
- Suspended the Bush-era decision to purchase a fleet of Marine One helicopters from foreign suppliers in favor of American-made helicopters (2009)
- Ordered a review of the existing “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy on gays in the military (2010)
- Supports for blinded veterans (April 7, 2010); improvements in services for blind veterans; established Major Charles R. Soltes Blind Rehabilitation Center within the Department of Veterans Affairs (May 7, 2010)
- Increased cost-of-living adjustment and compensation for veterans (Sept 30, 2010)
- New GI Bill for returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan (2009-2011)
- Signed bill providing assistance for caregivers of veterans wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan (2010); signed Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act (April 23, 2010) * *Note: The omnibus bill does the following: Training, funding, and counseling for caregivers; promoting pilot childcare programs for women vets under treatment at the VA; independent oversight to prevent abuse; readjustment counseling for National Guard and reservist units; etc.*
- Eliminated co-payments for veterans who are catastrophically disabled (2010)
- Established enforcements for minimum essential care for veterans (May 27, 2010)
- Established a new interagency task force to assist veterans owning small businesses (2010) * *Note: The efforts include promoting federal contract opportunities, improve access to loans and capital, mentor assistance programs, etc.*
- Signed The Families of Fallen Heroes Act, which covers the moving costs of immediate family members of those lost in service (military, intelligence, and security personnel) (2010)
- Signed the For Vets Act (Dec 22, 2010)
- Measure to help prevent military families and vets from losing their homes (Dec 29, 2010)
- Proposal to offer tax breaks for businesses that hire unemployed Iraq/Afghanistan veterans; job training support for Iraq/Afghan vets (2011)
- Signed Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act (Aug 3, 2011)



NATIONAL SECURITY

- Phasing out the expensive F-22 war plane (which wasn't even used in Iraq/Afghanistan) and other outdated weapons systems (2009)
- Announced his intention to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay (2009) * *Note: The closure has been delayed due to opposition but it remains on the agenda.*
- Stated his interest in housing terrorists at a new federal "super max" facility in the US (2009) * *Note: this has been delayed due to opposition but it remains on the agenda*
- Cut the expensive Reagan-era missile defense program, saving \$1.4 billion in 2010 (2009)
- Cancelled plans to station anti-ballistic missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic (2009)
- Signed Weapons Systems Acquisition Reform Act (May 22, 2009)
- Replacing long-range, expensive missile systems with more efficient smaller systems (2009-2010)
- Increased US Navy patrols off the Somali coast in response to pirating (2009-2010)
- Established a new cyber security office and appointed a cyber security czar (2009)
- Ordered the first nation-wide comprehensive cyber threat assessment (2009)
- Signed a one-year extension on some provisions of the controversial PATRIOT Act (2009;and again on Feb 27, 2010 and May 26, 2011)
- Authorized the use of more unmanned warplanes/drones (Predator, Reaper, etc.) in the War on Terror (2009); eliminated more terrorist targets in same time period than the Bush Administration
- Instituted a new Nuclear Posture Review, revising US nuclear deterrence policy to encourage more nations to join the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (2010) * *Note: Components of the policy include: a pledge to stop nuclear testing; a pledge to not build a new generation of nucs; identifying nuclear terrorism, rather than a launch from another nuclear state, as the major threat; a pledge to not use nucs on a non-nuclear state in a conventional conflict; etc.*
- Signed Executive Orders to block payment, transfers, exports, etc... of individuals and organizations supporting the regimes of North Korea, Iran, Somali pirates, and other foreign threats (2010)

- Signed Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (July 1, 2010); signed related measures for sanctions and divestment Act to deal with other foreign regimes like North Korea (2010)
- Additional funds and supports for southwest border security (Aug 13, 2010)
- Signed First Responder Anti-Terrorism Training Resources Act (Sept 30, 2010)
- Presidential Memoranda to extend certain provisions of The Trading with Enemies Act which was to expire in September 2010 (2010) * *Note: This includes freezing assets and banning trade that benefits the Cuban regime; however further efforts at normalizing travel to Cuba are supported*
- Signed bill for southwest border security and increased funds and agents on the Mexican border (2010)
- Ordered another review of efforts to close Guantanamo Detention Facility (Jan 22, 2011); review of unlawful interrogations (Jan 22, 2011); review of Guantanamo detainees (March 7, 2011)
- Authorized bombing of military targets in Libya in support of rebels; support NATO mission against Qaddafi regime (winter 2011)
- Many terrorists and senior leaders of al-Qaeda and the Taliban have been killed on Obama's orders and on his watch (Osama bin Laden, Anwar al-Awlaki, Abus Hafs al-Shahri, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, Ammar al-Wa'ili, Abu Ali al-Harithi, Ali Saleh Farhan, Harun Fazul, Baitullah Mahsud, Noordin Muhammad Top, Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, Saleh al-Somali, Muhammad Haqqani, Qari Zafar, Hussein al-Yemeni Dulatin, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, Sheik Saeed al-Masri, Hamza al-Jawfi, etc.; many others were captured including Abdul Ghani Berader, Younis al-Mauritani, etc.)



RIGHTS

- Instituted enforcements for equal pay for women (Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act) (Jan 20, 2009)
- Appointed Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina, to the Supreme Court (2009)
- Held the first Seder in White House (2009)
- Appointed a diverse Cabinet and diverse White House staff (2009) (4 women, 2 Latinos, 4 African Americans, 3 Asians in Cabinet) **Note: Obama offered 3 Republicans Cabinet posts, but only 2 accepted*
- Signed Civil Rights History Project Act (May 12, 2009)
- Established protections and incentives for adopting children with special needs (May 15, 2009)
- Spoke at the annual dinner of the Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights organization (2009)
- Signed the first major piece of federal gay rights legislation that includes acts of violence against gays under the list of federal hate crimes (2009)
- Reversed the Bush-era practice of politicizing Justice Department investigations and prosecutions against political opponents (2009)
- Pushed for some of the 9/11 perpetrators to be tried in federal court (2009-2010) ** Note: The process moved at a snail's pace and, in the face of opposition, Obama has remained quiet*
- Signed an extension of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act to provide federal research and support for treating the disease (Oct. 30, 2009)
- Allowed the State Department to offer same-sex benefits for employees (2009)
- After eight years of neglect, the Justice Department and EEOC are again enforcing employment discrimination laws (2009)
- Convened the White House Tribal Nations Conference, inviting representatives from 564 federally-recognized Indian tribes (2009)
- Provided increased school projects for Indian lands and increased funds for the Indian Health Service (2009)
- Signed an Executive Order mandating that his Cabinet develop plans to work with and consult Indian tribes on issues impacting Indian lands (2009)
- Signed Human Rights Enforcement Act (Dec 22, 2009)

- Proposed that the Pentagon repeal the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy; placed a “freeze” on current efforts to remove alleged homosexuals from the military (2009); commissioned a study to develop alternatives to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (2010); signed Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act (Dec 22, 2010)
- Called for federal agencies to look into recognizing gay partnerships in terms of benefits (2010)
- Signed an Executive Order for the President’s Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (2010)
- Increased funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (2010)
- Signed Executive Order to promote the federal government as a “model employer” when it comes to hiring the disabled (2010) * *Note: This includes new efforts to increase the recruitment, hiring, and training for the disabled*
- Programs to assist Spanish speakers with the US Census (2010)
- Elena Kagen appointed to Supreme Court (2010)
- Tasked all federal agencies to develop new strategies to address HIV/AIDS (2010)
- Signed International Adoption Simplification Act (Nov 20, 2010)
- Signed Fair Sentencing Act (2010) * *Note: The Administration continues to deescalate marijuana interdiction and raids; increased dramatically the amount of cocaine one must possess to be sentenced to jail; eliminated mandatory sentencing for first-time drug abusers and simple possession*
- Signed Hoh Indian Tribe Safe Homelands Act (Dec 22, 2010)
- Additional supports for housing for the elderly (Jan 4, 2011)
- Executive Order for notification of employee rights under labor laws (Jan 30, 2011)

TAXES

- Negotiated a deal with Swiss banks to permit the US government to gain access to records of tax evaders and criminals (2009)
- Ended the Bush-era policy of offering tax benefits to corporations who outsource American jobs (2009) * *Note: The new policy promotes in-sourcing investments to bring jobs back to the US*
- Signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which provides small tax cuts for 95% of “working families” (2009) * *Note: The tax cuts were not as big as was suggested during the 2008 campaign*
- Convened an advisory board that is looking into simplifying the tax code (2009)
- Ordered the closing of offshore tax safe havens (for individual and business tax evaders) (2009)
- Reduced taxes for some small businesses to stimulate the economic recovery (2009)
- Extended the Home Buyers Credit for first-time home buyers (2009)
- Proposed doubling the child tax credit (2010)
- Called for the repeal of the capital gains tax for small businesses (2010)
- Proposed rolling back the 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans (2010) * *Note: This would be for families earning over \$250,000/year and would return their tax rates to the 1990’s level; however, the President backed off proposal in late 2011 because of Republican opposition*
- Proposed “Buffet Rule” which requires millionaires to pay a fair/minimum tax (Sept 2011)
**Note: Many take advantage of tax laws to pay less than or lower percentages than middle class Americans*



OTHER INITIATIVES

- New federal funding for science and research labs (2009)
- Signed national service legislation; expanded national youth service program (2009)
- Increasing opportunities in AmeriCorps program (2009)
- Signed Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (April 21, 2009)
- Ordered the DEA to stop raids on medical marijuana usage (2009)
- Ordered a review of existing “mandatory minimum” prison sentencing (2009)
- Signed an order to limit airport tarmac delays and the time passengers had to sit in the plane/on the tarmac during delays (2009)
- Restored the EPA to “Cabinet level” status (2009) * *Note: Bush removed the EPA from this status*
- Beginning discussions with Congress for comprehensive immigration reform (2010-2011) *
Note: Much of Obama’s immigration reform had been stalled by opposition in Congress
- Commissioned expert panels and reports from NASA; announced a new direction for human space flight that involves funding a new heavy lift-launcher and jettisoning the Ares 1 program; boosting NASA’s budget by \$1 billion in 2011 (2010)
- Signed a bill so that members of Congress would NOT receive a cost of living adjustment in FY 2011 (May 14, 2010)
- Signed Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act (May 17, 2010)
- Ordered a ban on text-messaging for all commercial truck and bus drivers (2010)
- Signed Special Agent Samuel Hicks Families of Fallen Heroes Act (June 8, 2010)
- Signed FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act (2010)
- Executive Order to seize transactions/property of criminal organizations (July 25, 2011)
- Signed Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Sept 20, 2011)



FACTOIDS & MISCONCEPTIONS

Online/talk radio claim: The Obamas demanded and spent more money than any first family to move into the White House.

Fact: The Obamas paid for the renovations of the private living quarters in the White House with their own money rather than using the funds provided to all new first families.

Online/talk radio claim: The Obamas are Muslims (some emails claim atheists) who did not allow Christmas to be celebrated in the White House.

Fact: The Obamas are Christian and celebrated Christmas in a very traditional way during each holiday season at the White House. They also recognized celebrations and customs from other religions. What was different about the Christmas celebration was that the Obamas reused many Christmas ornaments from previous White House trees rather than buy new ones and used LED energy-saving lights.

Online/talk radio claim: Obama received extra money as part of his Nobel Peace award and he pocketed it all.

Fact: Obama received the same award as other Nobel laureates, but donated the award money for the prize to several charities.

Online/talk radio claim: Obama has been secretive and unwilling to allow public or media access.

Fact: In only his first year in office, Obama held 23 town hall meetings, gave 158 interviews, and held 42 press/news conferences, as well as 411 speeches, comments, and remarks * *Note: Official numbers are not available on such things, but this seems to be a new record high in the White House*

Online/talk radio claim: Obama vacations more than any president.

Fact: In his first year in office, Obama took only 26 days of vacation (2009) * *Note: Official numbers are not readily available on such things, but this seems to be a new record low and far lower than Bush*

Online/talk radio claim: Obama was not born in America and is some sort of international “Manchurian” plant who supports other countries over America.

Fact: Obama was born in Hawaii in 1961. He has been an internationalist president insofar as he took 10 foreign trips to 21 nations and met with 74 foreign leaders in only his first year in office (he also took 46 out-of-town trips to 58 cities and 30 states in 2009).

Online/talk radio claim: Obama has not kept any of his campaign promises.

Fact: Official numbers are not kept on such things historically, but it appears Obama made more promises and discussed more policy issues during his campaign than any other presidential candidate. But, it also appears he has kept more promises than perhaps any other president. (As of 10/4/11) Obama has kept 147 of his campaign promises and another 197 of them are currently in progress; but he has broken 49 of them and compromised with Republicans on 44 of them; another 69 of his campaign promises have been stalled by Republicans. (Source: PolitiFact)

... and in case you were wondering

Obama promoted the celebration of the Reagan Centennial and established the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission (June 2, 2009)