



The Daily Dish

January 21st Edition

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Something interesting happened on the way to the State of the Union. In a “[rare moment of consensus](#),” the Senate voted 91-5 to approve the Portman-Shaheen amendment as part of the Keystone XL legislation. The energy efficiency amendment is budget neutral. [According to Senator Portman](#) the amendment is “...consistent again with this idea that we should produce more energy, have the infrastructure to bring the energy to the consumer and do it in a way where we are using the energy more efficiently.”

The president may have been touting rising wages during the State of the Union, but according to [Reuters](#), the “...data suggests actual wage increases are stuck in low gear.” Prior to the recession, wages were growing at more than 3 percent yearly, today workers are only seeing 2 percent growth.

If Congress is looking for a way to curb the administration’s break neck regulatory pace (\$181.5 billion just last year), they may want to consider the Congressional Review Act (CRA). [AAF Solutions](#) has the step-by-step guide on CRA and seven candidates for review.

Eakinomics: President Obama’s One-Sided SOTU Debate

President Obama has come to be recognized as someone who would rather win an argument than get a deal. This trait was on full display in last night’s [State of the Union](#) address (SOTU), a campaign-style event long on rhetoric. As expected, the president declared victory on the economy — “So the verdict is clear. Middle-class economics works.” — despite a recovery that has left labor force participation at 40 year lows, featured stagnant real wages, and has produced declining median household incomes. He lauded bipartisanship and invoked working “together” a handful of times — and issued a comparable (and perhaps [record](#)) number of veto threats.

At the heart of the economy message was a repetition of the president’s costly laundry list of taxpayer (meaning, affluent taxpayer) funded giveaways: “free” college tuition, cheaper mortgage insurance, a bigger government handout in the form of [tax credits](#) financed by raiding the inheritances of the next generation. The spirit of the proposals was summarized by the president in a revealing comment on Rebekah and Ben Erler, about which the president bemoaned “She and Ben are working as hard as ever, but have to forego vacations and a new car so they can pay off student loans and save for retirement.” Oh my! People have to give up something now to save for the future and have an obligation to pay off their debts. In the president’s middle-class economics, these bills should be paid by someone else. (The president wins the irony award for following this logic with the statement “Will we allow ourselves to be sorted into factions and turned against one another?—?or will we recapture the sense of common purpose that has always propelled America forward?”)

All of this is familiar, having been repeated at campaign stop after campaign stop since 2007.

There are three troubling realities that are left in the aftermath of the SOTU. First, the president’s view of middle-class economics is to give up on the [growth](#) that produced the middle class. The second is the absence of specific mentions of pressing legislative needs — silence on corporate tax reform, fixing the highway trust fund, paying Medicare doctors, or getting the federal debt under control. These difficult issues were brushed aside and

left for Congress to address. But the final is the most important: will the president's campaign-style approach be the death knell of real governance for the final two years of his term? Or will the White House now put the rhetoric behind it and turn to the unglamorous and hard work of passing legislation and running the government?

From the Forum

[The Congressional Review Act: A Primer and Regulations to Watch](#) by Sam Batkins, AAF Director of Regulatory Policy