

## January 16, 2017; Obama's Family Legacy

In just a few days, President Barrack Obama will surrender the reins of the presidency. Few presidents have worked so hard and tirelessly on behalf of all American families as has Obama. Although the relative success of the various programs he promoted will continue to be debated, the legacy of care for family life he leaves behind is indisputable and impressive.

First, he led by example. He was not only commander-in-chief, he was husband-in-chief and father-in-chief as well, exemplifying the finest attributes of both these roles.

He displayed great empathy for poorer Americans. Through sheer force of will, he shepherded passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) through Congress. The ACA has expanded medical coverage to an additional 20 million Americans who, before its passage, couldn't afford healthcare insurance. Under the ACA, parents can continue to include their children under their healthcare insurance policies up to the age of 26. Additionally, applicants can't be automatically declined medical insurance due to a preexisting medical condition.

Obama also addressed a dilemma facing many Americans. Unlike almost all other developed nations, the United States does not guarantee workers paid sick leave in times of need. As a consequence, an estimated 41 million workers face an untenable choice between receiving a paycheck or caring for themselves or for a loved-one when facing family or personal emergency.

Through executive action, Obama increased paid family leave for federal employees up to six weeks in instances of the birth or adoption of a child, for personal medical leave, or to care for an ailing relative. In addition, certain federal contract workers can also earn a minimum of seven paid sick days a year.

The president then implemented a campaign to encourage states, cities, and private employers to extend similar coverage to their workers. As a result, today five states, 26 cities, and numerous private companies have implemented paid sick leave policies.

In light of a growing disparity between rich and poor, Obama pushed hard to increase the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. These efforts were thwarted by Congressional inaction. In response, he shifted his focus and encouraged state and local governments to increase their minimum wages. These efforts have met with much greater success. As of October 2016, 29 states have a minimum wage higher than the federal minimum wage.

Social Security is a lifeline for older Americans. Obama has opposed privatizing Social Security. Privatization would force workers to invest in financial markets. As we saw in 2008, when the U.S. economy collapsed due to excessive

greed within the banking industry, the results could be catastrophic, leaving millions of aging Americans destitute.

The Obama administration helped tear down the discrimination barriers facing gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals, and fully threw his support behind the Supreme Court's ruling that state laws preventing same-sex marriages were unconstitutional.

There can be little doubt that a multitude of factors have been working against American families over the past several decades. The Obama administration prioritized reversing this negative trend. The results may not be perfect, but the effort should be acknowledged and appreciated.

Donald Trump has promised to be the workingman's president. Let's hope he's also the family man's and family woman's president as well.