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Mr Byron's AP Lang
State of the Union Address

Welcome Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, and my fellow Americans. It is my honor to stand here before you and address you on the state of our Union. I stand before you in a time of growth and recovery, as we pass by the recent turbulent years. After the government shutdown last year, we are all a little anxious about how our county is functioning. But we are doing well, and I intend to continue that recovery. We need to work together as a nation, and put aside our differences. With a little acceptance, with a little humility, and with a little bipartisan cooperation, we can overcome the challenges of society.

In this digital age, the backbone of our economy and society is the Internet. We are always connected, and the opportunities are endless. As I speak, there are millions watching this broadcast live, on their computers, tablets, and smart phones. Millions more will join them in the days to come, all watching and discussing online. They will share this State of the Union Address on social media sites, email it to coworkers, and share it with family. The platforms and websites our fellow Americans use drive our economy. Apple, Google, Facebook, and other companies are providing jobs and services to millions of Americans.

The critical role of the Internet in supporting and facilitating all that we do was painfully evident in the roll-out of HealthCare.gov. Poor function of the major government site designed to allow our citizens easy access to enroll in health insurance nearly resulted in the collapse of a program that took decades to come to fruition. But now that the site is running well, over nine million Americans who did not previously have a healthcare plan are now covered. That isn't even including the three million under

26 who are now covered by their parent's insurance. We are slowing bringing healthcare to all those who could previously not afford it with the help of the web.

Affordable, accessible healthcare makes the United States even more attractive to those seeking to better their situation by emigrating from countries with lesser developed infrastructure and family support. We have recently seen an increase in the amount of immigrants to America. There are over 40 million foreign-born persons living in the US, and more are coming every year. After the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln regarded immigration as "one of the principal replenishing streams...to repair the ravages of internal war and its wastes of national strength and health." Today, our new citizens can help breathe life into our society, bringing new and innovative ideas with them.

Our country has always valued its immigrants, who give America the diversity that it prides itself in. But we need to stop people coming into this country illegally, while at the same time provide more legal access for foreigners seeking to work hard and partake in the American dream. As former president Bill Clinton said, "We are a nation of immigrants. But we are also a nation of laws. It is wrong and ultimately self-defeating for a nation of immigrants to permit [this] kind of abuse of our immigration laws."

More border security and enforcement is one tactic to help achieve this goal. However, many people come temporarily on student and work visas and don't leave. Here, technology can assist us in assuring these people use the proper legal methods to stay in America. Regulating and maintaining legal immigration and identifying those who are in our country illegally is made easier and more efficient with the help of online data systems.

You may ask, "how are these people finding jobs and supporting their families in this economy?" Over the past four years, we have added over eight million jobs for all Americans. We are

adding more jobs every year as new companies emerge, and larger companies move manufacturing to American soil. Many of these are new businesses are budding tech startups, which bring new light and innovation to consumers. In all areas, our unemployment rate is lower than it has been in years.

Yet many of our workers are not making enough to support their families. A single parent working at minimum wage can't support a family. Thousands of parents must work two or three jobs just to keep the lights on, to keep the water flowing, to keep food on the table. We need to help these poor families by raising minimum wage. With higher pay, they can be better parents, better citizens, and better consumers.

Across the seas, we still have troops in Afghanistan. We have been fighting there too long, and it is time to take more steps toward pulling out. We want them home now. America already sends billions of US dollars to countries in the Middle East, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. We need to stop paying for it in American lives. We are already in the process of bringing our men and women home, and I plan for every last service member to be home by the end of the year.

While we are bringing our men and women home from Afghanistan, this in no way means we are letting our guard down against terrorism. We will continue to fight terrorism and other illegal activity on American soil. As terrorist networks evolve, they use darknet technology to anonymously communicate and collaborate. These untraceable web pages are used for human trafficking and drug trade and well as terrorist group organization. It is this small, dangerous corner of the web that we must learn to combat. While mostly untraceable, we can find new ways to take down malicious sites and prevent these crimes from happening. By keeping a close eye on suspicious users and known criminals, law enforcement can better locate and apprehend the offenders.

Yet while we keep tabs on criminals, it is important not to infringe on the privacy of the average

citizen. Wanton wiretapping, web data collecting, and phone tracking can not be allowed to continue. It is stated in the Bill of Rights that it is "the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." When our every online interaction is recorded and collected, our personal privacy rights are affected. We need to implement more measures to ensure that Americans have digital freedom without the fear of being watched.

It is that line between surveillance for national security and infringing constitutional rights that needs to be addressed. Our government needs to continue to evolve with the rapid expansion of this digital age. We can not continue to be obsessed with fear over potential abuses of this great resource. Efforts to regulate the web through bills like the Stop Online Piracy Act need to be based on a more nuanced understanding of the internet. There is a fine balance online between regulating copyright and infringing on free speech. Legislation put forth based on fear or special interests resulting in the taking down of harmless websites, censoring American's internet, and spying on our personal matters only serve to infringe on our freedom of speech and impair our online economy. Fortunately, our great democratic system allows for the American public to push back against these kinds of laws and protect their own rights. And it will continue to do so.

Thank you, and G-d bless America.