

9:26 am ET February 13, 2013

Fact Checking President Obama's 2013 State of the Union Address

Tuesday night, President Obama delivered his [State of the Union address](#), defending his record on jobs, touting the need for immigration reform, and urging Congress to act on climate change.

The Fox News Brainroom took a look at the president's claims and where he may have strayed from the facts.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: "After years of grueling recession, our businesses have created over 6 million new jobs."

THE FACTS: That's in the ballpark, as far as it goes. But Obama starts his count not when he took office, but from the point in his first term when job losses were the highest. In doing so, he ignores the 5 million or so jobs that were lost on his watch, up to that point.

Private sector jobs have grown by 6.1 million since February 2010. But since he became president, the gain is a more modest 1.9 million. And when losses in public sector employment are added to the mix, his overall jobs record is a gain of 1.2 million.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: "After shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have added about 500,000 jobs over the past three."

THE FACTS: Obama again is cherry-picking a jobs number. The low point for manufacturing jobs was reached in January 2010, and so there has been a gain of 500,000 jobs since then. But BLS data show that the number of manufacturing jobs is still 600,000 fewer than when Obama took office in the depths of the recession-and 1.8 million fewer than when the recession began in December, 2007.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: "We have doubled the distance our cars will go on a gallon of gas."

THE FACTS: Not so fast. That's expected to happen in 12 more years. Under a deal the Obama administration reached with automakers in 2011, vehicles will have a corporate average fuel economy of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025, twice the 27 miles per gallon, on average, that cars and trucks get today. Automobile manufacturers won't start making changes to achieve the new fuel economy standards until model year 2017. Not all cars will double their gas mileage, since the standard is based on an average of a manufacturers' fleet.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: "Already the Affordable Care Act is helping to reduce the growth of health care costs."

THE FACTS: The jury is still out on whether Obama's health care overhaul will reduce the growth of health care costs. It's true that cost increases have eased, but many experts say that's due to the sluggish economy, not to the health care law, whose main provisions are not yet fully in effect.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: "Real reform means establishing a responsible pathway to earned citizenship — a path that includes passing a background check, paying taxes and a meaningful penalty, learning English and going to the back of the line behind the folks trying to come here legally."

THE FACTS: The seemingly stern admonition that illegal immigrants must go to the back of the line, often heard from the president, doesn't appear to have much practical effect except in the most obvious sense. Everyone who joins a line, whether for a movie, a coffee or citizenship, starts at the back of that particular line. It's not clear he is saying anything more than that illegal immigrants won't get to cut in line for citizenship once they've obtained provisional legal status.

Like those living abroad who have applied to come to the U.S. legally, illegal immigrants who qualify for Obama's proposed path to citizenship will surely face long waits to be processed. But during that time, they are already in the U.S. and will get to stay, work and travel in the country under their new status as provisional immigrants, while those outside the U.S. simply have to wait.

Sending illegal immigrants to the "back of the line" is something of a distinction without a difference for some legal immigrants who dutifully followed all the rules before coming to the United States.

For instance, some legal immigrants who are in the U.S. on an employer-sponsored visa can't easily change jobs, or in some cases take a promotion, without jeopardizing their place in line to get a green card. In other cases, would-be legal immigrants in other countries wait for years to be able to settle in the U.S.

Obama is using "back of the line" somewhat figuratively, because there are multiple lines depending on the applicant's relationship with family already in the U.S. or with an employer.

Generally, a foreign-born spouse of a U.S. citizen or someone with needed skills and a job offer will be accepted more quickly than many others.

But even as a figurative point, his assertion may cloak the fact that people who came to the U.S. illegally and win provisional status have the great advantage over applicants abroad of already being where they all want to go.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: “We can build on the progress my administration has already made – putting more boots on the southern border than at any time in our history and reducing illegal crossings to their lowest levels in 40 years,” Obama said.

THE FACTS: Obama is right about the numbers, but it’s a stretch for him to suggest that his administration is the primary reason. The growth in agents began under President George W. Bush. And economic conditions in both the United States and Mexico tend to influence the number of crossings, as does crime.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: “Study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. ... And for poor kids who need help the most, this lack of access to preschool education can shadow them for the rest of their lives. ... Every dollar we invest in high-quality early education can save more than \$7 later on — by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing violent crime.”

THE FACTS: Dozens of studies have shown Head Start graduates are more likely to complete high school than their at-risk peers who don’t participate in the program. But a study last year by the Department of Health and Human Services that found big vocabulary and social development gains for at-risk students in pre-kindergarten programs also found those effects largely faded by the time pupils reached third grade. The report didn’t explain why the kids saw a drop-off in performance or predict how they would fare as they aged.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: “I urge this Congress to pursue a bipartisan, market-based solution to climate change, like the one John McCain and Joe Lieberman worked on together a few years ago. But if Congress won’t act soon to protect future generations, I will. I will direct my Cabinet to come up with executive actions we can take, now and in the future, to reduce pollution, prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change and speed the transition to more sustainable sources of energy.”

THE FACTS: Obama failed to get a global warming bill through Congress when both Houses were controlled by Democrats in 2010. With Republicans in control of the House, the chances of a bill to limit the gases blamed for global warming and to create a market for businesses to trade pollution credits are close to zero. The Obama administration has already acted to control

greenhouse gases through existing law. It has boosted fuel-efficiency standards and proposed rules to control heat-trapping emissions from new power plants. And while there are still other ways to address climate change without Congress, it's questionable regulation alone can achieve the reductions needed to start curbing global warming.

OBAMA: “We buy less foreign oil than we have in twenty [years].”

THE FACTS: This claim lacks context. The Energy Department has cited a host of reasons why foreign oil imports have declined, noting the main reason was “a significant contraction in consumption” because of the poor economy and changes in efficiency that began “two years before the 2008 crisis” – in other words, before Obama took office.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: “On Medicare, I’m prepared to enact reforms that will achieve the same amount of health care savings by the beginning of the next decade as the reforms proposed by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles commission.”

THE FACTS: This carefully crafted phrase recently earned the president a prized Geppetto Checkmark. Obama wants us to compare the savings in 2022. Granted, that would be six years after Obama’s second term ends. But administration officials argue that changes in health-care policies take time to achieve budget savings, and that the right mix can produce greater savings in the long run.

Using Congressional Budget Office estimates of the president’s budget, we see that over 10 years, Obama’s proposals would achieve \$337 billion from 2013 to 2022, compared to \$483 billion for Bowles-Simpson in the same time period. (Bowles-Simpson, or more accurately the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, is considered by many in Washington to be the model for a bipartisan approach for deficit reduction.)

However, in 2022, both would achieve exactly the same amount of savings – \$68 billion.

Administration officials say they believe their proposals would achieve greater savings than Bowles-Simpson after 2022, which would be consistent with the increase in savings toward the end of the first 10-year budget window.

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