

Top 50 Things Accomplished by President Barack Obama

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1. *Passed Health Care Reform:* After five presidents over a century failed to create universal health insurance, signed the Affordable Care Act (2010). It will cover 32 million uninsured Americans beginning in 2014 and mandates a suite of experimental measures to cut health care cost growth, the number one cause of America's long-term fiscal problems.
2. Passed the Stimulus: Signed \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009 to spur economic growth amid greatest recession since the Great Depression. Weeks after stimulus went into effect, unemployment claims began to subside. Twelve months later, the private sector began producing more jobs than it was losing, and it has continued to do so for twenty-three straight months, creating a total of nearly 3.7 million new private-sector jobs.
3. Passed Wall Street Reform: Signed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (2010) to re-regulate the financial sector after its practices caused the Great Recession. The new law tightens capital requirements on large banks and other financial institutions, requires derivatives to be sold on clearinghouses and exchanges, mandates that large banks provide "living wills" to avoid chaotic bankruptcies, limits their ability to trade with customers' money for their own profit, and creates the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (now headed by Richard Cordray) to crack down on abusive lending products and companies.
4. Ended the War in Iraq: Ordered all U.S. military forces out of the country. Last troops left on December 18, 2011.
5. *Began Drawdown of War in Afghanistan:* From a peak of 101,000 troops in June 2011, U.S. forces are now down to 91,000, with 23,000 slated to leave by the end of summer 2012. According to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, the combat mission there will be over by next year.
6. Eliminated Osama bin Laden: In 2011, ordered special forces raid of secret compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in which the terrorist leader was killed and a trove of al-Qaeda documents was discovered.
7. *Turned Around U.S. Auto Industry:* In 2009, injected \$62 billion in federal money (on top of \$13.4 billion in loans from the Bush administration) into ailing GM and Chrysler in return for equity stakes and agreements for massive restructuring. Since bottoming out in 2009, the auto industry has added more than 100,000 jobs. In 2011, the Big Three automakers all gained market share for the first time in two decades. The government expects to lose \$16 billion of its investment, less if the price of the GM stock it still owns increases.
8. Recapitalized Banks: In the midst of financial crisis, approved controversial Treasury Department plan to lure private capital into the country's largest banks via

“stress tests” of their balance sheets and a public-private fund to buy their “toxic” assets. Got banks back on their feet at essentially zero cost to the government.

9. *Repealed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”*: Ended 1990s-era restriction and formalized new policy allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military for the first time.

10. Toppled Moammar Gaddafi: In March 2011, joined a coalition of European and Arab governments in military action, including air power and naval blockade, against Gaddafi regime to defend Libyan civilians and support rebel troops. Gaddafi’s forty-two-year rule ended when the dictator was overthrown and killed by rebels on October 20, 2011. No American lives were lost.

11. Told Mubarak to Go: On February 1, 2011, publicly called on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to accept reform or step down, thus weakening the dictator’s position and putting America on the right side of the Arab Spring. Mubarak ended thirty-year rule when overthrown on February 11.

12. Reversed Bush Torture Policies: Two days after taking office, nullified Bush-era rulings that had allowed detainees in U.S. custody to undergo certain “enhanced” interrogation techniques considered inhumane under the Geneva Conventions. Also released the secret Bush legal rulings supporting the use of these techniques.

13. Improved America’s Image Abroad: With new policies, diplomacy, and rhetoric, reversed a sharp decline in world opinion toward the U.S. (and the corresponding loss of “soft power”) during the Bush years. From 2008 to 2011, favorable opinion toward the United States rose in ten of fifteen countries surveyed by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, with an average increase of 26 percent.

14. *Kicked Banks Out of Federal Student Loan Program, Expanded Pell Grant Spending*: As part of the 2010 health care reform bill, signed measure ending the wasteful decades-old practice of subsidizing banks to provide college loans. Starting July 2010 all students began getting their federal student loans directly from the federal government. Treasury will save \$67 billion over ten years, \$36 billion of which will go to expanding Pell Grants to lower-income students.

15. Created Race to the Top: With funds from stimulus, started \$4.35 billion program of competitive grants to encourage and reward states for education reform.

16. Boosted Fuel Efficiency Standards: Released new fuel efficiency standards in 2011 that will nearly double the fuel economy for cars and trucks by 2025.

17. *Coordinated International Response to Financial Crisis*: To keep world economy out of recession in 2009 and 2010, helped secure from G-20 nations more than \$500 billion for the IMF to provide lines of credit and other support to emerging market countries, which kept them liquid and avoided crises with their currencies.

18. *Passed Mini Stimuli*: To help families hurt by the recession and spur the economy as stimulus spending declined, signed series of measures (July 22, 2010; December 17, 2010; December 23, 2011) to extend unemployment insurance and cut payroll taxes.

19. Began Asia "Pivot": In 2011, reoriented American military and diplomatic priorities and focus from the Middle East and Europe to the Asian-Pacific region. Executed multipronged strategy of positively engaging China while reasserting U.S. leadership in the region by increasing American military presence and crafting new commercial, diplomatic, and military alliances with neighboring countries made uncomfortable by recent Chinese behavior.

20. *Increased Support for Veterans*: With so many soldiers coming home from Iraq and Iran with serious physical and mental health problems, yet facing long waits for services, increased 2010 Department of Veterans Affairs budget by 16 percent and 2011 budget by 10 percent. Also signed new GI bill offering \$78 billion in tuition assistance over a decade, and provided multiple tax credits to encourage businesses to hire veterans.

21. Tightened Sanctions on Iran: In effort to deter Iran's nuclear program, signed Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (2010) to punish firms and individuals who aid Iran's petroleum sector. In late 2011 and early 2012, coordinated with other major Western powers to impose sanctions aimed at Iran's banks and with Japan, South Korea, and China to shift their oil purchases away from Iran.

22. Created Conditions to Begin Closing Dirtiest Power Plants: New EPA restrictions on mercury and toxic pollution, issued in December 2011, likely to lead to the closing of between sixty-eight and 231 of the nation's oldest and dirtiest coal-fired power plants. Estimated cost to utilities: at least \$11 billion by 2016. Estimated health benefits: \$59 billion to \$140 billion. Will also significantly reduce carbon emissions and, with other regulations, comprises what's been called Obama's "stealth climate policy."

23. *Passed Credit Card Reforms*: Signed the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act (2009), which prohibits credit card companies from raising rates without advance notification, mandates a grace period on interest rate increases, and strictly limits overdraft and other fees.

24. *Eliminated Catch-22 in Pay Equality Laws: Signed Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009*, giving women who are paid less than men for the same work the right to sue their employers after they find out about the discrimination, even if that discrimination happened years ago. Under previous law, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, the statute of limitations on such suits ran out 180 days after the alleged discrimination occurred, even if the victims never knew about it.

25. Protected Two Liberal Seats on the U.S. Supreme Court: Nominated and obtained confirmation for Sonia Sotomayor, the first Hispanic and third woman to serve, in 2009; and Elena Kagan, the fourth woman to serve, in 2010. They replaced David Souter and John Paul Stevens, respectively.

26. *Improved Food Safety System*: In 2011, signed FDA Food Safety Modernization

Act, which boosts the Food and Drug Administration's budget by \$1.4 billion and expands its regulatory responsibilities to include increasing number of food inspections, issuing direct food recalls, and reviewing the current food safety practices of countries importing products into America.

27. Achieved New START Treaty: Signed with Russia (2010) and won ratification in Congress (2011) of treaty that limits each country to 1,550 strategic warheads (down from 2,200) and 700 launchers (down from more than 1,400), and reestablished and strengthened a monitoring and transparency program that had lapsed in 2009, through which each country can monitor the other.

28. Expanded National Service: Signed Serve America Act in 2009, which authorized a tripling of the size of AmeriCorps. Program grew 13 percent to 85,000 members across the country by 2012, when new House GOP majority refused to appropriate more funds for further expansion.

29. Expanded Wilderness and Watershed Protection: Signed Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (2009), which designated more than 2 million acres as wilderness, created thousands of miles of recreational and historic trails, and protected more than 1,000 miles of rivers.

30. Gave the FDA Power to Regulate Tobacco: Signed the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (2009). Nine years in the making and long resisted by the tobacco industry, the law mandates that tobacco manufacturers disclose all ingredients, obtain FDA approval for new tobacco products, and expand the size and prominence of cigarette warning labels, and bans the sale of misleadingly labeled "light" cigarette brands and tobacco sponsorship of entertainment events.

31. Pushed Federal Agencies to Be Green Leaders: Issued executive order in 2009 requiring all federal agencies to make plans to soften their environmental impacts by 2020. Goals include 30 percent reduction in fleet gasoline use, 26 percent boost in water efficiency, and sustainability requirements for 95 percent of all federal contracts. Because federal government is the country's single biggest purchaser of goods and services, likely to have ripple effects throughout the economy for years to come.

32. *Passed Fair Sentencing Act:* Signed 2010 legislation that reduces sentencing disparity between crack versus powder cocaine possession from 100 to 1 to 18 to 1.

33. Trimmed and Reoriented Missile Defense: *Cut the Reagan-era "Star Wars" missile defense budget, saving \$1.4 billion in 2010,* and canceled plans to station antiballistic missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic in favor of sea-based defense plan focused on Iran and North Korea.

34. *Began Post-Post-9/11 Military Builddown:* After winning agreement from congressional Republicans and Democrats in summer 2011 budget deal to reduce projected defense spending by \$450 billion, proposed new DoD budget this year with cuts of that size and a new national defense strategy that would shrink ground forces from 570,000 to 490,000 over the next ten years while increasing programs

in intelligence gathering and cyberwarfare.

35. *Let Space Shuttle Die and Killed Planned Moon Mission:* Allowed the expensive (\$1 billion per launch), badly designed, dangerous shuttle program to make its final launch on July 8, 2011. *Cut off funding for even more bloated and problem-plagued Bush-era Constellation program to build moon base in favor of support for private-sector low-earth orbit ventures, research on new rocket technologies for long-distance manned flight missions, and unmanned space exploration, including the largest interplanetary rover ever launched, which will investigate Mars's potential to support life.*

36. Invested Heavily in Renewable Technology: As part of the 2009 stimulus, invested \$90 billion, more than any previous administration, in research on smart grids, energy efficiency, electric cars, renewable electricity generation, cleaner coal, and biofuels.

37. Crafting Next-Generation School Tests: Devoted \$330 million in stimulus money to pay two consortia of states and universities to create competing versions of new K-12 student performance tests based on latest psychometric research. New tests could transform the learning environment in vast majority of public school classrooms beginning in 2014.

38. *Cracked Down on Bad For-Profit Colleges:* In effort to fight predatory practices of some for-profit colleges, Department of Education issued "gainful employment" regulations in 2011 cutting off commercially focused schools from federal student aid funding if more than 35 percent of former students aren't paying off their loans and/or if the average former student spends more than 12 percent of his or her total earnings servicing student loans.

39. *Improved School Nutrition:* In coordination with Michelle Obama, signed Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010 mandating \$4.5 billion spending boost and higher nutritional and health standards for school lunches. New rules based on the law, released in January, double the amount of fruits and vegetables and require only whole grains in food served to students.

40. *Expanded Hate Crimes Protections:* Signed Hate Crimes Prevention Act (2009), which expands existing hate crime protections to include crimes based on a victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability, in addition to race, color, religion, or national origin.

41. Avoided Scandal: As of November 2011, served longer than any president in decades without a scandal, as measured by the appearance of the word "scandal" (or lack thereof) on the front page of the *Washington Post*.

42. Brokered Agreement for Speedy Compensation to Victims of Gulf Oil Spill: Though lacking statutory power to compel British Petroleum to act, used moral authority of his office to convince oil company to agree in 2010 to a \$20 billion fund to compensate victims of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico; \$6.5 billion already paid out without lawsuits. By comparison, it took nearly two decades

for plaintiffs in the Exxon Valdez Alaska oil spill case to receive \$1.3 billion.

43. Created Recovery.gov: Web site run by independent board of inspectors general looking for fraud and abuse in stimulus spending, provides public with detailed information on every contract funded by \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Thanks partly to this transparency, board has uncovered very little fraud, and Web site has become national model: "The stimulus has done more to promote transparency at almost all levels of government than any piece of legislation in recent memory," reports *Governing* magazine.

44. Pushed Broadband Coverage: Proposed and obtained in 2011 Federal Communications Commission approval for a shift of \$8 billion in subsidies away from landlines and toward broadband Internet for lower-income rural families.

45. Expanded Health Coverage for Children: Signed 2009 Children's Health Insurance Authorization Act, which allows the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to cover health care for 4 million more children, paid for by a tax increase on tobacco products.

46. Recognized the Dangers of Carbon Dioxide: In 2009, EPA declared carbon dioxide a pollutant, allowing the agency to regulate its production.

47. Expanded Stem Cell Research: In 2009, eliminated the Bush-era restrictions on embryonic stem cell research, which shows promise in treating spinal injuries, among many other areas.

48. *Provided Payment to Wronged Minority Farmers: In 2009, signed Claims Resolution Act, which provided \$4.6 billion in funding for a legal settlement with black and Native American farmers who the government cheated out of loans and natural resource royalties in years past.*

49. Helped South Sudan Declare Independence: Helped South Sudan Declare Independence: Appointed two envoys to Sudan and personally attended a special UN meeting on the area. Through U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice, helped negotiate a peaceful split in 2011.

50. Killed the F-22: In 2009, ended further purchases of Lockheed Martin single-seat, twin-engine, fighter aircraft, which cost \$358 million apiece. Though the military had 187 built, the plane has never flown a single combat mission. Eliminating it saved \$4 billion.

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