



Despite GOP Gains, President Obama Speeds into the Home Stretch

JANUARY 2, 2015

Delivering his next to last State of the Union Address, President Obama touted economic and global accomplishments, promised to defend his landmark reforms, and called for bold new steps to boost the middle class. SSN scholars assess Obama's initiatives and explain how he is securing his legacy and setting agendas for the future.

[Watch Obama's State of the Union Address here.](#)

[State of the Union 2015: Obama Proposal Too Taxing for the GOP](#)

Brookings Blog, January 20, 2015

[Thomas E. Mann](#), the Brookings Institution

"Obama's bold call for taxing the super-wealthy to help the middle class lays the basis for "an altered public philosophy... and a Democratic Party willing and able to restore purpose and capacity to public service."

[What Can U.S. Presidents Accomplish in a Second Term?](#)

SSN Key Findings, February 2013

[Daniel Paul Franklin](#), Georgia State University

Drawing on his new book, [Pitiful Giants: Presidents in Their Final Terms](#) (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) Franklin argues that although the powers of second-term presidents are inevitably on the wane in many spheres, they still have many tools at their disposal to wield influence – including the threat of vetoes to bargain over legislation, the capacity to take international initiatives, and rule-making authority plus capacities for administrative action – such as action through the Environmental Protection Agency or setting new priorities for immigration enforcement. Last but not least, they can still use the White House as a “bully pulpit” to draw public attention to important national problems and priorities.

Free Community College Isn't a Joke for Families Who Spend Half Their Income to Send a Child

The Guardian, January 12, 2015

[Sara Goldrick-Rab](#), University of Wisconsin-Madison

One of the scholars who inspired President Obama's new initiative explains its origins and significance for boosting middle-class fortunes. See also the citations from [Donald Heller](#) of Michigan State University in a [recent Atlantic article](#) on "The Genius of Obama's Two-Year College Proposal," and from journalist Karen Weise in her [Bloomberg News report](#) on "How Obama Retooled a Republican Education Idea along Democratic Lines."

The U.S.-Venezuela-Cuba Triangle

The Conversation, January 7, 2015

[Jennifer Lynn McCoy](#), Georgia State University

McCoy dissects President Obama's new opening to Cuba and its consequences for evolving relationships among three nations.

You Can't Help Today's Middle Class with 1930s-Era Policies

The Washington Post, December 19, 2014

[Heather Boushey](#), Washington Center for Equitable Growth

New policies to support working families are central to President Obama's closing agenda. Along with many SSN experts, Boushey has helped to outline the policies we need now to support working women and their families. See the full set of ideas in [SSN's recent spotlight](#) on this topic.

The President's Executive Order: What Difference Will It Make for Immigrants?

The Conversation, November 21, 2014

[Helen Marrow](#), Tufts University, [Ben Railton](#), Fitchburg State University, and [Roberto Gonzales](#), Harvard Graduate School of Education

Three SSN scholars joined others in praising the President's executive action on immigration enforcement, which will modify an aggressive program of deportation and allow relatives of U.S. citizens and those who arrived in the country as minor children to stay with their families. But Obama's action is only the beginning, they stress, because executive actions can be reversed, and Congress along with future presidents must act to achieve comprehensive immigration reform including a path to citizenship for many undocumented residents.

In His Second Term, is Obama Weak or Strong?

The Hill, December 2, 2014

[Stuart Shapiro](#), Rutgers University

"A president ineligible to run for reelection is freer to focus on his policy preferences and his legacy. All presidents since FDR who have had a second term have also been confronted with a Congress where at least one house was controlled by the opposition party.... [making] legislative options harder and administrative ones more attractive...."

53 Historians Weigh in on Obama's Legacy

New York Magazine, January 11, 2015

[Theda Skocpol](#), Harvard University, and [Beverly Gage](#), Yale University

Two SSN scholars were asked by *New York Magazine* to assess President Obama's accomplishments and likely enduring legacies on a full range of domestic and international challenges.