



TELEMUNDO

**NOTICIAS TELEMUNDO
INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA
CORRESPONDENT: JOSE DIAZ-BALART
WASHINGTON D.C.
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*EXCERPTS OF THE INTERVIEW WILL AIR TODAY ON "NOTICIERO TELEMUNDO"
(6:30PM/5:30 C)*

*FULL VERSION WILL AIR ON "ENFOQUE CON JOSE DIAZ-BALAR" ON SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER, 22 (12PM/11AM C)*

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Thank you so much.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Your efforts to get Congress to strengthen the gun control laws failed earlier this year, after Newtown. And now we have a massacre couple of miles from here, 13 people dead, including the shooter. Are we condemned in this country to live in a country where massacres are just part and parcel of our daily existence?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Well, we don't have to be. And the overwhelming majority of the American people understand that there's some commonsense gun safety laws that we can put in place that-- could prevent some of

this-- tragedy from happening. It's not gonna prevent all violence, it's not gonna prevent all gun violence. But-- you know, initial reports indicate that-- this is an-- an individual who may have had some mental health problems.

The fact that-- we do not have a firm enough background-check system-- is something that makes us more vulnerable to these kinds of mass shootings. And, you know, the-- the-- I do get concerned that-- this becomes-- a ritual that we go through every three, four months, where we have these horrific mass shootings. Everybody expresses understandable horror. We all embrace the families and-- and obviously our-- our thoughts and prayers are with those families right now-- as they're absorbing this incredible loss.

And yet we're not willing to take some basic actions--

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

So what can we do?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

--that we know would make a difference.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Wh-- wh-- what could--

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Well, ultimately this is something that-- Congress is gonna have to act on. I have now in the wake of Newtown initiated a whole range of executive actions. We've put in place every executive action-- that-- I proposed right after Newtown happened.

So I've taken steps-- that are within my control. The next phase now is for Congress to go ahead-- and move. And, you know, this is an example of-- where what we've seen again and again on immigration reform, on gun control, on a commonsense budget.

You have a majority of the American people and even a large percentage of Republicans who are ready to move the country forward, and yet we keep on getting blocked. And-- it's-- a challenge that-- I'm com-- speaking out on, but ultimately we're also gonna meet pressure from the public to-- to see if we can change how they do business up there--

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

On the political front, is it bad timing to give a speech on the economy just-- hours after the shooting?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Well-- you know, keep in mind that I spoke directly to the shooting while it was taking-- while we were still gathering information. And-- I think that everybody understands that the minute something like this happens, I'm in touch with the F.B.I., I'm in touch with my national security

team, we're making sure that all the assets are out there-- for us to deal with this as well as we can.

On the other hand, what is also important to remember is-- is that-- Congress has a lot of work to do right now. We don't have a budget that's passed. We're hearing that-- a certain faction of Republicans, in the House of Representatives in particular-- are arguing f-- for government shutdown or-- even a default for the United States of America losing-- our financial credibility around the world-- if they don't get 100% of what they want.

And I think it's very important for us to understand the urgency that we need to see out of Congress to go ahead and keep this recovery going, put people back to work, make sure that-- we're building the middle class and providing ladders for people who are willing to work hard to get into the middle class.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

You've said if diplomacy fails in Syria, the U.S. is prepared to act. What do you base that on, when Congress seems unwilling to give you the authorization. American people overwhelmingly disagree with any military actions in Syria and there won't be anything written into any U.N. resolution authorizing the use of force. So what can the United States do?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Well, keep in mind-- that we just had a U.N. report come out yesterday, that essentially confirmed

everything that we've said. And during the course of the debate over the last week, week and a half, there were some who were wondering, well, how hard-- is the evidence, how credible. There were a number of-- allies in European countries who said, "We want to respect the U.N. process."

Well, the U.N. process has now-- played itself out, the investigators have unequivocally said that chemical weapons were used, and when you look at the details of-- the evidence they present-- it is inconceivable that anybody other than the regime used it. What that does I think is change the international dynamic. I think it changes international opinion on this issue. But I am also-- committed to saying, "Can we resolve this diplomatically?"

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

If it fails?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

And-- well, I-- you know, I'm not gonna-- I'm not gonna-- prejudge the situation. The good news is right now we've got-- a strong resolution that I think has been prepared not just by us, but also the French and the British on the Security Council. We're in negotiations with the Russians as we speak up in the United Nations. My goal consistently here has been to make sure that we get those chemical weapons out so that nobody can use them.

There's an underlying challenge that we've gotta deal with, which is that-- there's a civil war going on inside of Syria and we've got-- a murderous dictator-- who-- so far at least has resisted efforts

at a political settlement. So this will only be the first step, even if we get an agreement on chemical weapons. We still have a destabilizing situation there and we're gonna have to take action-- diplomatically, to try to resolve it. But I always preserve as commander in chief-- the possibility that if in fact-- U.S. interests-- are directly-- impacted, that—we've gotta-- we may end up having to do somethin'.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

If Assad does comply with the ban? Is it better for him to stay in power for the region and not risk chaos that has erupted in-- in Libya or in Egypt?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

I don't think that-- anybody in the world community-- should accept the notion that-- somebody who kills tens of thousands of his own people, including children, women, defenseless civilians-- is-- the preferable ruler of-- of any country. And-- I do continue to believe that it is in the interest, most importantly of the Syrian people, but also the region, if you have somebody other than Assad-- in that country.

Keep in mind that it's very hard to imagine that civil war dying down, if in fact Assad is still in power. And the question then becomes how do you transition him out in a way that does protect-- you know, religious minorities-- Alawites, cer-- Christians-- and also make sure that extremists aren't-- gaining ground inside of Syria. But-- you know, we're gonna take this a step at a time.

The first step right now is to make sure we can deal with the chemical weapons issue. The next step is to engage all the parties-- not just Syria itself, but those countries that have been supporting Syria, like Russia, to say-- "We need to bring an end to this."

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Iran's Supreme Leader said, today, that his country should embrace diplomacy over militarism. Is this the opening you've been looking for? Have there been exchanges in communications between the two governments?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

There have been some exchanges. I sent him a letter after his election indicating the U.S.'s interest in resolving this nuclear issue, in a way that would allow Iran to rejoin the international community. But it's gonna have to show the international community that it's not trying to weaponize nuclear power.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Is that your red line--

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

--and--

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

--in Iran?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

(LAUGH) The-- I-- I-- I think it's clear that-- Iran is under a whole host of international sanctions precisely because the entire international community believes that we can't see a nuclear arms race triggered in the most volatile part of the world. And-- there is an opportunity here for diplomacy.

I hope the Iranians take advantage of it. There are indications that Rouhani, the new president-- is somebody who is-- looking to-- open dialogue with-- the West and with the United States-- in a way that-- we haven't seen in the past. And so we should test it.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

There are 35 working days left in Congress this year. Is immigration reform dead for 2013?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

It shouldn't be. We've got-- a bill that passed with bipartisan support, strong bipartisan support in the Senate. You've got a president-- who says that this is a number-one priority and he can't wait to sign-- a comprehensive immigration reform bill. You've got the majority of the American public who are committed to-- immigration reform and support-- a pathway to citizenship for those who don't have it.

And the only thing that's holding it back right now is John Boehner calling it into the floor because we've got a majority of members of Congress, Democrats and some Republicans, in the House of Representatives, who would vote for it right now if it hits. So the-- the-- this is really a question that should be directed to Mr. John Boehner. What's stopping him from going ahead and calling that bill.

And, you know-- he shouldn't be afraid of majority opinion on this thing. You know-- if in fact the overwhelming majority of the American people think we need to do something on immigration. We've got a bipartisan bill. Why not-- go ahead and let it-- let it come to the floor of the House and-- and let's see what happens.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

If the House, let's say, passes piecemeal, let's say they pass a codification of deferred action, and then it passes a legalization of the undocumented with no special path to citizenship. Would you support that?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Well-- if in fact Speaker Boehner thinks that procedurally he has to jump through a series of hoops-- you know, I'm happy to let the House work its will as long as the bill that ends up on my desk speaks to the central issues that have to be resolved. We need to continue to-- make sure that our border security-- efforts are-- are sound.

We need to make sure that-- employers who are taking advantage of undocumented workers, that they are penalized. We've got to improve our legal immigration system so that people aren't waiting for years-- to get into the country when in fact-- they should-- we should welcome them.

And finally-- we should have a pathway to citizenship. And if those elements are-- contained in a bill, whether they come through the House a little bit at a time-- or they come in one fell swoop-- I-- you know, I'm less concerned about process, I'm more interested in making sure it gets done.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Last time we spoke, you said that you weren't king. You were president. There are only certain things you could do, you know, unilaterally. As time goes on, a thousand deportations on average a day. People are wondering, and our Twitter feeds and Facebook feeds, that's the question everybody asks. Won't you at least consider unilaterally freezing deportations for the parents of deferred action kids?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Yeah. Here-- here-- here's the problem that I have-- Jose, and I've-- I've said this consistently. My job in the executive (THROAT CLEARING) branch is first to be to carry out the laws that are passed. Congress-- has said, "Here's the law when it comes to those who are undocumented." And they allocate a whole bunch of money for enforcement. And-- what I have been able to do is to make a legal argument-- that I think is absolutely right, which is that given the resources we have, we can't do everything that Congress has asked (THROAT CLEARING) us to do.

What we can do is then carve out the DREAM Act-- folks saying, "Young people who have basically grown up here are-- Americans that we should welcome." We're not gonna-- have them operate under a cloud, under a shadow. But if we start broadening that, then essentially, I would be ignoring-- the law-- in a way that-- I think would be very difficult to defend legally.

So that's not an option. And-- and I'm-- I do-- get a little worried that-- you know, advocates of immigration reform-- start losing heart and immediately thinking, "Well-- yeah, somehow there's-- an out here, if Congress doesn't act, we-- we'll just have the president sign something and-- and-- and that'll take care of it and we won't have to worry about it."

What I've said is-- is that there's a path to get this done, and that's through Congress. And right now, everybody should be focused on making sure that that bill that's already passed out of the Senate hits the floor of-- the House of Representatives. It's not as if the votes are not there. The votes are there. The only thing that's preventing it is-- you know, that Speaker Boehner's decided that-- he doesn't wanna call it right now.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

The Affordable Care Act takes effect next month. The latest NBC *Wall Street Journal* poll shows Americans oppose it, believing it will produce damaging results. Fifty-two percent believe the law will raise their healthcare costs. Is everybody wrong?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Yes. (LAUGH) They are. I mean, the-- the-- let-- let's look at the facts. You know, already the Affordable Care Act is providing health insurance to young people who didn't have it before 'cause they could stay on their parents' plan. Already seniors are getting-- billions of dollars in discounts on their prescription drugs.

Already there are no lifetime limits, if you already have health insurance, so you-- you don't find yourself without care because of some fine print. Already insurance companies are rebating money back to folks because the law requires insurance companies to make sure that-- they spend the money on healthcare--

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Some rates are rising--in some places?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Well-- look, the-- what we've seen is-- is the-- the-- the-- lowest increase in healthcare costs in 50 years-- over the last several years. So there is no evidence at all that-- this is somehow-- making healthcare more expensive. There's a lot of evidence that it's helping to make it cheaper.

And on October 1st, everybody who's watching who does not have health insurance is gonna be able to go no Healthcare.gov and-- and-- and take a look at the-- plans that are now gonna be available, cheap, high quality healthcare that-- you can't-- that-- that-- that-- insurance companies

will not be able to prevent you from getting because-- in fact-- even if you have a preexisting condition, you're gonna be eligible.

And you'll get tax credits to help you pay for it. So-- overall-- the problem we have is-- is that over the last four years, billions of dollars have been spent-- misinforming people about what this law is about. All the horror stories that were talked about have not come true. And I think this is especially important for-- Latino community to-- to understand, because nobody is more likely to have health insurance than-- Latinos in this country.

And they stand to, for the first time, get affordable healthcare coverage that they can count on for themselves and their families. And-- and they don't have to take my word for it. They'll be able to go to-- a website or place a phone call. And they'll be able to look at the plans, how much they cost, the deal that they get for it, and-- choose one that's right for them. And-- and I think what people will find is, in fact, that-- it's-- an absolute good deal and they should take advantage of it.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

If I could just add to something, you said it's nine million Latinos--

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Absolutely.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

--that currently are uninsured, that would have access to insurance for the first time.

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

For the first time.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Nine million?

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

That is a lot of people. And, you know-- when you look at-- some states, like California, who are really movin' this forward, they've already started to estimate what their premiums are gonna be, people are-- p-- potentially are gonna be able to get health insurance for less than their cell phone bill. They'll have that security and that coverage.

There are other states, like Texas, where the-- governor has been resistant to fully implementing it. We're still gonna be working with mayors-- and-- local community organizations, to sign people up. We're optimistic that you're gonna see-- over the course of six months, because there'll be an open enrollment period for-- from October 1st all the way until March-- what you're gonna see is-- people seeing for themselves how they can benefit-- and have the kind of security for healthcare.

And by the way-- the kind of healthcare plans that are gonna be in these marketplaces that they can choose from, all of them are gonna provide preventive care. So if you're-- a young woman,

for example-- let's-- let's say a young mom-- under these insurance plans, contraception is free-- regular checkups are free.

The cost of-- the healthcare monthly-- will probably-- be-- pay for itself compared to the out-of-pocket costs that you're already spending. So it's gonna be a good deal. And-- we expect that-- once it's fully implemented, a year from now, two years from now, five years from now, people will look back and s-- will-- they'll be asking, "What was the argument about? Why is everybody fighting this so much?"

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED)

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

Muchas gracias. Great to see you.

JOSE DIAZ-BALART:

Thank you, sir.

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *