

One Hundred and Twelfth Congress

Jan. 5, 2011-Jan. 3, 2013

First Administration of Barack H. Obama

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Historical Background

On January 25, 2011, as President Barack H. Obama delivered his State of the Union Address, one member of the House, Arizona Rep. Gabby Giffords, lay in the hospital gravely wounded after having been shot in the head during an unsuccessful assassination attempt only days before. The incident unfolded on January 8, 2011, as Representative Giffords convened a town-hall style constituent event at a strip mall in Tucson, Arizona. Shortly after 10:00 am, Jared Lee Loughner, a 22-year-old college dropout with a history of behavioral and mental health difficulties, approached Giffords and abruptly shot her in the head before turning his weapon on others who had gathered for the event. Though the investigation into the assassination attempt would reveal that Loughner had expressed some generic anti-government sentiments in the past, he did not seem to subscribe to any formal ideology.

Even so, the incident drew attention to the increasingly virulent partisan atmosphere around the country. The political messaging employed by some on the political Right during the 2010 midterm election cycle came in for particular scrutiny, including a midterm election map used on the website of former Republican Governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin, which included gun sight crosshairs on Congressional districts, such as that of Representative Giffords, targeted for Republican victory. Representative Giffords herself, responding to interview questions during the campaign, warned of the risks of such tactics: "We're in the crosshairs of a gun sight over our district. When people do that, they've got to realize that there are consequences to that action." As the nation confronted this assault on the democratic process itself, policymakers from both parties proposed policy measures aimed at forestalling future events of this sort. These ranged from stronger gun control laws — including a ban on high-capacity magazines and a ban on gun ownership by any individual rejected from military service due to drug use — to a ban on carrying firearms within 300 meters of certain Federal officials



Barack H. Obama
President of the United States

President Barack H.
Obama

House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (241 seats)	Majority Party: Democrat (51 seats)
Minority Party: Democrat (192 seats)	Minority Party: Republican (47 seats)
Other Parties 0 Note: 2 Vacancies	Other Parties 1 Independent; 1 Independent Democrat
Speaker of the House: John Boehner	Majority Leader: Harry M. Reid

deemed sufficiently important. As in similar circumstances in the past, however, the issue of gun control proved to be too politically charged to generate the sort of political energy required for substantive reform.

Meanwhile, events were unfolding at a blinding pace in Tunisia, Egypt, and other countries in the Arab world. Beginning on December 17, 2010, in protest against economic stagnation and corruption in Tunisia, first thousands and finally millions of ordinary Arabs took to the streets of Tunis, Cairo, Tripoli, Damascus, Manama, and elsewhere, to oppose the legacy of political repression, corruption and economic stagnation that were the fruit of decades of autocratic rule across the Arab world.

In Tunisia, where the wave of unrest originated, events unfolded at a blinding pace. The protests began in the town of Sidi Bouzid, roughly 300 km south of the capital Tunis, when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight outside the provincial headquarters in town after having the contents of his cart confiscated by local officials. Reports and images of police officials obstructing demonstrators in Sidi Bouzid began to appear on social media, sparking sympathetic demonstrations in the capital beginning on December 27th. As the unrest continued to spread, longtime Tunisian dictator Zine el Abidine Ben Ali paid a visit to Bouazizi, who had been moved to a hospital in Tunis, on December 28th. The unrest continued to spread, as did reports and images of Tunisian security officials responding to protesters with violence. On January 4th, Mohamed Bouaziz succumbed to his injuries. Meanwhile, President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, who had initially responded to the unrest by characterizing the protesters as extremists who were under the influence of antagonistic foreign powers, made a series of reforms to his administration in a last-ditch attempt to stave off his imminent political downfall. However, the measures were considered inefficient by the Tunisian populace after nearly 25 years with President Ben Ali at the helm of the Tunisian state.

On January 14, 2011, Ben Ali dissolved his government and declared a state of emergency, calling for elections to choose a new president within six months. Ben Ali then fled the country, heading first for Malta, and finally landing in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, after France rejected his request that he be allowed to alight there. Elections were held to elect an interim government and a Constituent Assembly was charged with drafting a new constitution. That document was produced, with some difficulty, and elections were held in 2014 according to the terms of the new constitution, thereby completing Tunisia's transition to a democratically accountable government.

The revolt in Tunisia would spark other similar protests and revolutions across the Arab world, beginning what would become known as the Arab Spring. Within days of Tunisian President Ben Ali's flight from Tunisia, students and other youth groups in Egypt planned a series of protests around the country to coincide with observances of National Police Day. The choice of date was significant as the grievances cited by participants in the national day of protests were largely related to political repression, police brutality, and abuse of power. The protests, which were largely



Senate Majority Leader
Harry M. Reid



Speaker of the House
John Boehner

organized and promoted using social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, began in Tahrir Square in Cairo and quickly spread to sites around the country. As tensions mounted, longtime Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak made a series of televised speeches during which he pledged a number of concessions, including calling for new national elections in September, and a pledge that he would not seek reelection. Here, too, the President's concessions were judged too little, too late, and on February 11, 2011, Egyptian Vice President Omar Suleiman announced in a televised address that President Hosni Mubarak had resigned.

With the Tunisian and Egyptian successes through mass citizen action and the fall of extremely deeply-ensconced, anti-democratic Arab regimes in a matter of weeks, the coming months would see analogous protests crop up in cities throughout the Arab world. In February 2011, protests against the regime of longtime Libyan dictator Colonel Muammar Qaddafi broke out in the city of Benghazi. In March, protests began in the Syrian capital Damascus against the government of Bashar al Assad. In Yemen, what began as relatively quiet protests against proposed changes to the Yemeni constitution in the days immediately following the ouster of Tunisian President Ben Ali, morphed into broad-scale demonstrations calling for the removal of longtime Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. While in Tunisia and Egypt the government largely refrained from responding to the protests with violence (though there were some reports of government sanctioned gangs paid to beat up protesters in Egypt), in Syria, Yemen, and Libya government leaders would take more radical and violent actions in an attempt to thwart the protests.

On Friday, March 11, 2011, an earthquake measuring 9.0-9.1 on the moment magnitude scale struck off the east coast of Japan. The quake triggered Japan's tsunami warning system, with the strongest possible warning. Within an hour of the quake, a tsunami was seen flooding the nearby Sendai Airport. The tsunami flooded several major coastal cities with waves reaching over three meters in height, though the tsunami itself measured as high as 15 meters. Less than an hour after the quake, the facilities at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in nearby Fukushima Prefecture began to experience flooding, which disabled the facility's backup power generation systems. Overheating in the reactors in Units 1, 2, and 3 triggered a reaction that produced hydrogen gas, causing multiple explosions beginning with Unit 1 on March 12th, followed by Unit 3 on March 14th and Unit 4 the next day. These, in turn, led to core meltdowns in Units 1, 2, and 3.

On the evening of May 1, 2011, President Barack H. Obama addressed the American people from the White House. The President reported: "Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden." The news put the capstone on an important aspect of the global war on terror initiated in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, almost a decade earlier. The al Qaeda leader was found to be hiding in a compound in the Pakistani garrison city of Abbottabad, just over a mile down the road from

that country's premier military academy, analogous to the United States's West Point. The assassination was carried out via a high-risk raid deep into the sovereign territory of an ostensible ally, who was otherwise not informed about the pending raid. Though largely celebrated at home, the incident brought fresh questions about the level of good faith that remained in the relationship between the United States and Pakistan, erstwhile allies that increasingly had found themselves at cross purposes. Of immediate concern was the question of whether a high-profile fugitive such as Osama bin Laden could hide out so close to the headquarters of Pakistan's powerful security forces without their knowledge, to say nothing of participation. Here, too, the fact that the U.S. carried out such a bold violation of an ally's sovereignty without informing them ahead of time, suggested that there was little trust left in the relationship.

The 112th Congress, which convened under a pall of tragedy as one of its members languished in critical condition, the victim of gun violence, would draw to a close in the shadow of yet another mass shooting. On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, a 20-year old resident of Sandy Hook, Connecticut with a history of developmental and mental health challenges, walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and opened fire, killing 20 students, many of whom were in kindergarten or first grade, and six staff members before turning his gun on himself. The investigation that followed determined that Lanza had also killed his mother at home, execution style, prior to advancing on the school. This unspeakable tragedy generated near-universal condemnation in the immediate aftermath, though political disputes in the country meant that the solidarity generated by the incident would be necessarily short-lived. Efforts to increase restrictions on gun ownership and Federal rules barring firearms from school grounds met with immediate and fierce opposition by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and its supporters in government.

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War or Peace?

Military Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan

At the beginning of 2011 as the United States began to prepare for its scheduled drawdown from Afghanistan and ultimate departure in 2014, concerns persisted about the ability of the Afghan government to assume control over the security situation nationwide. In addition, there were concerns over the Afghans' ability to maintain the operation of government and curb the widespread corruption that had gripped the country since the Taliban regime was toppled in late-2001. At the same time, militants in the country saw the impending drawdown of the U.S. military presence in the country as a prime opportunity to reassert themselves against a government viewed as weak and easily corruptible. That June, President Barack H. Obama announced the withdrawal of 10,000 troops from Afghanistan by year's end, with a further 20,000+ scheduled to return by the following summer. In response, several NATO allies, including Canada, France, and the United Kingdom, announced similar timelines for the partial or complete withdrawal of their troops.

In Iraq, President Obama faced a difficult decision as to the issue of Iraqi readiness to assume control of all aspects of governance, including security, in the face of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed by President George W. Bush and his Iraqi counterparts in 2008, which called for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq by December 31, 2011. Though serious questions remained about the ability of the Iraqi government and President Nouri al-Maliki to assume full control of security operations in the country, there was pressure in Iraq for the occupation to end. In this environment, negotiations about the possibility of maintaining some continued U.S. military presence in the country beyond 2011 stalled over the issue of granting U.S. military personnel immunity from prosecution in Iraqi courts. On December 15, 2011, some two weeks ahead of the December 31 deadline, a ceremony was held in Baghdad bringing a formal end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Arab Spring in Libya

In late-February and early-March 2011, following weeks of widespread unrest in the Arab world which saw the toppling of regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, the global community watched as mass protests continued across Libya. As reports began to surface of the regime of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi launching air strikes against protesters in Libyan cities, on March 17th the United Nations Security Council adopted UN Security Council Resolution 1973, calling for an immediate cease-fire and authorizing the

establishment of a no-fly zone in Libya. That same day, a military intervention by the governments of the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada, Belgium, and others began, with a focus on destroying Libyan government air defense and other military sites, thereby taking out the government's ability to fire on its own citizens, and enforcing a naval blockade and no-fly zone over much of the country. As the operation grew and more countries contributed, NATO assumed control of the operation. The NATO campaign had an immediate effect on the government's ability to retain control and city after city fell under opposition control. That June, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Qaddafi and his son, Seif el-Islam Qaddafi, for crimes against humanity. With fewer options available to find safe harbor, Qaddafi was ultimately captured by rebels in Misurata. Mobile phone video of his capture showed him being beaten by his captors and dragged from a truck, before being transported to a hospital, where he was declared dead.

The evidence of the gruesome end met by Qaddafi at the hands of rebels purported to be U.S. allies called into question the level of due diligence completed on the motivations, aims, and allegiances of the various rebel factions. U.S. policy in Libya would receive a further blow on September 11, 2012, when armed attackers swarmed the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, where the U.S. Ambassador to the country, J. Christopher Stevens was holed-up with what proved to be an insufficient CIA and military security contingent. Stevens and three other U.S. personnel would be killed in the attack, which, in the immediate aftermath, was reported as the result of spontaneous demonstrations against a U.S. produced film deemed offensive to Muslims and the Islamic prophet Muhammad, though further investigation would confirm that the attack was a pre-meditated terrorist attack against the consulate and the Ambassador. In the investigations that followed, questions would be raised over the security arrangements approved by the State Department under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and what some interpreted as her attempt to cover up mismanagement of the affair by blaming it on spontaneous protests.

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Economic Trends and Conditions

At a February 3rd hearing before the Senate Budget Committee, Senator Kent Conrad stated that while the Federal response to the recession and the financial crisis succeeded in pulling the economy “back from the brink,” it was clear that the economy was growing at a much slower pace than hoped. Even after 12 consecutive months of private sector job growth, the unemployment rate still fluctuated above 9%. The rate of long term-unemployment stood at 4.2%. One out of five home mortgage loans had a balance greater than the value of the mortgaged property and one of about eight mortgages was delinquent or in foreclosure. Home prices had fallen 31% from their peak in 2006. Many State and local governments faced burgeoning debt and fiscal crisis.

Even as the Congress and the Obama Administration looked for ways to address the slower-than-hoped-for economic recovery, a fiscal crisis loomed during the early months of the 112th Congress. According to most estimates, unless Congress acted to raise the Federal debt ceiling, the Treasury would run out of funds to meet its obligations by roughly August 15, 2011. Congressional Republican leaders vowed, however, that they would not vote to raise the debt ceiling unless and until equal cuts were made in the Federal budget. If Congress failed to raise the debt ceiling in time, the Treasury would be forced to default on one or another of the Federal government’s obligations, causing an international financial crisis. The dispute caused great uncertainty among investors, with stock market fluctuations showing particular volatility and the credit rating agency Standard & Poor’s downgrading U.S. debt for the first time in its history. Negotiations between the Obama Administration and Republican leaders in Congress continued throughout the summer before finally reaching a breakthrough announced on July 31, 2011. The agreement, which took the Act of 2011, enacted August 2, articulated a complex arrangement in which failure to reach an agreement on spending cuts would trigger substantial automatic budget cuts known as sequestration. Republican Speaker of the House, John Boehner, announced it to members of his party, highlighting that the deal requires more spending cuts than it allows new debt authorizations.

Occupy Wall Street

Responding to a call put out by the Canadian magazine and anti-consumerist organ *Adbusters* and inspired by the Arab Spring actions unfolding in the Middle East, thousands of activists began to gather in Manhattan’s Zucotti Park near Wall Street on September 17, 2011, to protest the influence of money and big business in politics and the lack of consequences for those whose actions which sparked the financial crisis in 2008 and the long recession that followed it. The so-called Occupy Wall Street movement tapped into the anxieties and outrage of millions around the world, with numerous sister demonstrations popping up in U.S. cities such as Boston and Chicago, and worldwide. The New York City demonstration, which was effectively ended when the city opted to close the park overnight on November 15, 2011, was informed by a sense that ordinary people end up bearing the costs of financial upheavals such as the financial crisis on 2008. But while the

movement gained a wide media coverage and high-profile support, the Occupy Wall Street movement, produced very little in terms of a political program or legislative legacy.

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Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran v. EEOC, holding that Federal discrimination statutes do not apply to a religious organization's selection of religious leaders, [565 U.S. 171](#) (2011)

United States v. Jones, holding that the installation of a global positioning device on a vehicle and using it to track the vehicles movements constitutes a search under the Fourth Amendment, [565 U.S. 400](#) (2011)

Zivotofsky v. Clinton, holding that the regulation of passports was not a political question and therefore is resolvable by the courts. The case concerned a passport holder whose passport listed "Jerusalem" as the place of birth and wished to have the passport read "Jerusalem, Israel" as the place of birth in contradiction of the State Department's policy of not taking a stance on the final political disposition of Jerusalem, [566 U.S.](#) (2011)

Missouri v. Frye, holding that under the Sixth Amendment, defense counsel must communicate any formal plea offers to their clients, [566 U.S. 134](#) (2011)

Florence v. Board of Chosen Freeholders of Burlington County, N.J., holding that law enforcement officials may require individuals detained for suspicion of a crime to be strip-searched prior to admitting them to jail, even if they have no suspicion that the individual is carrying contraband, [566 U.S. 318](#) (2011)

Arizona v. U. S., holding that certain sections of an Arizona law granting greater authority to local law enforcement official to enforce immigration law are superseded by Federal law but that the remaining provisions of the law could stand, [567 U.S. 387](#) (2011)

National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) v. Florida, Florida v. DHHS (3 Obamacare cases), ruling in three cases challenging the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, holding that the major provisions of the Act, including the individual mandate to purchase health insurance, were Constitutional exercises of the Congress's authority, [567 U.S. 519](#) (2011)

United States v. Alvarez, holding that the provision of the Stolen Valor Act that criminalized false statements regarding having earned a military decoration violated the First Amendment's speech protections, [567 U.S. 709](#) (2011)

Clapper v. Amnesty International USA, holding that Amnesty International and others did not have standing to challenge section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, [568 U.S. 398](#) (2012)

Florida v. Jardines, holding that police use of a trained detection dog to sniff the front porch of a private home constitutes a search under the Fourth Amendment, [569 U.S. ___](#) (2012)

Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum, holding that the Alien Tort Claims Act presumptively does not apply extraterritorially, [569 U.S. ___](#) (2012)

Agency for International Development v. Alliance for Open Society, holding that a provision of a Federal law that requires recipients of grants to help fight AIDS must have a policy explicitly opposing sex work violates the First Amendment's speech protections, [570 U.S. ___](#) (2012)

Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, holding that a lower court upholding the University of Texas's use of affirmative action in their admissions policy failed to apply strict scrutiny and remanded the case to the lower court, [570 U.S. ___](#) (2012)

Hollingsworth v. Perry, upholding a lower court decision overturning California's Proposition 8 ballot initiative, which defined marriage as a union between one man and one women, on the grounds that it violates the Equal Protection provisions of the Constitution, on the grounds that the sponsors of the ballot measure do not have standing to challenge the ruling though the State of California declined to defend the law, [570 U.S. ___](#) (2012)

2011 Events

- **Jan. 4:** *Arab Spring* – [Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi dies after setting himself alight to protest government corruption, setting off the series of street protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and other countries that would come to be called the “Arab Spring”](#)
- **Jan. 8:** [Representative Gabrielle Giffords is gravely wounded in an assassination attempt in Tucson, Ariz.](#)

- **Jan. 9-15:** [The people of Southern Sudan vote in a plebiscite on the question of independence from Sudan, ultimately voting to secede, forming the Republic of South Sudan, with its capital in Juba](#)
- **Jan. 14:** *Arab Spring* – [Tunisian President Zine Abidine Ben Ali resigns following widespread public demonstrations](#)
- **Jan. 25:** *Arab Spring* – [Street demonstrations, rallies, and civil disobedience result in violent clashes across major Egyptian cities](#)
- **Feb. 11:** *Arab Spring* – [Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigns following widespread demonstrations](#)
- **Feb. 15-Oct. 23:** *Arab Spring* – [Street protests in the Libyan city of Benghazi against the government of Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi mark the beginning of the First Libyan Civil War](#)
- **Mar. 6:** *Arab Spring* – [15 youths in the Syrian city of Daraa are arrested for scrawling anti-government graffiti on their school, sparking street protests against the government across Syria and beginning the Syrian Civil War](#)
- **Mar. 11:** [9.0 Tōhoku earthquake south of Japan triggers tsunami waves reaching a height of up to 133 ft, resulting in 15,894 casualties](#)
- **Mar. 12:** [Damage from the previous day's tsunami leads to the nuclear meltdown of three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant releasing radioactivity into the atmosphere – the most significant nuclear disaster since Chernobyl](#)
- **Mar. 19:** [U.S. and allies begin military actions against Libya following UN Security Council vote to create a no-fly zone over Libya](#)
- **Apr. 27:** To dispel accusations of not being born in the U.S., President Obama releases a copy of his birth certificate
- **May 1:** U.S. President Barack H. Obama announces that Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed in a special forces operation in the Pakistani garrison city of Abbottabad
- **May 16:** [Space shuttle Endeavour launches on its final mission in space](#)
- **July 9:** [South Sudan gains independence from Sudan](#)
- **July 21:** [NASA's Space Shuttle program ends with the return of Space Shuttle Atlantis from its last mission](#)
- **July 22:** [Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian white nationalist, kills eight in a bomb blast targeting government buildings in the Norwegian capital Oslo, and an additional 69 when he opens fire on a Workers' Youth League camp on the island of Utøya](#)
- **Aug. 23:** *Arab Spring* – [Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi is overthrown during the Libyan Civil War](#)
- **Sept. 17:** [Occupy Wall Street movement begins in New York City in protest of extreme economic inequality in the U.S.](#)
- **Sept. 20:** [The U.S. ends its "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in the military, allowing gay men and women to serve openly for the first time](#)
- **Oct. 20:** *Arab Spring* – [Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi is killed by his captors in the Libyan city of Sirte](#)
- **Oct. 31:** World population reaches 7 billions

- **Nov. 23:** *Arab Spring* – [After 11 months of protests in Yemen, President Ali Abdullah Saleh transfers power to the Vice President in exchange for legal immunity](#)
- **Nov. 26:** NATO forces in Afghanistan attack a Pakistani checkpoint killing 24 soldiers
- **Dec. 18:** [The last U.S. troops withdraw from Iraq](#)

2012 Events

- **Jan. 18:** [Italian cruise liner Costa Concordia runs aground in Italy resulting 32 deaths](#)
- **Jan. 23:** [The European Union votes to adopt an embargo against Iran in response to its continuing efforts to enrich uranium](#)
- **Feb. 2-8:** Over 400 people die during a cold snap occurring across Europe
- **Feb. 17:** German Chancellor Christian Wulff resigns over a corruption scandal
- **Feb. 27:** [Wikileaks begins disclosing 5 million emails from private intelligence company Stratfor](#)
- **Mar. 1:** Euro Zone unemployment reaches historical high of 10.7%
- **Mar. 4:** [Vladimir Putin wins Russian presidential election amid allegations of voter fraud](#)
- **Mar. 8:** [Greece secures debt-restructuring deal with private lenders](#)
- **Mar. 10:** [Rockets are fired from the Hamas-administered Gaza Strip into Israel](#)
- **Mar. 21:** Greek Parliament votes in favor of an international bailout deal
- **Mar. 22:** [Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré is ousted in a coup orchestrated by mutinous soldiers](#)
- **Mar. 30:** [Spanish government passes tough austerity measures, cutting 27 billion euros from its budget](#)
- **May 6:** [60% of voters support parties opposed to austerity measures in Greek parliamentary election](#)
- **May 9:** President Obama officially states his support for same sex marriage
- **May 25:** 116 people are massacred by the Syrian Army in Houla
- **June 18:** [China becomes the third nation, after the United States and Russia, to dock a space craft with an orbiting object when its Shenzhou 9 spacecraft docked with the Tiangong-1 orbiter](#)
- **June 30:** [Muslim Brotherhood member Mohamed Morsi is elected President of Egypt, sparking a new round of protests and unrest in the country](#)
- **July 20:** James Holmes opens fire in a crowded cinema in Aurora, Colorado, killing 12 and injuring a further 58
- **Sept. 11-12:** [A coordinated attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya results in the death of Ambassador John Christopher Stevens](#)
- **Nov. 6:** Barack H. Obama is reelected to a second term as President of the United States

- **Dec. 14:** Adam Lanza opens fire inside an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, killing 27

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Major Acts

Budget Control Act of 2011. Set discretionary spending limits for defense and nondefense, FY2012-21; and imposed mandatory spending reductions through FY2027. Established the Joint Select Committee to reduce the deficit

by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. Increased Pell Grant funding for FY2012-13 and revised student loan programs. Approved Aug. 2, 2011. ([125 Stat. 240, PL112-25](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Leahy-Smith America Invents Act. Major overhaul of patent and trademark law to provide for reform. Approved Sept. 16, 2011. ([125 Stat. 284, PL112-29](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. Renegotiated the trade agreement from June 2007, eliminating most tariffs on goods from both countries. Approved Oct. 21, 2011. ([125 Stat. 428, PL112-41](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

United States-Colombia Free Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act. Established duty-free trade on a variety of goods between countries, with commitments to enforce and uphold labor rights and environmental protections. Approved Oct. 21, 2011. ([125 Stat. 462, PL112-42](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

United States-Panama Free Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act. Established duty-free trade on a variety of goods between countries, with commitments to enforce and uphold labor rights and environmental protections. Approved Oct. 21, 2011. ([125 Stat. 497, PL112-43](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012. Appropriated \$662 billion in funding for defending the U.S. and interests abroad. Imposed economic sanctions on Iran and requested appraisal of military forces of selected countries. Authorized indefinite military detention of suspected terrorists. Approved Dec. 31, 2011. ([125 Stat. 1298, PL112-81](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012. Provided incentives for the creation of jobs through tax relief. Approved Feb. 22, 2012. ([126 Stat. 156, PL112-96](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Federal Restricted Buildings and Grounds Improvement Act of 2011. Allows Secret Service to suppress protests and make arrests for entering restricted grounds such as the White House and its grounds, places where the President or Vice President are residing or visiting, and areas associated with special events of national significance. Approved Mar. 9, 2012. ([126 Stat. 263, PL112-98](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act of 2012. Requires public reporting of financial transactions among public officials within 30 days of receipt, holding congressional members, employees, and federal officials to a more rigorous standard of ethics. Approved Apr. 4, 2012. ([126 Stat. 291, PL112-105](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Jumpstart Our Business Startups Act. Changed federal securities laws administered by the Securities Exchange Commission to allow advertising among prospective corporate issuers at promotional events and “demo

days,” in order to stimulate economic growth. Approved Apr. 5, 2012. ([126 Stat. 306, PL112-106](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012. Clarified the disclosures of information protected from prohibited personnel practices and provided authority for the Special Counsel. Approved Nov. 27, 2012. ([126 Stat. 1465, PL112-199](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012. Halted selected automatic spending cuts and tax increases scheduled for 2012. Reduced and postponed the enforcement of statutory limits on discretionary spending of the Budget Control Act and froze income taxes for most tax-payers 2012-13. Extended Medicare and Medicaid program expiring provisions. Approved Jan. 2, 2013. ([126 Stat. 2313, PL112-240](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

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