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**Subject:** Federal Insider: Obama thanks feds for their 'passion for public service'

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## Obama thanks feds for their 'passion for public service'

By Joe Davidson

President Obama in a video message released Dec. 13. (White House)

President Obama celebrated federal employees Tuesday in a [video message](#) that was at once pensive and optimistic as he urged them to forge ahead in divisive times.

The Web video was shown to a group of employees meeting in the White House complex, where winners of the president's Customer Service Awards were honored.

Obama talked about the passion of federal employees, the difficulty of their work and how proud he is to be their colleague.

"I'm excited to see what all of you do next," he said after listing some of the many ways federal workers have served the public.

One line in Obama's three-minute talk could apply to Donald Trump's acrimonious campaign, but the president, being the gentleman he is, did not refer directly to the president-elect.

"It's when our politics feels most divisive that we're the most in need of people like you," Obama said. "It's times like now when we need people who show the rest of the country what it means when we say we are all Americans first."

For those who might have contemplated leaving in the wake of Trump's victory, Obama urged them to stay in federal service. "Keep doing it," he implored. "Your good work has never been more important."

Honored with the president's 2016 Customer Service Awards were:

- Frank Minnick, Department of Homeland Security
- Jack Tran, Social Security Administration
- Oliver Villalobos Jr., Department of Veterans Affairs
- Taxpayer Assistance Center at the Treasury Department
- Federal Employees Health Benefits Program tribal-desk team from the Office of Personnel Management
- Bureau of Land Management Recreation Mapping Project team from the Interior Department

The White House also released an [“impact report,”](#) a long list of federal employees' accomplishments and [messages from some of the winners.](#)

Here is the full text of Obama's remarks:

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Hi, everybody. Before I leave office in a few weeks, I just wanted to thank you one more time for stepping forward to serve this country we love. I want you to know how much I admire the work that you do, day in and day out, and how deeply I appreciate your passion for public service, your professionalism and the career path each of you has chosen.

The American people have high expectations of their government. Trust me — I know. Your jobs aren't easy. Believe me — I know that, too. I see you perform them with skill. But as I know you've experienced, the reward is in the opportunity to help your fellow citizen.

So many of the vital services that the American people depend on cross your desk every day. Your work is essential to our national security and to families' economic security. You are the folks who help strangers after a storm or in the face of tragedy. You guard our borders and protect our civil rights. You keep our food and our workplaces safe and protect the air we breathe and the water we drink. You help businesses expand and enter new markets. You push the boundaries of science and space and guide hundreds of thousands of people each day through the glory of America's natural wonders. You promote diplomacy and development and defend our homeland from threats foreign and domestic. And over these past eight years, you have hauled our government to a place where it is smarter, faster and more responsive to the needs of the American people in the 21st century.

So whatever or whoever inspired you to join public service — whether you're a young person who just signed up because you want to make a difference, or a career employee who has dedicated your life to that pursuit — I want you to know that it has been my privilege to call you my colleagues. This precious experiment in self-government only works when we have selfless citizens like you.

And it's when our politics feels most divisive that we're the most in need of people like you. It's times like now when we need people who show the rest of the country what it means when we say we are all Americans first. By choosing public service, you carry on a proud tradition at the heart of some of this country's greatest and most lasting achievements. So keep doing it. Your good work has never been more important. Public service has always been a noble calling, and it always will be a noble calling.

I'll always be grateful for what we've accomplished together. And as a citizen who will continue to rely on the enormous differences you make, I'm excited to see what all of you do next. On behalf of Michelle and myself, thank you again for working so hard every single day in service of this country that we love so much.

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