MIDTERM ESSAY EXAM: "The State of the (Domestic) Union" America's Future (IA463)

Hard copy due on Friday, January 14th by 4:00pm in my office (Moench A209).

ASSIGNMENT: A strange confluence of events has thrust YOU into the Presidency. ***Everything else remains the same***. The Republicans control the House, the Democrats control the Senate, and all of the legislation passed under (now former) President Obama still stands. So you are addressing the actual political situation as it exists in America right now. The only difference is that you are president. You can make yourself a Democrat or a Republican, liberal or conservative. You can seek to continue the direction of President Obama or steer the country on a different course. You can do whatever you wish -- but you've got to convince the American people to follow you. Here is your big chance. It is January so it is time for the State of the Union Address. ***Your assignment for this essay is to write the domestic policy portion of the speech.***

This assignment gives you a great deal of flexibility and potential for creativity. It is also incumbent upon you, however, to show that you have been paying attention by establishing your policy credentials. Thus you need to focus on what you think are the ***key domestic policy challenges for the US at present, why they are significant, and how you think they should best be addressed.*** You are not limited to the topics that we have discussed in class nor do you need to cover every topic discussed to date. You do, however, need to ***cover at least three[1] key issues in some detail*** (explaining the nature of the problem; its importance; and your proposed plan for addressing it). Keep in mind the assembled members of Congress as well as the public at large need to be convinced of the soundness of your analysis and the benefit of your proposed policies. This requires logic, persuasion, and the appropriate marshaling of empirical evidence.

FORMAT: This is a speech and should be written as such. (You might want to look at some old State of the Union Addresses to garner the proper voice.) Begin your speech with: "Speaker Boehner, Vice President _____[2], members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow Americans…" You do not need a conclusion as you are only writing the first half of the speech. You can end by saying: "We also face numerous challenges around the world…" Your speech should be at least five typed, double-spaced pages long (normal margins and fonts). Remember that if you drone on too long the TV audience will start flipping over to The Food Network (*Chopped* Marathon!!!)

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[1] REMEMBER: You don't get any special credit for doing the minimum!

[2] You're the Commander-in-Chief now; you get to pick the Vice President.