

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Seattle, Washington
May 10, 2012

The President. All right! Give it up for Libby!

Libby Blume. Hello. Thank you very much for coming. We're all very honored. I'm Libby. I'm the youngest of the Blumes. And I'm very, very proud to present the President of the United States of America.

The President. Yay! Yay! Nice job!

Thank you. Libby knows the key to good public speaking: Be brief. [*Laughter*] That always makes people happy.

I just want to thank the entire Blume family—especially Libby—but in addition to Bruce and Ann, their other kids—Max, Rebecca, Jacob, and Scooter—for opening up this extraordinary home to us and for their friendship. I'm so grateful to you guys.

Thanks for whoever is in charge of the weather. [*Laughter*] I've been told this is typical Seattle weather. [*Laughter*] But I've been here before so—[*laughter*].

What I'm going to do is actually be pretty brief at the top because what I'd really enjoy is just answering questions and getting comments and, kind of, hearing what you guys are thinking about.

We've been through an extraordinary period in American history: worst financial crisis, worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. When you think about the Blume family growing up, what a lot of this younger generation has seen is hardship and recession and people being laid off of work. And yet the good news is that America is full of incredibly resilient, wonderful, decent people who have been willing to buckle down and work through these difficult times, and as a consequence, the country, I think, is on a path of great strength and great promise.

We've seen more than 4 million jobs created over the last 2 years, more than 800,000 just in the last 4 months alone; the greatest increase in manufacturing employment since the 1990s, a lot of that having to do with an auto industry that has surged back after a period of time when a lot of us thought that they might go under. Here in this region, the last time I was in Seattle—I think it was the last time—we had a chance to visit Boeing, which is as good of a symbol of American ingenuity and American promise—and I teased the CEO there that I deserve a gold watch because we've been selling a lot of planes all around the world. [*Laughter*]

And so slowly, in fits and starts, the economy is getting stronger, and businesses are starting to invest again. And in fact, you're starting to see companies that had moved to places like China recognizing: Why would we abandon the largest market in the world? Wages are going up in China and workers are getting more productive here; let's start bringing companies and businesses back.

We've still got headwinds. Europe is still in a difficult state, partly because they didn't take some of the decisive steps that we took early on in this recession. Gas prices are still pinching a lot of folks. The housing market is still very weak all across the country. But the good news is

that we have weathered the storm and are in a position now to make sure that the 21st century is the American century just like the 20th century was.

But in order to do that, we've got to make good choices. And when I ran in 2008, I did not run just to get the country back to where it was before the crisis, because there had been problems that had been building for decades. And so the question was, were we finally going to take on some of these core challenges that had been holding us back for far too long? And that's the reason why, even as we were trying to manage the auto bailout, even as we were trying to deal with the banks and the fact that credit was locked up, even as we were trying to make sure that we could immediately put people back to work, we were also looking at what are the long-term things that are going to make a big difference in the life of this country?

That's why we took on health care. And I am very proud of the fact that you got 2.5 million young people who have health insurance because they can stay on their parents' plans right now that didn't have it before and 30 million who stand to get it over the next couple of years.

That's the reason why we took on energy. And not only have we increased traditional energy in this country—oil and gas—but we're looking at the energies sources of the future and have doubled clean energy investment and raised fuel efficiency standards, doubling fuel efficiency standards on cars, which will not only end up saving about \$8,000 for the average consumer over the life of a car, but is going to take huge amounts of carbon out of the atmosphere and is part of what's contributing to some of the lowest levels of oil imports that we've seen in years, which obviously has national security implications.

It's the reason why we took on education. And in addition to investing in reform at the K-through-12 level, we're also making sure that every young person has access to a college education and rechanneled money that was going to banks in the student loan program, tens of billions of dollars that are now going directly to students in the form of Pell grants. And now we've got a little more work to do to make sure that interest on their student loans don't double on July 1.

That's why we made investments during the Recovery Act to rebuild our roads and our bridges and our ports, but also to start looking at things like high-speed rail and new broadband lines into rural areas that didn't have them before. Because the fact is that, historically, America grows not just because a few folks are doing well, but because we create a platform where everybody can succeed. Anybody who's working hard, everybody who's willing to put in the time and the effort and the energy, anybody who's got a new idea, no matter what they look like, no matter where they come from, they can succeed. And through their success, we all succeed.

And we're huge admirers of individual initiative, and we insist on individual responsibility, but we also recognize, this country succeeds together, not apart. And that is going to be probably the biggest theme in this election, because we've got another party on the other side that just has a fundamentally different view about how to make sure that America succeeds. I think they're patriotic folks. I think they care about this country. But I also think that they have a very narrow vision that says, if I'm doing well, then it's up to everybody else to figure their own way.

And that's certainly not the reason I'm here. I'm here because my grandfather, after coming back from World War II, was able to study on the GI bill. I'm here because my mother, a single mom, was able to get scholarships and grants to help her make her way

through school. Michelle and I are where we are today because, although we came from very modest backgrounds, we got some of the best education in the world.

When I hear people talk about the free enterprise system and entrepreneurship, I try to remind them, you know, all of us made that investment in DARPA that helped to get the Internet started; so there's no Facebook, there's no Microsoft, there's no Google if we hadn't made this common investment in our future.

And that's what we're going to be debating. There are going to be a lot of ups and downs and a lot of other issues, but the fundamental issue is going to be, do we believe that we grow together, or do we believe that "you're on your own" is a better model for how we advance not just our interests, but the future of our children.

Now, we've still got a lot of work to do. And the reason I'm running is because there's a lot of unfinished business. Still too many people out of work, and there's some things we could be doing right now to put construction workers back to work rebuilding America. There are things we could be doing right now to invest in science and technology to make sure we maintain a cutting edge.

We haven't done as much on energy and climate change as we need to do. And so continuing to push for the kinds of work that a company like McKinstry is doing, making sure that we have energy-efficient buildings and companies and universities and hospitals and schools all across the country. We could reduce our consumption of energy by about 20 percent just by making these simple investments, and we haven't done that yet. We've made progress, but we've got more work to do.

We've still got to reform an immigration system that is broken and make sure that young people who are raised in this country with our kids, that they're treated as the Americans that they are and they're given an opportunity to serve and make of themselves what they will, because that's also part of our tradition.

We're a great country because what binds us together isn't just what we look like or our last names, but we share a creed. And if you believe in America, then you can be part of it.

So we're going to have a whole lot of work to do over the next 5 years, and I'm not going to be able to get there on my own. I practice what I preach: In the same way that I don't think a society is successful on its own, well, my campaign is not successful on its own. Back in 2008, we didn't succeed because of me, we succeeded because of you, because all of you made a common commitment to a common vision of what America should be.

And I'm hoping that you're willing to continue with me on this always fascinating journey. *[Laughter]* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. at the residence of Bruce M. and Ann S. Blume. In his remarks, he referred to W. James McNerney, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Boeing Co.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Obama Victory Fund 2012 fundraisers :: Seattle, WA.

Locations: Seattle, WA.

Names: Blume, Ann S.; Blume, Bruce M.; Blume, Elizabeth; Blume, Jackson "Scooter"; Blume, Jacob; Blume, Max; Blume, Rebecca; McNerney, W. James, Jr.; Obama, Michelle.

Subjects: Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Communications : Broadband technology; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Pell grants; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, interest rates and refinancing; Education : Standards and school accountability; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Domestic sources; Energy : Energy efficiency and weatherization :: Homes and buildings; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Environment : Carbon emissions; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Transportation : High-speed rail lines, development and expansion; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Washington : Democratic Party events; Washington : President's visit.

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