

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Greenwich,
Connecticut**

September 16, 2010

Well, listen, Richard and Ellen, I'm so grateful to you guys for opening up this extraordinary home.

And just a couple of quick acknowledgments. Obviously, we've got races all across the country that are important, but there are very few races that are more important to me than the race for U.S. Senate here, and Dick Blumenthal, I think, is just an outstanding candidate who is going to be a terrific U.S. Senator. We've got Dan Malloy, who is going to be the next Governor of Connecticut. And we've got somebody who is probably the only person who is putting in more miles than me, Tim Kaine.

It is great to be here with some new friends, but also some old friends. Richard and Ellen were some of my earliest supporters. They actually supported me when I ran for United States Senate, before people could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And so for them to open up their house like this is just terrific.

I'm not going to give a long speech because I want to take the opportunity to sit with each of you and hear what you're thinking, answer your questions. But let me just say generally, we came into office back in January of 2009 at a historic time: the worst financial crisis that we've seen since the Great Depression, on the verge of a great depression, in the midst of two wars. And so the challenges that we've confronted over these last 2 years have been extraordinary. And we've got a long way to go. This country received a body blow, and it was already having difficulties competitively. It was already falling behind educationally. We had a health care system that was broken, a middle class that hadn't seen its incomes or wages go up at the same time as their costs were skyrocketing for everything from college tuition to health care.

And so the recovery has been painfully slow. We've got millions of people who are still out of work, hundreds of thousands of people who've lost their homes. People are anxious about the future; they're fearful about the future. And we're in a very competitive environment, where other countries like China and India have now caught up—in some indicators—and are going to keep on moving, because they are hungry and they've got some very talented people.

Having said that, after being in this job for 2 years, I have never been more optimistic about America. I am optimistic partly because we did some really tough things that aren't always popular, but were the right things to do. We had initiated an education reform agenda that is shaking up the education system all across the country. And I've got a terrific Secretary of Education who's been able to get teachers, principals, students—sometimes there's some contentiousness about it, but everybody focused on how are we going to lift up performance for all our kids so they can compete in a global economy.

We have finally started digging into our health care system in a way that is not just providing health insurance to 31 million people who didn't have it before. I spoke to a woman today who was the first person to sign up for an insurance pool that allows people with preexisting conditions to finally get health insurance. She lives up in New Hampshire, had lymphoma, could not get treatment, could not get health insurance. And we signed that bill just as she was about to give up—and is now in the midst of treatment and her prognosis is good.

But that's not the only reason that we initiated reform. We're now digging in to see what we can do so that our costs for businesses and families start getting under control, and we can bend that cost curve.

We initiated a financial regulatory reform bill that was obviously contentious. And a lot of folks in Connecticut work on Wall Street and so they're folks who at some point felt like, are we attacking Wall Street? No. What we want to do is to create a financial system that is vibrant and dynamic and innovative, but also create some rules of the road so we don't go through what we went through over the last 2 years. And if we had smart rules that treat consumers fairly and that promotes transparency, that's going to allow us to stay the leader in financial services for years to come. And it means that we're going to be able to finance businesses all around the country and around the world that help grow our economy.

So, we made the largest investment in research and development in our history. We'd been falling behind, and now we are back at the forefront of R&D. We made the largest investment in green energy in our history so that we could start building solar panels and wind turbines all around the country.

So all these long-term investments that we made are going to be bearing fruit not just next year, not just the year after, but for a couple decades to come. And that's what makes me optimistic.

That's just on the domestic front. In foreign policy, we've reset our relations around the world so that—a lot of people who travel will come back and say to me, you know, folks are once again looking to America for leadership in a way that they haven't for a long time. We have ended our combat mission in Iraq. We are initiating Middle East peace once again; I had the parties at the table. Old adversaries like Russia are now cooperating with us, and we just got a nuclear arms reduction treaty out of the Senate committee today, and we hope to get it ratified before the end of the year.

Across the board, we are making progress. Now, I'm making this point for two reasons. Number one, the changes we've made are ones that will take some time to bear fruit. And folks who are out of work right now, whose homes are underwater right now, who are trying to figure out how to pay the bills or send their kids to college right now, they don't have 5 or 10 years to wait. And so we've got to still work very hard in the short term to dig ourselves out of this enormous hole.

And that's why having public servants like Dick Blumenthal in Washington is so important. Because the other side, all they are going to be feeding us is anger and resentment and not a lot of new ideas. But that's a potent force when people are scared and they're hurting. And so for all of you to support candidates like Dick all across the country is absolutely vital, because our job is not yet finished. And the agenda of the other side is essentially to roll back progress that we've made. And they're doing so, by the way, not just by self-financed candidates like the one here in Connecticut, but because of the Supreme Court decision from the Roberts's Court called the *Citizens United*. You now have special interests spending—outspending candidates and parties all across America, spending millions of dollars without disclosing who they're spending it—who they are and what interests lie behind all these negative TV ads.

So we are going to be in some tough fights everywhere, and all of you are going to be desperately needed in order for us to keep moving in a positive direction.

Now, the second reason I'm telling you this is because Democrats, just congenitally, tend to get—to see the glass as half empty. [Laughter] If we get an historic health care bill passed—oh, well, the public option wasn't there. If you get the financial reform bill passed—then, well, I don't know about this particularly derivatives rule; I'm not sure that I'm satisfied with that. And gosh, we haven't yet brought about world peace, and I thought that was going to happen quicker. [Laughter] You know who you are. [Laughter]

We have had the most productive, progressive legislative session in at least a generation. And so I want everybody here to—when you are talking to your friends and your neighbors and your coworkers, I want you to feel good about the support that you've provided, because you didn't send me there to do what was easy; you sent me there to do what was hard. We have tackled some of the hardest problems facing this country, and we did so in the midst of crisis, and we are succeeding.

And so as long as you keep that in mind, not only will you feel good about writing checks, but you're also going to be feeling good as you go around the country making the case to ensure that people like Dick Blumenthal are elected to the U.S. Senate.

All right? So thank you very much, everybody. I look forward to talking to you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:52 p.m. at the home of Richard Richman and Ellen Schapps Richman. In his remarks, he referred to Timothy M. Kaine, chairman, Democratic National Committee; cancer patient Gail O'Brien of Keene, NH; and Connecticut senatorial candidate Linda E. McMahon. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee reception in Greenwich, CT.

Locations: Greenwich, CT.

Names: Blumenthal, Richard; Duncan, Arne; Kaine, Timothy M.; Malloy, Dannel; McMahon, Linda E.; O'Brien, Gail; Richman, Ellen Schapps; Richman, Richard; Roberts, John G., Jr.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia, expansion; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Connecticut : Democratic Party events; Connecticut : President's visits; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Standards and school accountability; Education, Department of : Secretary; Elections : Campaign finance laws; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Housing : Foreclosure rates; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Chief Justice; Middle East : Peace and democracy efforts; Russia : Relations with U.S.; Russia : Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with U.S., expansion; Science and technology : Research and development.

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