

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania**

October 10, 2010

The President. Hello, Philadelphia!

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Oh—this is—thank you. Joe, this is a good-looking crowd, man. This is a beautiful crowd on a beautiful day. It's good to be back here in Pennsylvania.

Vice President Joe Biden. And they're all the way back in the parking lot. They can't even see you.

The President. It is good to be back in Pennsylvania, good to be back in Philly. I know part of the reason you're fired up is because you've just heard from one of the finest Vice Presidents we will ever see in this country's history, Joe Biden. Plus, Joe looks cool in those glasses too, doesn't he?

You know, I want you to know, when I was still campaigning, right after I selected Joe, I—we went out and we were doing some events and small town hall meetings. And everywhere we went with Joe, some woman would come by and say, you know, I think Joe's kind of cute. Can you introduce me to Joe? [*Laughter*] That was true. And I had to inform this woman that Joe is married to a wonderful Jill Biden.

In addition to hearing from Joe, I know you've heard from Governor Ed Rendell. Senator Arlen Specter's in the house. Senator Bob Casey is in the house. State Treasurer Rob McCord is here. Congressman Chaka Fattah is here. Congressman Joe Sestak is here. Congressman Bob Brady is here. Mayor Michael Nutter is in the house. And we've got Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato is here. I want to thank Pastor Kevin Johnson for the invocation. DJ Diamond Kuts, and give it up for the Roots.

Now, I'm glad to see that this crowd is fired up. Are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. I've got to make sure you stay fired up. I promise you'll be out of here to catch the Phillies and the Eagles. I don't want to get between Philly fans and their sports teams.

Now, Philadelphia, 2 years ago—2 years ago, you defied the conventional wisdom in Washington. They said, no, you can't. They said, no, you can't overcome the cynicism of politics. No, you can't overcome the special interests and the big money. No, you can't take on the big challenges of our time. No, you can't elect a skinny guy with a funny name to the Presidency of the United States. What did you say?

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. That's what you said.

But Philly, I've got this message for you today. I want everybody to understand, our victory in that campaign, that wasn't the end of the road. That was just the beginning of the road. That was just the start of the journey. By itself, it does not deliver the change that we need. I know a lot of you thought, just because of election night and the Inauguration, everybody was having fun and Beyonce was singing and Bono, and so everybody thought, boy, this is it.

But that was just the start, because we understood what we were going up against. The only thing that the election did was, it gave us the chance to make change happen. It made each of you a shareholder in the mission of rebuilding our country and reclaiming our future. And Philly, I'm back here 2 years later because our job is not yet done, and the success of our mission is at stake right now. On November 2, I need you as fired up as you were in 2008, because we've got a lot of work ahead of us.

After that last election, it was my hope that we could pull together, Democrats and Republicans, to confront the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. I hoped that we could get beyond the divisions of red States and blue States. That's what we thought. Because although we are proud to be Democrats, we are prouder to be Americans, and I know there are plenty of Republicans out there in this country who feel the exact same way.

But when we arrived in Washington, the Republicans in Congress, they had a different idea. They knew it would take more than 2 years to climb out of this recession. They knew that by the time of this election, people would still be out of work. They knew people would still be frustrated. And so what they figured was, if we just sat on the sidelines, if Republicans just opposed everything we said we could do, if they rejected every compromise we offered, if they spent all their time attacking Democrats instead of attacking problems, they figured they might be able to do well in the polls.

So they sent—they spent the last 20 months saying no, even to policies that they had supported in the past. They said no to middle class tax cuts. They said no to help for small businesses. They said no to a bipartisan deficit reduction commission that they had once cosponsored. If I said the sky was blue, they said no. If I said there were fish in the sea, they said no. They figured, if Obama fails, then we win. Am I wrong, Joe? That's exactly what they said.

Now, they made a—they may have thought that playing political games would help them win an election, but I knew it wouldn't get America through the crisis. So I made some different decisions. I took whatever steps were necessary to stop the economic freefall, to stop a second depression, even if those decisions were not popular, even if they were not easy. Because you didn't elect me to do what was easy. You elected me to do what was right. That's why you sent me to Washington. You didn't send me to Washington to put my finger to the wind and figure out which way the wind was blowing, to spend all my time reading the polls. You sent me there to solve problems.

And 20 months later, we no longer face the possibility of a second depression. Our economy is growing again. The private sector created jobs 9 months in a row now. There are 3 million Americans who would not be working today if not for the economic plan that Joe and I put into place. That's the truth.

Now, what's also the truth is we've still got a long way to go. The hole we're climbing out is so deep, the Republicans messed up so bad, left a—such a big mess, that there are still millions of Americans without work. I want everybody to understand this, just in case there's still some

undecideds out there. Before I was inaugurated and before Joe was inaugurated, we had lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before that. We lost almost 800,000 jobs the month I was sworn in; 600,000 the month after that; 600,000 the month after that. Before any of our economic plans were put into place, we had lost almost 8 million jobs—because of their policies.

And that means that it's going to take us a while to get out of this hole. There are still millions of Americans who can barely pay their bills, millions of Americans who are just barely hanging on, millions of middle class families who were struggling even before this crisis hit and are out there treading water. I know.

So of course people are frustrated. Of course people are impatient with the pace of change. And believe me, so am I. But here's the thing I need everybody to remember. No matter how angry you get, no matter how frustrated you are, the other side has decided to ride that frustration and anger without offering any solutions.

And the other—and you know, a lot of folks in Washington think that they're running a smart strategy. They're saying the other party's supporters are more enthusiastic, more excited. They say all y'all are going to stay home. You might not come out like you did in 2008. They say you might not care as much. They think, oh, well, Obama's name is not on the ballot; maybe they're not going to turn out. They think you're going to be willing to let the same politicians and the same policies that left our economy in a shambles back to Washington.

Well, Philadelphia, I think the pundits are wrong. I think the pundits are wrong. I think we're going to win, but you got to prove them wrong. It's up to you to show the pundits that you care too much about this country to let it fall backwards, that you're going to keep us moving forward, that you're ready to fight for the future.

Just look, everybody, I need you to understand, this election is a choice. And the choice could not be clearer. It's not as if the Republicans are offering new ideas. It's not as if the Republican leaders have changed their agenda since the last time they ran Washington. In fact, the chairman of one of their campaign committees promised that if the Republicans take control of Congress, they will follow the exact same agenda they pursued the last time they were in power.

We know what that agenda was. We know what this agenda was. You cut taxes, mostly for millionaires and billionaires. You cut regulations for special interests. You try to bust the unions. You cut back on investments in education and clean energy and research and technology. The basic idea is that if we put our blind faith in the market and we let corporations do whatever they want and we leave everybody else to fend for themselves, then America somehow automatically is going to grow and prosper.

Well, let me tell you something. The problem with their theory is, it didn't work. We tried it for 8 years. It didn't work for middle class families who saw their incomes fall and their costs go up when Republicans were in charge. I want everybody to understand, between 2001 and 2009, the wages of middle class families went down 5 percent. They didn't go up; they went down. Job growth was the slowest that it had been at any time since World War II, slower than it's been over the last year. When they were in charge, they took a record surplus from Bill Clinton, and by the time I got there, we had a record deficit. And because of that free-for-all that they had on Wall Street, we're still digging our way out of the crisis. That's their track record.

Now, listen, everybody, I don't bring this up because I want to relitigate the past. I bring it up because I don't want to relive the past. I don't want to go through what we already gone

through. I bring it up because this is the other—this philosophy that the other side intends to bring if they win in November. Republicans might have a new name for it—they call it the "Pledge to America"—but it's the same old stuff they've been peddling for years.

Let's take a look at the "Pledge to America." Anybody read the "Pledge to America"? Let me tell you, for starters, it turns out that the pledge was actually written in part by a former lobbyist for AIG and ExxonMobil. That should tell you something right there. You can't make that stuff up.

And the centerpiece of the pledge is a \$700 billion tax cut that would only go to the top 2 percent, the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans. Ninety-eight percent of you would not get this tax cut, but they would borrow \$700 billion from the Chinese or from the Saudis or somebody. That's their big idea to get the economy moving again. These are the same folks who lecture us on fiscal responsibility, but now they want to borrow \$700 billion to give a tax cut worth an average of \$100,000 to millionaires and billionaires.

When you ask them, "Where are you going to get the money?" they say, "Well, we don't have it." But mostly, they're going to borrow it from other countries. And just to pay for a small part of it, they want to cut education by 20 percent. They would reduce financial aid for 8 million college students.

Now, Philadelphia, at a time when the education of our country's citizens is one of the most important things for economic success, the notion that we would give out tax cuts to folks who don't need them and sacrifice the next generation, that does not make any sense at all.

I want to ask my Republican friends, do you think China's cutting back on education? Do you think South Korea or Germany or India are cutting back on education? Those countries aren't playing for second place. They're playing for first place. Guess what? America does not play for second place either. We pay—we play for first place.

So, Philly, as long as I'm President, we're not going to let Washington politicians sacrifice your education for a tax cut we can't afford. And that is a choice in this election.

Joe and I, we've got a different idea about what the next 2 years should look like, and it's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built. We know government doesn't have all the answers to all our problems. We know the private sector is primarily responsible for creating jobs and prosperity. I believe government should be lean and efficient, and I don't want anybody in Washington wasting your taxpayer dollars. That's why I proposed a 3-year spending freeze, set up a bipartisan fiscal commission to deal with our deficit.

But in the words of our first Republican President, named Abraham Lincoln, we also believe that government should do what people can't do better by themselves. We believe in a country that rewards hard work and responsibility. We believe in a country where we look after one another. We believe in a country where working people can come together so they can get a minimum wage and better working conditions. We believe that I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper; that everybody deserves a fair shot at the American Dream. That's the America I know. That's the choice in this election.

We want to make permanent tax cuts for the middle class, because you deserve a break. Instead of the other side's plan to keep giving tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas, I want to give those tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in the United States of America. I want to give it to small businesses and to American manufacturers and to clean energy companies. I don't want solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars

built in Europe or Asia. I want them built here in the United States of America by American workers.

Instead of cutting education and student aid, we want to make our new college tax credit permanent—\$10,000 in tuition relief for every young person who goes to college. We're going to fight to keep the reforms we've made to the student loan system, because thanks to those reforms, tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies that would be going to banks right now are going to students. That's where they belong.

If the other side wins, they'll try their hardest to give rein back to the insurance companies and the credit card companies and the Wall Street banks that we're finally holding accountable. We can't let them do that. We can't go back to the days of taxpayer-funded bailouts. We can't go back to the day when credit card companies could just jack up your rates without any reason or insurance companies could deny or drop your coverage just because you get sick.

We need to keep that new law in place that says if you're looking for a job or have a job that doesn't offer you coverage and you're a young person, you can stay on your parents' insurance until you're 26 years old, and that they can't drop your coverage just because you get sick. That's the choice in this election, Philadelphia. That's what at stake right now.

So, Philly, it comes down to this. Many of the Republicans who are running right now, these are the exact same folks who spent the last decade driving our economy into a ditch. And once we were elected, Joe and I, we put on our boots; we went down into that ditch. It was muddy and dusty down there, and it was hot. And we started pushing on that car to get it out of the ditch. And we had a whole bunch of folks like Joe Sestak helping us push that car out of the ditch.

And every once in a while, we'd look up at the Republicans. They were—they had driven into the ditch, but they had gotten out, and they were kind of taking a break, fanning themselves and sipping on a Slurpee, watching us do all the work. And every once in a while, they'd say, why don't you push harder? You're not pushing the right way, Obama. But they didn't help.

And after pushing and pushing over these last 20 months, finally we've got that car out of the ditch. Now, the car is a little dented up. The fender's a little busted. It needs a tune-up. But it's moving. It's pointing in the right direction. We're on level ground now. We're starting to make repairs. And suddenly, we get a tap on our shoulder, and we look back, and who is it? It's the Republicans. And they say—what are they saying?—they say, we want the keys back.

Philadelphia, they can't have the keys back. They don't know how to drive. They don't know how to drive. They can ride with us if they want, but they got to get in the back seat. Because we want to go forward. We don't want the special interests riding shotgun. We want working families, middle class families, up front. They're our priority.

I just want everybody to notice, when you get in your car and you want to go forward, what do you do? You put the car in "D." If you're going backwards, what do you do? You put the car in "R." That's not a coincidence. You want to ride forward; put it in "D" on November 2.

But listen, listen, can I just say, at the end of the day, Philly, whether the Republicans get the keys back or not's going to depend on you. There is no question—there's no question the other side sees a chance to get back in the driver's seat.

And thanks to a Supreme Court decision called *Citizens United*, they are being helped along this year by special interest groups that are spending unlimited amounts of money on

attack ads—attacking folks like Patrick Murphy, attacking folks like Joe Sestak—just attacking people without ever disclosing who's behind all these attack ads. You don't know. It could be the oil industry, could be the insurance industry, could even be foreign-owned corporations. You don't know because they don't have to disclose.

Now, that's not just a threat to Democrats; that's a threat to our democracy. Every American business and industry deserves a seat at the table, but they don't get a chance to buy every chair. We've seen what happens when they do. They put the entire economy at risk, and every American might end up suffering.

So you can't let it happen. Don't let them hijack your agenda. The American people deserve to know who's trying to sway their elections. And you can't stand by and let special interests drown out the voices of the American people.

So, Philadelphia, that's why I need you working even harder in this election than you did in the last election. We need you to fight their millions of dollars with our millions of voices. I look out on this crowd, and I see millions of voices all across the country. We've got to finish what we started in 2008. Because if everybody who fought so hard for change in 2008 shows up to vote in 2010, I'm absolutely confident we will win. And most of the polls say the same thing.

See, what the other side is counting on, what they're counting on is you're going to stay home. They're counting on your silence. They're counting on your amnesia. They're counting on your apathy. They're counting on young people staying home and union members staying home and Black folks staying home and middle class families staying home. They're counting on the fact that they made the argument so ugly in Washington that you just completely turned off and you're not going to vote for anybody. And if that happens, they win.

Philly, let's prove them wrong. Let's show Washington one more time, change doesn't come from the top; it comes from the bottom. It doesn't come from millions of dollars of ads; it comes because people are out there knocking on doors, making phone calls, going into the beauty shops, going into the barber shops. We have come—I know we're a long way from the day—the hope and excitement we all felt on election night. We're far from Inauguration Day. But I always told you it was going to take time. I always told you it was going to be hard because change has always been hard.

But from the first days of our Nation, every time Americans have tried to bring about real, meaningful change, we've faced down setbacks, we've faced down disappointments. We have faced fear, and we have faced down doubt. As Americans, we've always moved forward. We've always kept fighting. We've always remembered that in the United States of America, our destiny is not written for us; it is written by us.

That's how we came through war. That's how we came through depression. That's how we got civil rights legislation. That's how we got workers' rights. That's how we got women's rights. It's being tested right now, but if you keep moving forward in the face of difficulty, I promise you we will not lose this election. We will win this election. And we will make sure that every American has the opportunity to live out the American Dream.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:57 p.m. at Morton Field. In his remarks, he referred to Kevin R. Johnson, senior pastor, Bright Hope Baptist Church; entertainers Tina "DJ Diamond Kuts" Dunham, the Roots, Beyonce G. Knowles, and Paul D. "Bono" Hewson; Rep. Pete Sessions, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee; former lobbyist

Brian Wild; and Rep. Patrick Murphy. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee rally in Philadelphia, PA.

Locations: Philadelphia, PA.

Names: Biden, Jill; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Brady, Robert A.; Casey, Robert P., Jr.; Clinton, William J.; Dunham, Tina "DJ Diamond Kuts"; Fattah, Chaka; Hewson, Paul D. "Bono"; Johnson, Kevin R.; Knowles, Beyonce G.; McCord, Rob; Murphy, Patrick; Nutter, Michael A.; Onorato, Dan; Rendell, Edward G.; Sessions, Pete; Sestak, Joe; Specter, Arlen; Wild, Brian.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Congressional spending restraint; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Deficit Reduction Commission; Budget, Federal : Deficit reduction commission, proposed :: Congressional establishment; Business and industry : Domestic investment, proposed tax breaks for; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Promotion efforts; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Postsecondary education :: Tax credits, expansion; Elections : 2010 congressional elections; Elections : Campaign finance laws; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Employment and unemployment : Outsourcing to foreign countries; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies, U.S. production; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Pennsylvania : Democratic Party events; Pennsylvania : Governor; Pennsylvania : President's visits; Republican Party : Republican Congressional Committee, National; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; White House Office : Vice President.

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