

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Reception and Fundraiser Event for Representative Ron Klein in Miami, Florida

October 11, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody. Well, it is wonderful to be here. I want to thank a few people at the outset. First of all, I want to thank the Mourning family, who are opening up this beautiful home and arranged this fantastic weather. We're so grateful to them. Yes, you can give them a big round of applause.

Chris Van Hollen—this is the only guy who puts in more miles than me. [*Laughter*] He has been working so hard as the chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. He is a great Congressman in his own right, a great leader inside the House, but he's also just been doing a bang-up job in what is one of the more difficult posts in politics.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz is here. Where's Debbie? She was here. She was here. Well, we love her, so give her a round of applause. Ron Klain—

Audience member. Klein.

The President. No, I've got a—Biden's chief of staff is Ron Klain, and I just talked to him on the phone so I slipped up.

Ron Klein is here, and one of the main reasons that we're here—but—if he's not here, I know—is he? Where is he? He's inside. All right, we love him. Kathy Castor is here. Ted Deutch is here and his family.

Anybody that I miss? You all are here, and we love you.

Now, the main reason we're here is for Ron, who has done such an unbelievable job in Congress, but more importantly, in the community. They've made south Florida their home for the last 25 years. This is where they raised their family, where Ron helped run a small business. That's exactly who Ron has been fighting for since he came to Washington: the families and small-business owners that he grew up with, all of you. Those are the folks he cares about.

He fought to bring down the skyrocketing cost of homeowner's insurance. He's fighting to protect and strengthen Medicare and Social Security. He helped write tough new sanctions to crack down on Iran as they try to develop nuclear weapons; something I know that everybody here cares deeply about, and my administration has made one of our top priorities. He has made the security of our ally, Israel, a constant theme in his work. He knows the people of south Florida because he's spent so much time listening to your concerns, and he's one of you.

And so this election, I think, is representative of what's happening all across the country. We've got wonderful candidates like Ron who are working so hard and have, over the last 20 months, done more to get this country back on track than any Congress in my lifetime—any Congress at least since 1965.

You know, 2 years ago, a lot of you worked your hearts out for Ron's campaign and for my campaign. And we knew at that point that the country was on the wrong track. What we didn't realize was how bad it was going to be by the time we took office. We have gone through the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. We have made sure that as a consequence of a bunch of tough actions that we took we didn't slip into the second great depression.

As Chris was just saying, we now have an economy that is stabilized. An economy that was shrinking by 6 percent when I came into office is now growing. We have seen 9 consecutive months of private sector job growth. Businesses are profitable again and investing again. And all of that is because Members of Congress like Ron and Chris and Ted and Kathy were willing to take tough votes, even in the face of enormous criticism, because they knew it was the right thing to do.

And so at a certain point, the reason you send folks to represent you in Washington is not just to put their fingers up to the wind; it's not just to figure out what's going to help keep them in office. You send them there to do what's right and to make sure that they are thinking about you and your families each and every day.

And that's what Ron has done, and that's what Chris has done, and that's what I intend to do as long as I have the great honor of being your President. That is our number one priority.

Audience member. Thank you.

The President. Now, of course, things aren't where we want them to be. We've got a lot more work to do. The question in this election is not whether or not things are where we want them to be; the question is who is going to help us get to where we want to be. And on that choice, the answer is absolutely clear.

Look at what the Republicans have been offering out here. I mean, they have now been out of power for 2 years, and they had a chance over the last 2 years to try to work with us to figure out how we could move the country forward. And instead, their basic philosophy was, we are just going to say no to everything. We're going to say no to help to small businesses. We're going to say no to putting people back to work. We're going to say no to helping young people get student loans. We're going to say no to making sure that folks aren't thrown off their health care when they get sick or because they have a preexisting condition. They said no each and every time.

And now they come before you and they say, we want to lead again. And yet the ideas they're offering are the exact same ideas that got us into this mess in the first place. It's not as if they've gone off and meditated and decided, you know what, we really screwed up; here's a whole bunch of new ideas. [*Laughter*] They don't have new ideas.

The same philosophy that got us into this mess, that you basically give tax cuts mostly to millionaires and billionaires and you cut regulations in the banking industry and in the health care industry and in the oil industry, that you basically leave everybody else to fend for themselves, that philosophy is the same philosophy that produced the most sluggish job growth since World War II; that saw the wages of middle class families decline by 5 percent when they were in power; that resulted in the worst crisis that we've seen in the financial markets that has an impact far beyond Wall Street; and that took a record surplus left by Bill Clinton and got us into record deficits that I inherited when I walked into the White House.

Now, that same philosophy is what they're peddling right now. They put a new name on it. What did they'd call it?—"Pledge to America." And when you actually take the time to read it, it turns out that they are peddling the same snake oil they were before. They put some different names on it, but it's the same concepts.

Their big idea for putting people back to work, their main economic proposal is to provide \$700 billion in tax cuts to the top 2 percent of the income bracket. The other 98 percent of American people won't get a dime of it. And it's not money that we've got. We'd have to

borrow that \$700 billion from China or the Saudis. And they don't pay for it, but the proposals that they've talked about to start paying for it include cutting education by 20 percent.

Think about that. Here we are trying to compete with China and South Korea and Germany, countries that are investing and as a consequence have created a higher proportion of college graduates than we have, and we're going to cut education? We're going to create a situation where 8 million young people across the country are getting fewer student loans, less help because we want to give tax cuts to folks who don't need them, weren't even asking for them, and won't spend them, so they won't have any impact in terms of boosting demand in our economy. That does not make sense. But that's an example of the lack of ideas that we're seeing from the other side.

Now, Ron, myself, others, we've got a different idea of how we need to move this country forward. We envision a situation in which instead of giving tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas, we give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in the United States of America.

We have a vision where we're rebuilding our infrastructure—I talked about this—so that we're not just rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our rail systems, but we're laying broadband lines, and we're making sure that we have the best Internet service in the world.

We want to invest in our young people to make sure that we have the highest proportion of college graduates of any country. We used to be number one; we're now number nine. I want us to get back to number one by the year 2012.

I want to invest in clean energy so that solar panels and wind panels—wind turbines and the electric cars and advanced batteries of the future, that those are made not in Asia, not in Europe, but they're made right here in the United States of America with American workers. And by the way, that means we're also saving our environment in the bargain.

And yes, I want to get our budget under control, but I don't want to do it on the backs of folks who need it most. I want to make sure that we do it in a responsible way.

And again, when you look at the hypocrisy of the other side—we set up a bipartisan fiscal commission that originated as a bipartisan idea, Democrats and Republicans. And when I decided this was a good idea and I endorsed it, and I said, let's vote for it, you know what happened? The Republicans voted against it.

So there's a fundamental lack of seriousness in terms of how they want to move this country forward. And these are serious times. And we've got to have people in Congress who are not thinking about the next election but are thinking about the next generation.

The analogy I've been using as I've traveled across the country—the other folks, they drove this economy into a ditch. And we decided, even though we hadn't driven it in the ditch, it was our responsibility to get us out of the ditch. So Ron and myself and Chris and Debbie and others, we all went down into the ditch. We put on our boots. It's muddy down there. It's hot. We're sweating. *[Laughter]* We're pushing and pulling to get that car out of the ditch. And every once in a while we'd look up, and the Republicans would be standing there, waving at us. *[Laughter]*

And we'd say, "Why don't you come on down and help?" And they'd say, "No, thanks, but you're not pushing hard enough. You're not pushing the right way."

But despite the lack of help, we kept on pushing, until finally we've got that car on level ground. Finally it's just sitting there ready to go forward. It's a little banged up. It's got to go to the body shop. It needs a tuneup. But we're pointing in the right direction. And we get a tap on our shoulders, and we look, and lo and behold, it's the Republicans. And they want the keys back. [Laughter]

We've got to tell them, in this election, you can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive. You don't know how to drive. You can get in the car, but you got to ride in the backseat. [Laughter]

Audience member. In the trunk!

The President. In the trunk. [Laughter] No, we wouldn't do that. We got room in the back. But we don't want their hands on the wheel. [Laughter]

And that's why all of you are so important. Look, when I won, when Ron won, we didn't win because of us. We won because of you. We won because you guys believed in something. You decided that you didn't have to have big money, you didn't have to be connected to special interests, you didn't have to be well connected in order to win. You just had to believe in the American Dream and want to align our Government on the side of people who wake up every day, work hard, and just want that piece of that dream for themselves and their family; want to make sure they can have a job that pays a living wage; make sure that they're not bankrupt when they get sick; make sure they can send their kids to college and aspire to things that they didn't dream of; retire with dignity and respect.

That's the essence of what Ron's campaign was about, the essence of what my campaign was about. That's why you worked so hard. We're not finished. That day that we got elected on election night and then the Inauguration, that was a lot of fun, but that wasn't the end of the journey. That was just the beginning of the journey. We've got a long ways to go. And we can't get there without you.

So I'm grateful for you all being here today, but I'm going to be even more grateful if over the next 3 weeks, you're out there talking to your friends, you're talking to your neighbors, you're talking to your coworkers, you're talking to family members, and you remind them that as frustrating as things are right now, we have come so far in the last 20 months. And if you remind them, we've got so much more to do, if you do that, I'm convinced Ron is going to win. I'm convinced that the American people are going to win.

Go bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:54 p.m. at the private residence of former National Basketball Association center Alonzo Mourning.

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