

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks at a Rally for Senatorial Candidate Christopher A. Coons and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in Wilmington, Delaware
October 15, 2010

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. It is good to be back in Wilmington. Last time I was here, it was a day just like today, spectacular day. We were outside. Some of you were there. And it was just beautiful.

It is great to be back here in Delaware. It is an extraordinary honor to be here to campaign for the next great Senator from the State of Delaware, Chris Coons.

I want to just acknowledge some of the extraordinary public servants who are here. You've already heard from them or about them, but all these folks have been such great friends of mine and such terrific workers on behalf of Delaware, I want to make sure to make mention of them.

Governor Jack Markell is here, and he's just doing a great job. Where's Jack?—there he is. Lieutenant Governor Matt Denn is here, along with Zachary; Senator Ted Kaufman, done extraordinary work over the last 2 years—thank you, Ted; and my great friend, Tom Carper, senior Senator from Delaware.

Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden—we are so thrilled with the work that he's done but also his extraordinary service to our country. We are proud of him and grateful for him. And former Lieutenant Governor and soon-to-be Member of Congress John Carney is in the house.

And then there's this guy. [*Laughter*] I've had to make a lot of decisions over the last 24 months, both before I was President and since. The single best decision that I have made was selecting Joe Biden as my running mate—single best decision I've made. I mean that. It's true.

Joe has been an extraordinary Vice President, a great friend, a fighter, somebody who knows what our core mission is, which is making sure that we are growing this economy on behalf of a middle class so they can aspire to live out the American Dream. Joe has lived out that dream. He hasn't forgotten where he came from.

And so I know that me taking him out of Delaware for a while was frustrating, but I assure you, it was worth it at least for me—[*laughter*]—and I think for you. So I am grateful to all of you.

Now, that's why it's so important, in filling these enormous shoes of Joe, that we get somebody who represents those same Delaware values. And Chris is the kind of leader that you want representing you in the United States Senate.

He knows this State. He knows its values. When he talks about cleaning up Washington, it's from the standpoint of somebody who's cleaned house as a county executive, somebody who's balanced a budget, somebody who's cracked down on wasteful spending, somebody who even cut his own pay. Believe me, you won't see too many Members of Congress willing to do that.

Chris has traveled all across this State, talking to people, finding out what's on their minds, listening to their hopes for the future. He wants Delaware to be a leader on clean energy

because he knows it will lead to new jobs and new industries. And he's got a plan to make it happen. Chris isn't looking to be a voice for special interests. He wants to be a voice for Delaware. This is where he grew up. This is the community he's going to fight for if you send him to Washington.

Now, in a little more than 2 weeks, you have the opportunity, right here in Delaware, to set the direction of this State and this country for the next several years. In 2 weeks, you can continue the journey that we started in 2008. And just like you did in that election, you can defy the conventional wisdom that says you can't change Washington, you can't overcome the cynicism of politics, you can't overcome all the special interest money, you can't solve tough problems. That has always been the conventional wisdom.

It was the conventional wisdom 2 years ago. You remember that? Everybody said, "No, you can't." And 2 years ago, you said, "Yes, we can." And you can say that same thing 2 weeks from now.

I want everybody to be clear: There is no doubt this is a difficult election. It is difficult here, and it is difficult all across the country. And although I think Chris has so far run an extraordinary race, I don't want anybody here taking this for granted. This is a tough political environment. This is a tough political environment right now. This is a difficult election because we've been through an incredibly difficult time as a nation.

For most of the last decade, middle class families saw their costs rise and their incomes fall. They saw too many jobs disappear overseas. There were too many parents who couldn't afford to send their kids to college or see a doctor when they got sick, or Americans working two jobs, three jobs just to make ends meet. And all these problems were compounded when we had the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the worst in most of our lifetimes, a recession that cost us more than 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I took office; 750,000 jobs lost the month I was sworn in; 600,000 the month after that; 600,000 the month after that. All told, 8 million jobs lost, most of them lost before any of our economic had plans an opportunity to take effect.

It was a once-in-a-generation challenge. And I'll be honest with you—Joe will recall this—our hope was that because this was such a unique challenge, that it would cause both parties to put politics aside for the sake of the country. That was our expectation. Our hope was that we could move beyond the division and the bickering and the game-playing that had dominated Washington for so long, because although we are proud to be Democrats, we're prouder to be Americans.

But you know what happened. The Republican leaders in Washington made a different decision. And I want to be clear, it was the decision of Republicans in Congress, because I think there were a whole lot of Republicans all across the country who, in fact, wanted the same thing, but that's not what they saw in Washington. Their attitude—it was tactical on their part—was that we were climbing out of such a deep hole, they had made such a big mess, that they figured it was going to take some time to repair the economy, longer than any of us would like. They knew that people would be frustrated. They knew people would be angry. And they figured if they just sat on the sidelines and opposed us every step of the way, if they said no even to policies that they could agree with, that historically they had supported, then people might forget that they were the ones who had caused the mess, and that people's anger and frustration would lead them to success in the next election. That was their strategy.

And you have to give them credit. In terms of short-term tactics, it wasn't a bad strategy. In terms of what was good for the country, it didn't work out so well.

So the other side wants you to believe that this election is simply a referendum on the current state of the economy. But make no mistake: This election is a choice. This election is a choice, and the stakes couldn't be higher.

If they win this election, the chair of the Republican campaign committee has promised to pursue the exact same agenda as they did before I took office. And we know what that agenda was: You cut taxes, mostly for millionaires and billionaires, you cut rules for special interests, and then you cut middle class families loose to fend for themselves.

We also know the results of that agenda. It's not as if we didn't try it. *[Laughter]* This isn't—we don't have to guess in terms of how their theories might work out.

From 2001 to 2009, slowest job growth since World War II; 2001 to 2009, incomes for middle class families went down by 5 percent. Those aren't my claims. That was trumpeted in the Wall Street Journal. Took a record surplus and turned it to a record deficit, an agenda that let Wall Street run wild at the expense of folks on Main Street, an agenda that nearly destroyed our economy.

That's what they say they want to go back to, the exact same agenda. If they take over Congress, the other side has promised to roll back health reform so that insurance companies can go back to denying you coverage when you get sick or denying your child coverage if they've got a preexisting condition.

They want to roll back Wall Street reform so that taxpayers are on the hook again for Wall Street bailouts and credit card companies can hit you with hidden fees and penalties and mortgage brokers can steer you to the most expensive mortgage or a mortgage you can't afford.

They want to cut back on education spending by 20 percent to help pay for a \$700 billion tax break that only the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans will ever benefit from.

Audience member. No!

The President. My sentiments exactly. *[Laughter]*

This is the same theory they've been peddling for years. This is not as if they went off into the desert after 2008 and they said, boy, we really screwed up; let's meditate here a little bit, and let's try to figure out what we did wrong. And then they came back and they said, we realize the error of our ways, and we've got some new idea—that's not what's happening. They're just pretending as if all that stuff didn't happen.

And so it's up to you to remind your friends and your neighbors and your coworkers, we've tried that stuff. It didn't work. We've been there before, and we're not going back. We're moving forward, not backwards.

We don't want to keep giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas. We want to give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in Wilmington, right here in Delaware. We don't want tax cuts for folks who don't need them by borrowing from—the money from China to pay for them and cut education in the process. We want to invest in young people right here in the United States of America, because we know that the countries that out-educate us today are going to out-compete us tomorrow. And so we're going to invest in our young people.

We don't want to go back. We don't want to go back to the days where insurance companies and Wall Street banks had free rein to run roughshod over the middle class. We don't want to see 2 more years of gridlock and game-playing and point-scoring in Washington. We want to solve problems. We want to move forward. That's why Chris is running. That's why his family is putting up with him running, because we want to solve problems for the families of Delaware and people all across America.

We want a growing middle class and an economy that's built to compete in the 21st century. And because of the steps we've taken, we no longer face the possibility of a second depression. As Joe said, the economy is now growing again. The private sector—we've seen job growth in the private sector 9 months in a row now. But we still have a long way to go. We've still got a lot of work to do. There are a lot of people hurting out there. I hear from them every day, families hanging on by a thread. That's what's keeping me up at night. That's what keeps me fighting.

And I know this: The biggest mistake we could make right now as a country is to go back to the same policies that caused this hurt in the first place. The last thing we should do is return to a philosophy that nearly destroyed our economy and decimated the middle class over the course of years. And that's what this election is about: not where we are right now, but where we want to go 2 years from now and 5 years from now and 10 years from now and 20 years from now. It's not about the work we've done, but the work we have left to do.

And I bring this up not because I want to relitigate the past. It's because I don't want to relive the past. I want to reach for a better future.

And this election is a choice between our fears and our hopes. That's what's at stake right now. Look, Chris and I and Joe, we've got a different idea about what the next 2 years should look like. It's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built. We know government doesn't have the answer to all our problems. We believe government should be lean and efficient. And you've seen Chris's track record on that front as a county executive.

But in the words of Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican President, we also believe government should do for the people what they cannot do better for themselves. We believe in a country that rewards hard work and responsibility, a country where we look after one another, a country where we say, I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. I'm not just thinking about myself; I'm thinking about everybody. I want every child to succeed. I want everybody to climb that ladder to success. That's the choice in this election. That's what we're about. That's why we're Democrats. That's why we're going to win this election.

You're fired up?

Audience members. Yeah!

The President. We see a future where the next century is driven by American innovation and American ingenuity. We want to give tax breaks to companies that are creating jobs and investing in research and development right here in the United States, to small businesses, to American manufacturers, to clean energy companies. I don't want solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars and advanced batteries made in Europe or Asia. Chris Coons and I want them built here in the United States of America, by American workers. I want us to take the lead in energy independence. That's the choice in this election.

We see an America where every citizen has the skills and training to compete with any worker in the world. The other side might think it's a good idea to cut education by 20 percent,

but let's think about this. Do you think that China is cutting education by 20 percent? Is South Korea cutting education spending, or India or Germany? These countries, they're not cutting back on education. Those countries are not playing for second place, and neither should we. The United States of America, we play for first. We play for first place.

And that's why we took tens of billions of dollars—with the help of Tom and Ted and others—we took tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies that used to go to big banks; they're now going where they should be going, to students and families, millions of young people out there getting a break on their student loans so they can go to college. That's why we want to make our new college tax credit permanent. This is a tax credit worth \$10,000 in tuition relief for each student who's going to college. That's the America we believe in.

That's the America we believe in, where the middle class is growing and where opportunity is shared and the only limit to your success is how hard you are willing to work. That's why the tax cuts we want to make permanent would go to middle class families. That's why we'll fight the efforts of some in the other party to privatize Social Security, because as long as I'm President, no one is going to take the retirement savings of a generation of Americans and hand it over to Wall Street. Not on my watch. That's why we're going to keep fighting to keep the new protections we put in place for patients and consumers, so insurance companies can't drop you when you're sick, credit card companies can't jack up your rates without notice on your bill. That's the choice in this election. That's what we're fighting for.

Now, right now the same special interests that would profit from the other side's agenda, they are fighting hard, they're fighting back. To win this election, they are plowing tens of millions of dollars into front groups that are running misleading, negative ads all across America. Tens of billions of dollars are pouring in. And they don't have the courage to stand up and disclose their identities. They could be insurance companies or Wall Street banks or even foreign-owned corporations. We will not know because there's no disclosure. They've got these innocuous-sounding names—Americans for Prosperity and Moms for Motherhood. *[Laughter]* I made that last one up. *[Laughter]*.

But this isn't just a threat to the Democrats; it's a threat to our democracy. And the only way to fight it, the only way to match their millions of dollars is with millions of voices who are ready to finish what we started in 2008. And that's where you come in.

A lot of you got involved in 2008 because you believed we were at a defining moment in our history, a crossroads. You believed this is a time where the decisions we make won't just affect us; they're going to affect and shape the lives of our children and our grandchildren for decades to come. And that's the reason you knocked on doors and made phone calls and waited in line to cast your vote, some of you for the very first time, because you believed that your actions could make a difference, that you might play some small role in making big change.

Now we are in the midst not just of advocating for change, not just calling for change, but doing the grinding and sometimes frustrating work of delivering change inch by inch, day by day. And it's not easy. Believe me, Joe and I know. And I understand that some of the excitement has faded since election night or Inauguration Day. You know, that was fun. Beyonce was singing, and Bono. *[Laughter]* But that's not what the election was about.

I also know it's hard to keep faith when a family member still hasn't found a job after months of trying or another foreclosure sign is hung on the house down the street. And it doesn't help when you turn on the television and you see politicians tearing each other down or pundits who treat politics like a sport.

But I'm here to tell you, don't let anybody tell you that this fight is not worth it. Don't let them tell you that we're not making a difference. Because of you, there is a woman in New Hampshire right now who no longer has to choose between losing her home and treating her cancer. Because of you, there are parents right now who can look their children in the eye and guarantee that those kids are going to college. Because of you, there are small-business owners and clean energy entrepreneurs who can keep their doors open and put out "Help Wanted" signs in the window. Because of you, there are nearly 100,000 brave men and women who are no longer at war in Iraq—because of you. So don't let them tell you change isn't possible.

Don't let them convince you that we have not made progress. We have made progress. I've been using this analogy as I travel across the country. Now, these folks drove the car into the ditch. And Joe and I, Tom and Ted and others, we all put on our boots, and we went down into that ditch. And it was muddy, and it was nasty and hot. And there were bugs. [*Laughter*]

But we decided we were going to get that car out of the ditch. We kept on pushing. We kept on shoving. Every once in awhile, we'd look up, and the Republicans, they'd just be standing there—[*laughter*—]—fanning themselves, sipping on a Slurpee. [*Laughter*] And we would say, "Why don't you come down and help?" They'd say, "No, no, that looks muddy down there. No." [*Laughter*]

So we pushed anyway. We kept on pushing. We kept on pushing. And finally we got this car up on level ground, pointing in the right direction. And, you know, look, the car is a little dented up. It needs to go to the body shop. It needs a tuneup. But it's running, and it's ready to go forward.

And suddenly, we get this tap on our shoulder, and we look back, and who is it? The Republicans. They say, "Excuse me, can we have the keys back?" And we got to tell them, "No, you can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive." You can't have them back. Can't have them back. You can ride with us, but you got to ride in the back seat. We're not going to have special interests riding shotgun. We want the American people in the front.

You've noticed when you want your car to go forward, what do you do? You put it in "D." [*Laughter*] When you want it going backward, what do you do? You put it in "R." We want to go forward; we don't want to go back. Don't let them tell—don't let them take this country backwards.

Don't let them take this country backwards because you didn't care enough to fight for it. Because if our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents had made the same decision 50 years ago or 100 years ago, we would not be here tonight. The only reason we are is because past generations were unafraid to push forward. Even in the face of difficulty, even in the face of uncertainty, they were willing to do what was necessary, even when success was not promised and was sometimes slow and you had to grind it out. That's how we got through war. That's how we got through depression. That's why we have civil rights. That's why we have workers' rights. That's why we have women's rights. That's the spirit we need today.

The journey we started in 2008 was not about putting a President in the White House. It was never just about getting to election night. It was about every day after that and building a movement for change that endures. It's about realizing that in the United States of America, anything is possible if we're willing to work for it and fight for it and believe in it.

So I need you all to keep on fighting. I need all of you to knock on doors. I need all of you to talk to your neighbors. I need all of you to make phone calls. I need all of you to commit to vote for Chris Coons. Because if you are willing to step up to the plate, we won't just win this

election, we're going to restore our economy and rebuild our middle class, and we will reclaim the American Dream for this generation.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. at the Grand Opera House. In his remarks, he referred to Zachary Denn, son of Delaware Lieutenant Governor Matthew P. Denn; Rep. Pete Sessions, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee; and entertainers Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. "Bono" Hewson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Senatorial candidate Christopher A. Coons, rally in Wilmington, DE.

Locations: Wilmington, DE.

Names: Biden, Joseph R. "Beau," III; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Carney, John C., Jr.; Carper, Thomas R.; Coons, Christopher A.; Denn, Matthew P.; Denn, Zachary; Hewson, Paul D. "Bono"; Kaufman, Edward E. "Ted"; Knowles, Beyonce G.; Markell, Jack A.; Sessions, Pete.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Domestic investment, proposed tax breaks for; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Business and industry : Labor issues :: Organized labor; Civil rights : Civil rights movement; Civil rights : Women's rights and gender equality; Congress : Bipartisanship; Delaware : Democratic Party event; Delaware : Governor; Delaware : President's visit; Democratic Party : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Economy, national : Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; 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; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Science and technology : Research and development; Social Security and retirement : Social Security personal retirement accounts, proposed; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; White House Office : Vice President.

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