

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

**Remarks at a Rally for Representative Tom Perriello in Charlottesville,  
Virginia**

*October 29, 2010*

*The President.* Hello, Cavaliers! Thank you! Are you fired up? Oh, it is good to be back in Charlottesville. Good to be back.

I want to thank Mayor Dave Norris for his hospitality. UVA, thank you. I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd stop by just to make sure you get out and vote on Tuesday for one of the best Congressmen Virginia has ever had, Tom Perriello.

*Audience member.* I love you!

*The President.* Now—I love you back. It's great to see you. Thank you.

Now, look, I am here for one reason. I'm not here because Tom votes with me on every issue. Sometimes he disagrees with me. There are times where I know that his first allegiance is not to party labels, it's not to the Democratic Party; it is to the people of his district and the people of Virginia.

The reason I am here is because in this day and age, let's face it, political courage is hard to come by. The easiest thing to do, especially when you're a first-term Congressman, the easiest thing to do is make your decisions based on the polls. You put your fingers up to the wind, you check which way the political wind is blowing before you cast every vote. That's how a lot of folks think they should do their jobs in Washington.

And that's not who Tom is. He did not go to Washington—he didn't go to Washington to do what was easy, to do what was popular. He went to do what was right.

*Audience members.* Go, Tom, go! Go, Tom, go! Go, Tom, go!

*The President.* Go, Tom, go! Go, Tom, go! Go, Tom, go! Go, Tom, go!

Tom went to help make the tough decisions necessary to save this economy from a second depression. He went to fight for jobs in Virginia. And in the last 6 months, this district has seen the announcement of over 2,000 new jobs, including new clean energy jobs right here in this district.

Tom Perriello went—Tom went to Washington to make college more affordable for students and families. We got any students here today? The first bill Tom wrote was a \$2,500 tuition tax credit that is now the law of the land, helping you.

Tom went to Washington to take on the insurance companies and the credit card companies and the Wall Street banks, to make sure they can't take advantage of his constituents or the American people. That's what Tom Perriello is about.

So Tom Perriello went to Washington to do what's hard. He went to do what is right. And now the lobbyists and the special interests are going after him. And the question I have for you is, when somebody like this has your back, do you have his back?

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

*The President.* Sounds like you do. Look, Charlottesville, in 4 days, you have the chance to set the direction of this State and this country not just for the next 2 years, but for the next 10 years, for the next 20 years, just like you did in 2008.

You can defy the conventional wisdom. You know what that is: The conventional wisdom that says that you can't overcome the cynicism of our politics; that you can't overcome the special interests, you can't overcome the big money, you can't tackle our biggest challenges, you don't want to make waves.

We always say we want integrity from our elected officials. And you know what, this is a test case right here in Charlottesville, because this man has integrity. And in 4 days, you have the chance to say, yes we can.

Now, there is no doubt this is a tough election. It's tough in Tom's district. It's tough all across the country because we have gone through an incredibly difficult time as a nation.

For most of the last decade, middle class families were hurting. Between 2001 and 2009, when the other party was in charge, we saw the slowest job growth of any time since World War II. The average middle class income went down 5 percent. This is when they were in charge.

Meanwhile, as your incomes were going down, your costs of living, health care, college tuition, groceries, all were going up. Too many jobs were leaving this area and going overseas. Too many parents couldn't afford to send their kids to college or go to a doctor when they got sick. Americans were working two to three jobs just to make ends meet. All this was happening before the crisis. And it all culminated and was compounded by the worst economic situation since the Great Depression.

We lost 4 million jobs before Tom and I were even sworn into office, in the 6 months before we were sworn in; 750,000 the month we were sworn in; 600,000 the month after that; 600,000 the month after that. We were in a freefall. We'd lost almost 8 million jobs before any of our economic policies had a chance to be put into effect.

And when Tom and I went to Washington, we both hoped that Republicans and Democrats would take some time to put politics aside because we had a once-in-a-generation challenge, because although we are proud to be Democrats, we are prouder to be Americans.

And there are plenty of Republicans around the country that feel the same way. But Republican leaders in Washington, they made a different decision. They realized—they looked around, they said, "Boy, we really made a big mess out of this economy, and it's going to take a long time to fix it, and in the meantime people will probably be angry and frustrated. So maybe if we just sit on the sidelines and say no to everything and don't lift a finger to help, knowing that unemployment will still be high, maybe we'll—maybe, just maybe, people will blame the Democrats instead of us." That was their basic strategy.

And so now in this election the other side is betting on amnesia. They're betting that you forgot who caused this mess in the first place. So, Charlottesville, it is up to you to let them know that we have not forgotten. It's up to you to remember this election is a choice between the policies that got us into this mess and the policies that are getting us out of this mess.

Let me tell you something. If they win this election, the chair of a Republican campaign committee has promised, quote, "the exact same agenda" as before Tom and I took office. In other words——

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* No, no—now, this is the agenda that resulted in the worst economy since the Great Depression, an agenda of cutting taxes mostly for millionaires and billionaires. You cut the rules for special interests and big corporations. You cut middle class families loose to fend for themselves. It's the same agenda that turned a record surplus into a record deficit, the same agenda that allowed Wall Street to run wild, the same agenda that nearly destroyed our economy.

Now, look, this is not as if we had not tried their agenda. Charlottesville, we tried it for 8 years. It didn't work. And so I bring all this up not because I want to reargue the past. I just don't want to relive the past. We've been through it before. We're not going back there. We're not going back.

Think about what has happened over the last 20 months. Because of the steps—because of the steps we've taken, we no longer face the possibility of a second depression. The economy is growing again. Private sector jobs we've seen increase 9 months in a row.

Now, look, nobody knows better than Tom that we've still got a long way to go. We've still got a lot of work to do.

There are too many people hurting here and all across the country. There are families who are still hanging on by a thread. That's what keeps me up at night. That's what keeps Tom up at night. How can we help families who got hit hard during this recession? How can we make sure that they're back up on their feet?

But you know what, we've got a different idea about what the next 2 years should look like, what the next 10 and 20 years should look like. It's very different from what the Republicans are thinking.

It's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built. I just had a chance to meet Tom's mom and—[*applause*]*—*Tom's mom. And just talking to her, you can tell that this is somebody who understands what it means to work hard and to raise a family. And both Tom and I know what it's like to see our families struggle once in a while. And we know that government doesn't have all the answers to our problems. And we believe government should be lean and it should be efficient. And we believe that job growth is going to come from the private sector and that each of us have responsibilities to take individual initiative to make it.

But in the words of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, we also believe that government should do for the people what the people can't do better for themselves. We believe in hard work and responsibility. But we also believe in a country that invests in its future, that invests in its children, that helps workers get retrained, where we look after one another, where we say, "I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper." That's that America we love. That's the America we believe in. That's the choice in this election.

We believe in an America that invests in its future and its people, an America that's built to compete in the 21st century. We know the jobs and businesses of tomorrow will end up in the countries with the most educated workforce, the best infrastructure, the strongest commitment to research and technology. I want that nation to be the United States of America. Tom wants that nation to be the U.S. of A.!

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* U.S.A.!

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* There is no reason that China should have faster railroads or newer airports than we do. We're the nation that built the transcontinental railroad. We're the nation that built the Interstate Highway System.

Today, we see an America where we've put—because of Tom's efforts, because of our efforts, we've put thousands of people, people right here in Virginia, to work building new railroads and runways and highways, an America where we build an infrastructure for the 21st century and put people to work doing the work that America needs doing.

We see an America where we invest in homegrown innovation and ingenuity, where we export more goods so we create more jobs here at home, where we make it easier to start a business or patent an invention.

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 Charlottesville, right here in Virginia, to small businesses and American manufacturers and clean energy companies. I don't want solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars made in Europe or made in Asia. I want them made here in the United States of America with American workers. That's the choice in this election.

We see an America where every citizen—not just some, but every citizen—have the skills and the training to compete with any worker in the world. We can't allow other countries to outcompete us when it comes to math or science or college graduation rates. We used to be number one in college graduation rates. Now we're number nine. We used to be number one in science and math. Now we're 21st and 25th. That makes no sense.

And that's why, working with Tom, we've made historic investments in education. That's why we set a goal that by 2020 we will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

That's why—that's why Tom and I refuse to think it makes sense to pay for a \$700 billion tax cut for millionaires and billionaires and then cut education by 20 percent to pay for it. Let me tell you, China is not cutting education. South Korea is not cutting its education spending. India is not cutting education spending. Germany is not cutting education spending. Those countries aren't playing for second place. And neither does the United States of America. We play for first place.

That's why, thanks to Tom, tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies that used to go to the big banks are now going where they should, to you, to students, to help support your college education. That's why we want to make permanent the college tax credit that Tom Perriello fought for, a tax credit worth \$10,000 of tuition relief for each student. That is the choice in this election. That is the America that we believe in.

We see an America where corporations live up to their responsibilities to treat consumers fairly, to play by the same rules as everybody else. That's why we made sure insurance companies can't jack up your premiums for no reason or deny you coverage because you're sick. That's why we made sure credit card companies can't hit you with hidden fees and penalties. That's why we made sure taxpayers never again are on the hook for the irresponsibility of Wall Street.

We see an America where we don't pass on a mountain of debt to the next generation. And we will attack the trillion-dollar deficit that I inherited when I took office. But we will do it

in a responsible way, not by cutting education. We won't do it by putting the burden on our children or our seniors or our veterans or our middle class families. We won't do it by borrowing another \$700 billion to give tax cuts to folks who don't need them and weren't even asking for them. We'll do it by asking for shared sacrifice from all Americans. That's how we do things in America. That's the choice in this election.

So, Charlottesville, we've got a lot of work to do in these next few years.

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* Yes! [Laughter] Exactly. We've got a lot of work to do in the next few years. And we need to work together, Democrats and Republicans, Independents, all to get it done.

But the leaders of the other party, so far they don't see it that way. They're feeling kind of cocky right now. They're feeling a little cocky. And the Republican leader in the House says that "this is not the time for compromise." That's what he said. That's a quote. "This is not the time for compromise."

The Republican leader of the Senate—the Republican leader of the Senate said that his main goal for the next 2 years, this is his top priority, is to beat me in the next election.

That's his top priority. I mean, he didn't say, "My top priority is to create jobs for folks in Virginia." He didn't say, "My top priority is to make America more competitive." He's already thinking about the next election. This one is not even over yet. We haven't even finished this election. He's already thinking about the next election.

That's what's wrong with Washington. That doesn't make any sense. That's the kind of cynicism that we're fighting against. That's the kind of politics we need to change in this country; the kind of politics—you know, this kind of politics that puts scoring points ahead of solving problems. I mean, it's so prevalent it happens every day.

And the sad thing is sometimes that cynicism is rewarded. Sometimes because of all the special interest money pouring in, all the negative ads, all the clout, sometimes folks who were operating in the best interests of their constituents, sometimes they don't win because folks don't turn out, because folks don't vote, because folks feel like, well, this is just too hard.

This is where all—this is where all of you come in, because the only way to fight that cynicism, the only way to fight the millions of dollars of special interest attack ads that they're running is with the millions of voices who are ready to finish what we started in 2008.

See, 2008 was just—that wasn't the end goal. It wasn't just to put a President in. It wasn't just to put Tom in. It was to keep building a movement for change. And if everybody—if everybody who fought for change in 2008 shows up in 2010, then we will win this election, and Tom is going back.

So I want you to think back to—some of you got involved in 2008 because you believed we were at a defining moment in our history. We still are. You believed this is a time where the decisions we make won't just affect us, but will affect future generations, our children and our grandchildren. That's still true.

You knocked on doors and you made phone calls and you cast your vote, some for the very first time, because you knew that if we didn't act now, then the opportunity to keep the American Dream alive might slip away. And that's still the case.

Actually delivering change isn't easy. Believe me, I know. So does Tom. [*Laughter*] I mean, we've got our lumps. We've been getting beat up pretty good. But the reason we're here—the reason we're here is—the reason we're here is because the lumps we've taken are nothing like the lumps that people have been taking for so many years out there. Folks who have worked hard, done everything right and are at risk of losing their home or lost their job or suddenly aren't sure whether they can send their kids to college, we've got to remember those folks. We've got to remember what this is about.

I understand that some of the hoopla and the excitement of election night and Inauguration Day from a couple years ago, that fades. Beyonce was singing and Bono was there. All that stuff—all that stuff fades away, but that spirit can't fade.

And it's still in each of you. Don't let anybody take that away from you. Don't let folks tell you that all that effort has not been worth it. Don't let them tell you we're not making a difference.

Because of you, right now there are folks in Virginia who don't have to choose between losing their home and getting treatment for their cancer. Because of you, there are parents who can look their children in the eye and say, you are going to college. Because of you, there are small businesses who are able to keep their doors open during this great recession. Because of you, there are nearly 100,000 brave men and women who are coming back from Iraq—because of you.

So don't let them tell you—don't let them tell you change isn't possible. Here's what I know. This country was founded on what seemed impossible. We had 13 colonies come together and have to battle the greatest empire on Earth. And then they drafted this document nobody had ever tried before, proclaiming, "We hold these truths to be self-evident"—a son of Virginia wrote those words—"that all men are created equal." "And they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

And there were those that didn't believe, but the Founders understood, as imperfect as we were, as long as it would take, that we would be set on a journey to perfect this Union. And think of everything our forbearers went through for us to be here tonight, those who braved oceans because they emigrated, those who fought slavery, those who made sure women had the right to vote, those who made sure that workers had the right to organize.

Imagine if they had given in to cynicism, if they had said, oh, this is too hard. Oh, we're being attacked. [*Laughter*] Oh, there are negative ads being run against us. [*Laughter*] Oh, this is taking too long. Oh, somebody is filibustering. [*Laughter*] They could have given up. They went through much tougher fights than we went through. They got beat up a lot; they got beat up, literally. [*Laughter*]

But they kept on going. They kept on dreaming. They kept on believing. They kept on pushing, even in the face of difficulty, even in the face of uncertainty. They understood that they had to do what was necessary.

And that's what brought us through war. And that's what brought us through depression. And that's what got us civil rights. And that's what got us women's rights. And that's what got us worker's rights. And that's what made this the greatest country on Earth. That's the spirit we need today. That's the journey that put me in the White House. That's what sent Tom Perriello to Congress. That is what we have to sustain, is that realization that in the United States of

America, anything is possible if we're willing to work for it, if we are willing to fight for it and believe in it.

So I need you guys to keep on fighting. Tom needs you to keep on believing. In these last 4 days, I need you to knock on doors and make phone calls and talk to your neighbors and vote, because if you're willing to step up to the plate, we won't just win this election, we won't just send Tom back to Congress, but we will rebuild this middle class. And we will put people back to work, and we will reclaim the American Dream for future generations.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. in Charlottesville Pavilion. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Perriello, mother of Rep. Perriello; House Republican Leader John A. Boehner; Senate Minority Leader Addison M. "Mitch" McConnell; and entertainers Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. "Bono" Hewson.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Rep. Tom Perriello, rally in Charlottesville, VA.

*Locations:* Charlottesville, VA.

*Names:* Boehner, John A.; Hewson, Paul D. "Bono"; Knowles, Beyonce G.; McConnell, Addison M. "Mitch"; Norris, Dave; Perriello, Linda; Perriello, Tom.

*Subjects:* Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Credit cards, regulations and consumer protections; Business and industry : Domestic investment, proposed tax breaks for; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Business and industry : Labor issues :: Organized labor; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Promotion efforts; Business and industry : Small businesses, promotion efforts; Civil rights : Racial equality; Civil rights : Woman's rights and gender equality; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Economy, national : Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Career training and continuing education; Education : Postsecondary education :: College dropout rate; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Postsecondary education :: Tax credits, expansion; Education : Science and math programs; Elections : 2010 Congressional elections; Elections: 2010 Congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Government organization and employees : Federal programs, performance of, improvement efforts; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Housing: Foreclosure rates; Slavery (historical) in U.S.; Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Transportation : Infrastructure, national improvement efforts; Transportation : Mass transit and rail infrastructure, improvement efforts; Virginia : Democratic Party event; Virginia : President's visit.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201000926.