

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Boston,
Massachusetts**

May 18, 2011

The President. Hello, Boston! It is good to be back in Boston. It's good to be back with one of the finest Governors in the United States of America and my friend, Deval Patrick. It's good to be back with one of the finest mayors in the United States of America, Tom Menino. It's good to be back with a great congressional delegation, including Niki Tsongas and Bill Keating.

And this is a little tough to say, but it's good to be back with some Celtics. See, look at Ray. Ray was—Ray wishes he was in Chicago tonight, actually. [*Laughter*] But I am so grateful not only to Ray Allen, who is a great friend—and just a gorgeous family; I had a chance to say hello to them today—the greatest three-point shooter of all time. But to have the honor of knowing and becoming friends with perhaps the greatest basketball player—certainly the greatest champion—of all time, Bill Russell, what a outstanding honor. And his beautiful daughter Karen, thank you. Bill knows how to win, and he's on my team.

It is good to be back in Boston. Back in 2004, I gave a little speech here that got some attention. It's been downhill ever since. [*Laughter*] But it's good to get out of Washington, DC. Now, look, I—DC is a nice town. It has been treating my family wonderfully. But the conversation you hear in Washington is very different than the one you hear around the kitchen table or around the water cooler.

And that's why we decided, for our reelection campaign, for the first time in modern history, we would be based outside of Washington, DC. We were going back to Chicago, because I don't want our campaign to be hearing only from lobbyists and pundits and insiders. I want our campaign to be hearing from the people who sent me to the White House. I want to be hearing from you. I want to make sure we're putting our campaign in your hands.

I want our campaign in the hands of the same organizers, the same volunteers, the same folks who drove up to New Hampshire and trudged around in the snow and hung in there with us after we lost the primary and all the wonderful people who, in some cases, hadn't been involved in politics before but felt this was a moment to do extraordinary things. That's what this campaign is still about.

Now, a few things have changed since that time. Ray Allen doesn't get older, but I do. [*Laughter*] I'm a little bit grayer. I've got a few dings and dents.

Audience member. We love you, Barack!

The President. I appreciate that. [*Laughter*] But let's face it, you know? I mean, these Presidential years are dog years, so—[*laughter*]. But all of us can still remember that night in Grant Park, the excitement in the streets, the sense of possibility in the air. And I hope you all remember what I said then. I said, this isn't the end, this is the beginning. This is just the start of what is going to be a steep climb.

And that summit is going to be the moment when we can say that America's promise has been fulfilled and every child in America has opportunity and anybody who wants a job can find one and the middle class, when they carry their responsibilities and they're looking after

their family and looking after their neighborhoods and looking after their communities, that they know they can achieve the American Dream.

We said, at the time, the climb would be steep. Now, it's turned out to be a little steeper than we expected. [Laughter] We took office in the middle of the worst recession in our lifetimes. We lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I was sworn in. In the few months after I was sworn in, before our economic policies had to take effect, we lost another 4 million. All across the country, folks out of work; hundreds of thousands without homes; a recession so severe that families all across America are still feeling the aftershocks, still grappling with the challenges of something that we had not seen in our lifetime before.

And in response, we had to move swiftly and boldly, and we had to take some tough decisions that were not always popular. And you know what, 2½ years later, an economy that was shrinking by 6 percent is now growing. Over the last 3 months alone, we've added about three-quarters of a million private sector jobs. Over the last 14 months, we've added more than 2 million private sector jobs. And some of the things that folks said would not work, they worked. GM is hiring all of its workers back. The Big Three are all making a profit again.

We still got some climbing to do, though, so you can't put away those hiking shoes. Just today there was a story in the paper about how manufacturing jobs are coming back, in part because of the policies we put in place. But wages—the wages that are being paid aren't what they used to be. It used to be that if you were willing to work hard, you could bring home a paycheck that supported a family. But now, even if you've got a job, you may be worrying about living paycheck to paycheck. And you can't afford the rising cost of everything from health care to groceries to gas.

And the fact is, that was a problem that we knew about before the recession hit. We talked about this in 2007. We talked about it during the campaign, that for a decade before the financial crisis, even as the stock market was booming, corporate profits were up, the real incomes of families, the real wages of families had actually declined.

And so our mission was never just to rescue ourselves from a recession. Our mission was how do we restore that fundamental American compact that if you work hard and act responsibly, you're going to be able to get ahead and you're going to be able to put your kids through college and you know that they will have a better life than you did; you'll be able to retire with some measure of dignity and security; and that the country as a whole will maintain its large and optimistic spirit.

That's what was and is at risk of being lost. That's why I ran for President. That's why you supported me for President. I didn't run for this office so I'd have a fancy title or a nice place to live. My house in Chicago is just fine. [Laughter] I ran for this office to make sure everybody in this country gets a fair shake. I ran for this office to put the American Dream back within the reach of anybody who's willing to fight for it. That's why I ran. That's why you supported me.

Now, because of you, we've been able to make some great progress over these last few years. The progress shouldn't make us complacent, but it should remind us that change is possible. Change is hard. Change takes time. But it's possible. It should inspire us to finish what we started.

Think about it. Because of you, we were able to prevent a second great depression. Because of you, we cut taxes for 95 percent of working families. We cut taxes 16 times for small businesses so that they could weather extraordinarily difficult economic circumstances. But in the next few years, we've got to make sure that the new jobs and industries of our time are

created right here in the United States. In the next few years, we've got to make sure that America is prepared to win the future. We've got more work to do.

Because of you, we've ended the wasteful taxpayer subsidies that were going to banks, and we took that money and we used it to make sure college was more affordable for millions of students, billions of dollars going to make sure our young people get educated.

We've raised standards for teaching and learning in schools across the country by launching a competition called Race to the Top. But now we've got to keep that reform going until every child is ready to graduate, every child is ready for college, and they can actually afford to go as well. That's how we'll out-educate and out-compete the rest of the world for the jobs of the future. That's how America will succeed in the 21st century.

Because of you, we've made the largest investment in clean and renewable energy in our history, and it's already creating new jobs and new businesses. And at a time of high gas prices and instability around the world—and I know folks are getting hurt by high gas prices—that's why we've got to keep on making these investments.

That's why I was so disappointed yesterday when Republicans in Congress voted to keep handing \$4 billion a year in taxpayer subsidies to oil and gas companies at a time when they are making tens of billions of dollars each—huge profits—while you're struggling to fill up your gas tank. It has to stop. We could take that money and instead of subsidizing yesterday's energy, we should be investing in the energy of tomorrow. And we can clean up the planet in the process. That's the right thing to do.

Because of you, we've put hundreds of thousands of people back to work rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure. But now we've got to make sure that America is built to compete in the 21st century, not just building new roads and new bridges, but high-speed rail and high-speed Internet and a smart grid. We used to have the best infrastructure, the best stuff. Other people would come from other countries, and they'd visit, and they'd marvel at our engineering feats. And now we go to Beijing, and we marvel at their airports. And we go to Europe, and we marvel at their trains. That's not the American way. We've got more work to do.

Because of you, we did what we have been trying to do for almost a century. With a little assist from the former Governor of Massachusetts, we—*[laughter]*—we said that health care should no longer be a privilege in this country, it should be affordable and available for every American. We said that in the United States of America, just like here in Massachusetts, you should never go broke because you get sick.

Because of you, we passed Wall Street reform to make sure we never go through the kind of financial crisis that we went through and to make sure that you're not cheated when you take out a mortgage or you apply for credit card.

We passed a law that said women should get an equal day's pay for an equal day's work. And while we were at it, we put two more women on the Supreme Court, including the first Latina. We overturned "don't ask, don't tell" so everybody can serve the country they love.

We removed a hundred thousand troops from Iraq and ended our combat mission there, just like I promised we would. We're taking the fight directly to Al Qaida. And because of the bravery of our men and women in uniform, Usama bin Laden will never again threaten the United States of America.

So we've been pretty busy the last couple years. *[Laughter]*

Along the way, we dealt with H1N1 and an oil spill and pirates. *[Laughter]* Do you remember pirates? *[Laughter]* Golly. *[Laughter]* Thomas Jefferson had to deal with pirates. *[Laughter]* I thought we were past that. *[Laughter]*

But we've got a lot more work to do when it comes to keeping America both safe and prosperous. We need to keep moving forward on a whole range of challenges still facing this Nation. We're going to have to confront the challenge of immigration. We've got to pass comprehensive immigration reform that upholds our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. That's the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do. It's good for our economy.

And for all the progress we've made on energy, we've got more work to do to break this cycle of endless energy crises. We've got to bring about real energy reform that grows our economy and frees us from the grip of foreign oil, cleans up our planet for our children.

We've got to keep working to leave America better than we found it. And ultimately, that's what the budget debate is about that we're having in Washington right now. It's about who we are; it's about what we care about. It's the kind of country that we believe in.

See, I believe in an America where government lives within its means. We're going to have to cut spending in Washington. Deval has had to make tough choices. Tom Menino has had to make some tough choices. Sometimes there's programs you like but you just can't do them right now. So that means we've got to cut some domestic spending, we've got to cut defense spending, we've got to cut health care spending. We've got to cut spending in our Tax Code. We've got to get rid of loopholes that aren't doing anything to promote economic growth and put people back to work. We've got to eliminate every dime of waste.

And if we're serious about taking responsibility for the debt we owe—and if you are progressive, you need to be worried about the debt because we can't build a foundation for a strong economy if we're in hock—that all means we're going to have to make some tough decisions about those things that we can afford to do without. And we're all going to have to share in some sacrifice.

But here's what I won't do. I will not reduce our deficit by sacrificing the things that have always made America prosper. I will not sacrifice our investments in education. I will not sacrifice scholarships for our students. I will not sacrifice medical research for our scientists. I will not sacrifice the safety of our highways or airports or our food supply or clean air or clean water. I will not sacrifice our investments in clean energy at a time when our dependence on foreign oil is causing Americans so much pain at the pump. I will not sacrifice America's future. There are more than one way to mortgage America's future.

And Boston, if we want to reduce our deficit, our sacrifice has to be shared. And that means ending tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans in this country. I mean, this is the big thing for Republicans, just making sure that millionaires and billionaires keep their tax cuts. That's their main economic prescription. And I just want to make clear to them, it's not because I want to punish success that I think we have to roll these tax cuts back. Everybody likes a tax cut. I like tax cuts. *[Laughter]*

The easiest thing to do as a politician is say, "You don't have to do anything." That's the easiest thing to do, to just say to citizens, you know what, you don't have to do anything. Keep all your stuff. Get whatever benefits you want, and you don't have to do a thing.

I want everybody here to be successful. I want you to go as far as your dreams can take you. But if we're going to ask Americans to sacrifice a little bit, we can't tell folks like me that

we don't have to do a thing. I don't want a \$200,000 tax cut that's paid for by asking 33 seniors to each pay more than \$6,000 extra in Medicare costs. I don't want to do that.

I don't want my tax cut paid for by cutting Head Start for kids or doing away with health insurance for millions of people on Medicaid, seniors in nursing homes or poor kids or middle class families who are raising a child with a disability like autism. That's not a tradeoff I am willing to make. And I don't believe it's a tradeoff that most Americans want to make, no matter what party you belong to. That's not who we are. We are better than that.

I said this back in 2004: What makes America great is not just the height of our skyscrapers, it's not the might of our military, it's not the size of our GDP. What makes this country great is the character of our people.

Now, we are rugged individualists. We're self-reliant. We believe that each of us is endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. We don't like being told what to do. That's part of what makes us America. But what makes us America, what has driven this country, is that we combine that sense of individualism with an idea that we're all in this together, that I am my brother's keeper, that I am my sister's keeper, and that when I look out for somebody else, it makes my life better.

If I'm driving down the street and I pass a school and I know in that school, young people, no matter how poor they are, no matter what they look like, they're getting a great education, that makes me smile. That makes my life better.

If I'm walking along the Charles and I see a older couple holding hands, talking to each other, and I think to myself, well, that's me and Michelle, hopefully, when we can take a walk again—[laughter]—and knowing that after a lifetime of hard work, they've got the security of Social Security and of Medicare, that makes my life better.

If I know that somebody in a tough neighborhood, if they're willing to work hard, they're going to have opportunity, just like Deval had opportunity growing up in a tough neighborhood, then I'm thinking to myself, you know, my future will be bright because, who knows, that person somewhere along the way might start a new business that puts people to work or might invent some medicine that saves a life. That's what makes us special.

When I know that other people around me have a shot at the American Dream—that's our vision for America. It's not a vision of a small America. It's a vision of a big America, a generous America, a bold and optimistic America, where we're living within our means but we're still investing in our future, where everyone makes sacrifices and no one bears all the burden. No matter what we look like, where we come from, what God we worship to, no matter whether our ancestors landed on Ellis Island or came here on a slave ship or crossed the Rio Grande, we believe that we are all connected and we rise and fall together. And that is a strength. That is the strength of America. That's the heart of the idea of America. That's the heart of the idea of our campaign.

That's why I'm going to need your help now more than ever. This campaign is still in its early stages, but now is the time you can help shape it, make sure it gets out of the gate strong.

And I know there are times where some of you, over the last 2½ years, you've been frustrated because we haven't gotten everything done exactly how you wanted it, as quickly as you wanted it. I know. I know all your conversations. [Laughter] "Why did Obama compromise with the Republicans on that? Why did health care take so long? Where's our public option?"

Why? Why? [Laughter] Maybe he's changed." [Laughter] Although somewhere you still got that poster. [Laughter]

Look, there are times where I felt frustrated too. But we knew this would not be easy. This is a democracy. This country is big and diverse and full of different ideas, and power is diffuse, which is part of what preserves our liberty. And it means sometimes we compromise, and it means sometimes we don't get our way. And it means that things that are so obvious to us, so self-apparent to us, may be completely anathema to somebody else, and we've got to persuade them and argue it out and win folks over, one mind and heart and vote at a time. And yeah, that's sometimes frustrating.

We knew, on a journey like this, there were going to be setbacks, there were going to be detours. And there would be times where we stumble. I love when I hear people say, "Well, you know, he ran such a perfect campaign." What campaign were you on? [Laughter] It didn't feel perfect to me. [Laughter] I've got the scars to prove it. [Laughter] We screwed up all the time.

But what we knew was that at every juncture in our history, when our future was on the line, when our country was at a crossroads like we are now, we figured it out. We somehow managed to transform ourselves from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy and then to an information economy. We somehow managed to absorb new waves of immigrants. We managed to take on the stain of slavery. We managed to figure out how to make sure women were full participants in our democracy. We managed to move forward not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans, as one people, as one nation.

So when you hear people say that our problems are too big, when you hear people say we aren't going to bring about the changes that we seek, I want you to think about all the progress that we've made. I want you to think about all the unfinished business that lies ahead. And I want you to remember and remind everybody else those three simple words that we talked about in 2008 that apply right now as much as they did then: Yes we can.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:41 p.m. at the Boston Center for the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; W. Ray Allen, guard, and William F. Russell, former center, National Basketball Association's Boston Celtics; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization, who was killed in a U.S. Navy SEALs counterterrorism operation in Abbottabad, Pakistan, on May 1.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Boston, MA.

Locations: Boston, MA.

Names: Allen, W. Ray; bin Laden, Usama; Kagan, Elena; Keating, William R.; Menino, Thomas M.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Patrick, Deval L.; Romney, W. Mitt; Russell, Karen K.; Russell, William F.; Sotomayor, Sonia M.; Tsongas, Nicola S. "Niki".

Subjects: Agriculture : Food safety; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Aviation : Airport improvement projects; Budget, Federal : Accountability and transparency; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Fiscal year 2012; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement;

Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Promotion efforts; Civil rights : Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; Communications : Broadband technology; Deaths : bin Laden, Usama; Defense, Department of : Funding; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Diseases : Global influenza outbreak; 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 :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Standards and school accountability; Education : Teachers; Education, Department of : Funding; Education, Department of : Race to the Top Fund; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Foreign sources; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Energy : Infrastructure and grid improvements; Energy : National energy policy; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Subsidies, elimination; Environment : Air quality, improvement efforts; Environment : Quality and improvement efforts; Environment : Water quality, improvement efforts; Gulf of Mexico : Deepwater Horizon oil spill :: Environmental effects and cleanup efforts; Health and Human Services, Department of : Head Start programs; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Health and medical care : Research and development; Housing : Housing market :: Decline; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Massachusetts : Democratic Party events; Massachusetts : Governor; Massachusetts : President's visit; Social Security and retirement : Social Security program; Somalia : Piracy incidents, increase; Supreme Court : Associate Justices; Taxation : Tax Code :: Reform; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Transportation : High-speed rail lines, development and expansion; Transportation : Highway system, modernization efforts; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

DCPD Number: DCPD201100366.