

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami Beach, Florida

June 13, 2011

Thank you, everybody. It is wonderful to see you. Steve, to you and Dorothea, thank you for the incredibly gracious introduction and for opening up this extraordinary home. We really appreciate it.

To everybody who is here, all the cohosts who helped make this event happen, thank you. To Debbie Wasserman Schultz, thank you for letting me in your district. We love Debbie. She—if you're in the foxhole, you want Debbie alongside you, because not only is she charming and has that dazzling smile, but she's tough as nails. And that's what's needed during challenging times.

You know, when I was taking photographs, Steve mentioned—he said, "This must be really the toughest time to be President that I can recall." And Steve has known some Presidents. And what I told him was that there's no doubt that the country has gone through an extraordinary trauma. And there are a lot of folks here who remember my first campaign, that were big supporters during the first campaign. And we talked about the challenges that America had been going through for the previous decade: that job growth had been slow, that inequality was on the rise, that our school system had declined, that we didn't have an energy strategy that was appropriate for the 21st century.

All those challenges were worsened as a consequence of the financial crisis. And so people who were already struggling—middle class families who were already treading water and trying to figure out how to get by when their income and wages had flatlined, even though costs of everything from health care to college tuition to groceries and gas had gone up—they really took it even worse in the chin over the last couple of years.

And my job over these first 2 years has frankly been to clean up a big mess. And so working with Debbie, we were able to make sure that we yanked an economy out of what could have been a second great depression, that we stabilized the financial system. We made sure that we ended one war and started putting another war on the path where we could start bringing our troops home. We had to restore a sense around the world of what American values and ideals were all about. We had to make sure that we put in place sensible regulations in the financial system to ensure that another financial meltdown would not happen again. We had to address an auto industry that was on the verge of liquidation. We had to get the economy growing again, and we had to get jobs created again.

And I could not be prouder of the track record that we've put together under these trying times. Over the last 15 months, we've created over 2 million jobs. The auto industry is now profitable for the first time in a decade and is actually hiring folks and producing cars that not just folks here in America, but all around the world want to buy, and they've paid back most of the money that they got from taxpayers because we had faith in the workers and the people who are producing cars there.

The financial system is now running again, although not as fast as we'd like, and the banks have paid back the money that we put in place because of the strong stewardship that we showed.

Along the way, we got a few other things done, like making sure that you could serve in our military no matter who you love. We made sure that young people could afford to go to college without amassing hundreds of thousands worth of debt, because we made sure that subsidies that were going to the banks were now going directly to college students.

We appointed the first Latina to the Supreme Court, and we made sure that people get paid an equal day's pay for an equal day's work.

And so even in the midst of struggles, even in the midst of challenges, we were able to move that proactive agenda forward. But here's my main message to you today: We've still got a lot more work to do. We still have a lot more work to do.

We may have made the largest investment in green energy technology in our history, but we still don't have the kind of energy policy that would benefit the greatest nation on Earth. We're still too dependent on foreign oil. We're seeing right now the effects of a spot oil market because we haven't thought through how we start freeing ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. And by the way, in the process, we have ended up financing folks who aren't particularly on our side on a whole range of issues. And so we've got to change course. That's work that remains to be done.

We still don't have a smart immigration policy in this country. It still doesn't make sense to think that we attract young people from all around the world to come here, study, get Ph.D.s in engineering and math and science, and then we tell them, "Go home," instead of having them stay here and start businesses and create economic growth here in America; and allow people to live in the shadows, separating families, when we know that one of our strengths has been both a nation of—to be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. We've got more work to do.

I could not be prouder of the work that we've done on health care, making sure that every American in this country can find affordable, accessible health care, which, by the way, will also end up saving us money, because if we've got a more efficient health care system, if we've got a smarter health care system that invests in things like preventive diseases, then we save all the money we're spending in the emergency room. And by the way, we give people some security and peace of mind.

But even though we passed the law, we've still got to implement it. And that's going to require us doing the hard work not just this year, not just next year, but over the next 5 years to make sure that that system's in place and we can start bending the cost curve on health care and save taxpayers money along the way.

We've still got to make sure that around the world, the progress that we've made over the last 2 years is not lost. And we've got to make sure that in certain areas that I know are of huge interest to the people of South Florida, that America is representing our best values and our best ideals.

In the Middle East, we will have to continue to be a stalwart ally of Israel, but we cannot give up on peace in the Middle East, because that's the only way that we can achieve full security.

Our neighbors in Haiti are still going to be depending on us to make sure that in the process of rebuilding, that we don't return to the bad governance that has plagued that country for so long, and that with a new government there, we're actually a partner with them to make

sure that all the folks who were devastated by the earthquake are put in a position where they can finally live out their dreams.

Around the world, people are still looking to America for leadership. And we can provide that leadership, but it starts at home. And so the most important thing we can do is make sure that we are doing the things that are necessary to grow this economy. I was just in—up in North Carolina meeting with my jobs council and some of the CEOs of some of the top businesses in the country; Intel and GE were there. And to a person, everybody said we have what it takes for America to grow and to prosper. What's preventing us right now is a lack of political will that can only be provided, I believe, by a strong Democratic Party and a Democrat in the White House. I believe that.

And the reason I believe it is because the last time we had a balanced budget, who was President? It was a Democratic President. The last time we had the kind of growth that lifted all boats, who was it? It was a Democratic President. And so for us to make the tough decisions that are required to start pulling down our deficit, getting a handle on our debt, but doing so in a way that continues to make investments in those things that have made America the land of opportunity—that's what this next election is going to be about. This is going to be a values debate. It's not just dry numbers, it's not just budgets. It's about who we are as a people, and do we still have a big, optimistic, bold, hopeful, compassionate, generous spirit, and is that reflected in how our Government operates.

I want an America where every young person who is willing to work hard knows that they can still make it, and that they're going to schools that teach them the skills they need to be the best workers in the world. And we're not there yet.

And I want an America where we've got the best infrastructure in the world, where we're not having to fly to Singapore—excuse me, Ambassador—or other places to see an airport that actually works or go to China to see high-speed rail. I want us to know that we can still do big things here in America.

I want an America in which we are still looking out for our seniors. And yes, we've got to make changes so that Medicare and Social Security are there for future generations. But we're not going to do it by privatizing it. We're not going to have to do it by voucherizing it. We're not going to do it by shifting costs onto folks who are the most vulnerable. We've got to do it in a way that shares the burdens for all people, because we all benefit from this extraordinary country. And obviously, no one has benefited more from the opportunities of this country than I have.

So when I see these young people who are sitting here, my question is: What kind of country are we going to be living—leaving them? Are we doing right by them? And I'm confident that we are in a position to do right by them, but we're going to have to work hard.

This process that began in 2008 is not done. When I stood there in Grant Park on that gorgeous night in November, I said to people, this is not the end, this is the beginning, and we have a steep hill to climb. I didn't know exactly how steep it was going to be. *[Laughter]* But I said we had a steep hill to climb. And we're just part of the way up that hill. We're going to have a lot more work to do.

And so for those of you who were involved in the campaign back in 2008 and you thought, boy, this is so exciting, and Obama is so fresh, and you had the posters and—*[laughter]*—now you look and you say, "Boy, the guy is—his hair is really gray now and"—*[laughter]*—"he's got a few bags under his eyes, and maybe my friends were all saying to me, 'Oh, I don't know, we

thought the change would come faster and"—I just want to remind you, big changes don't happen overnight.

This is a democracy that we live in. And that's—that is a wonderful thing, but it's messy and it's diverse, and it means there are going to be contentious arguments. And for those of you who think somehow that this period of time, things are more contentious or polarized than they've ever been, just look back at your history. I mean, we've had some big battles in this country around women's rights and worker's rights and civil rights and the shift from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy and huge issues of war and peace. It's always been contentious. That's part of what being a democracy is all about.

But I have never been more optimistic or more hopeful about what we can accomplish. And when I meet young people around the country, there's a spirit in them, a belief, a faith, a confidence, a can-do spirit that continues to inspire me and I hope inspires you.

So bottom line is this: Just as that night at Grant Park was the beginning, well, this is another beginning. And I want all of you to be just as geared up, just as fired up as you were 2½ years ago, as you were 3 years ago. If you are, I guarantee you, not only are we going to win in 2012, but more importantly, we're going to deliver the kind of country we want to our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you, everybody. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:23 p.m. at the residence of former U.S. Ambassador to Singapore Steven J. Green and his wife Dorothea. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, chair, Democratic National Committee; and former President William J. Clinton.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Miami Beach, FL.

Locations: Miami Beach, FL.

Names: Clinton, William J.; Green, Dorothea; Green, Steven J.; Sotomayor, Sonia M.; Wasserman Schultz, Deborah.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Agriculture : Food markets and prices; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Civil rights : Wage equality; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Credit markets, stabilization efforts; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Income inequality, increase; 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; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Foreign sources; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Energy : National energy policy; Florida : Democratic Party events; Florida : President's visits; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Haiti : Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts; Haiti : U.S. assistance; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and

medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Health and medical care : Preventive care and public health programs; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Israel : Relations with U.S.; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Social Security and retirement : Social Security program; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Treasury, Department of the : Troubled Asset Relief Program; White House Office : Jobs and Competitiveness, President's Council on.

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