

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Las Vegas,
Nevada**

October 24, 2011

The President. Hello, Vegas! Thank you. Thank you so much. It is good to be back in Las Vegas. It is good to be back in Nevada. I love coming to Vegas. The only people who love coming more is my staff. *[Laughter]* I would not be surprised if some of them miss the plane accidentally. *[Laughter]* But it is wonderful to be with all of you.

I want to especially thank Stephen for the incredible work that he is doing right now, because as a consequence of his work, we are going to see more tourism dollars in Las Vegas, more tourism dollars in Nevada, more tourism dollars in the United States of America. So please give him a big round of applause for all his efforts.

I see a lot of friends here, folks who have been with me for a long time. And to all of you, I just want to say thank you. But I'm here today not just because I need your help again. I am here because the country needs your help. I'm here because if you thought that the last election was critical to our future, then I can promise you that what happens in the coming year is going to be even more consequential. It's going to matter to our kids; it's going to matter to our grandkids.

For the past 3 years, we've been wrestling with two kind of crises. We've been dealing with an economic crisis that left far too many folks without a job, far too many folks struggling with housing. But we've also been dealing with a political crisis.

All across the country, people are crying out for action. A lot of folks have spent months looking for work. Others are doing their best just to get by, having to make tough decisions every single day. Maybe they don't go out to a restaurant because they can't afford the gas. Maybe they give up their retirement for now so that they can send their child to college. And you know, these Americans are not asking for a lot. They're not looking for handouts. They don't think government can or should solve all their problems. But they do believe what most of you believe: that America should be a place where no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, you can make it if you try; that this economy works best when it works for everybody, not just for those at the very top; that if opportunity exists for all Americans, then all of us do well—the folks in the middle and the folks at the top, as well as folks at the bottom.

Most Americans believe that hard work should pay off, that responsibility should be rewarded, that everybody in this country deserves a fair shake and everybody has a responsibility to do their fair share. And these beliefs aren't Democratic values. They're not Republican values. They are American values, and they're the bedrock of what this country has always stood for. That's why I ran for President in the first place. That's why so many of you supported me, poured your hearts into this campaign, because you believed that it was time for our politics to reflect our values.

Now, 3 years later, it's clear that a big chunk of Washington has not gotten the message yet. Just look at what's been going on since I introduced my jobs bill in September. Now, this is a bill that is filled with proposals that, traditionally, Democrats and Republicans have supported in the past: tax cuts for workers and small businesses; funding to rebuild our roads

and our bridges and our airports, our infrastructure, our transportation system; putting construction workers back on the job; hiring back teachers and cops, firefighters; giving incentives so that veterans are able to find work when they come home, because, I promise you, if you've laid down your life or risked your life for this country, you should not have to fight for a job when you come home.

So those are the proposals contained in this bill. It's a bill that's fully paid for by asking those of us who make more than \$1 million to pay a little more in taxes. Independent economists, people who look at this stuff for a living, say that it's the only plan out there right now that would create jobs in the short term as well as lay a foundation for economic growth in the long term. One economist said it would create nearly 2 million jobs next year—2 million. And by the way, that economist did not work for me. And polls show that an overwhelming majority of Americans support the proposals that are in this bill: Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

So we've got huge challenges in places like Nevada. We've got a jobs bill out there that is paid for and addresses those challenges. The question is, why, despite all the support, despite all the experts who say this jobs bill couldn't come at a more important time, when so many people are hurting, why the Republicans in Washington have said no? They keep voting against it. Now, maybe it's just because I am the one sponsoring it. I don't know. But last week, we had a separate vote on a part of the jobs bill that would put 400,000 teachers, firefighters, and police officers back on the job, paid for by asking people who make more than \$1 million to pay one-half of 1 percent in additional taxes. For somebody making \$1.1 million a year, that's an extra \$500—five hundred bucks. And with that, we could have saved 400,000 jobs.

Most people making more than \$1 million, if you talk to them, they'll say, I'm willing to pay \$500 extra to help the country. They're patriots. They believe we're all in this thing together. But all the Republicans in the Senate said no. Their leader, Mitch McConnell, said that—and I'm going to make sure I quote this properly—saving the jobs of teachers and cops and firefighters was just, I quote, "a bailout"—a bailout. These aren't bad actors who somehow screwed up the economy. They didn't act irresponsibly. These are the men and women who teach our children, who patrol our streets, who run into burning buildings and save people. They deserve our support.

This is the fight that we're going to have right now, and I suspect this is the fight that we're going to have to have over the next year. The Republicans in Congress and the Republican candidates for President have made their agenda very clear. They have two basic economic principles: first, tax cuts for the very wealthiest and the biggest corporations, paid for by gutting investments in education and research and infrastructure and programs like Medicare. That's agenda item number one. Second is just about every regulation that's out there they want to get rid of: clean air, clean water, you name it.

Now, I agree that there are some rules and regulations that put an unnecessary burden on business at a time when we can't afford it. I mean, we've seen this in our travel bureau, where the bureaucracy for getting a visa to come visit Vegas is too long. We want to get them here quicker; they can stay longer and spend more. And that's why, in addition to what we're doing with the travel bureau, we've already identified 500 regulatory reforms that will save billions of dollars over the next few years—billions of dollars over the next few years. But unfortunately, so far at least, we have not gotten any willingness on the other side to say that some regulations we can't give up.

We are not going to win the race in this competitive 21st century-economy by having the cheapest labor or the most polluted air. That's a race to the bottom that we can't win. There's always going to be a country out there that can exploit its workers more or pollute its air more or pollute its water more, have lower worker safety standards. There's always going to be somebody out there to win that competition. The competition we need to win is because we have the best scientists and we've got the best universities and we've got the best workers and we have the best infrastructure and we've got the best resorts and we've got the best ideas and we've got the best system and it's the most transparent and it's the most accountable. That's how we're going to win the competition for the future. And that's what's at stake right now in this race.

And the worst part is that the ideas that the other side are propagating we've tried. I mean, it would be one thing if, you know what, the economy is not doing very well, let's try something new. Let's try a whole radical new agenda. But what they're proposing we tried for 10 years. Remember? Does anybody remember?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. We cut taxes for our wealthiest citizens. We didn't enforce worker safety rules. We didn't enforce antipollution standards. We didn't enforce regulations on Wall Street. And where did we end up? We ended up with a decade in which income and wages for middle class families flatlined and people tried to make up for it by propping up a housing bubble. And when it went bust we had the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. That's the end of the road if you travel that path.

So we've got a different set of ideas here. We have a different set of values. And I repeat, they are not Democratic values alone. Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of a civil war, started land-grant colleges and the Homestead Act and built the intercontinental railroad, started the National Academy of Sciences. He understood—the first Republican President—that you've got to invest in the future in order to win it.

Dwight Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System, invested in math and science in our schools. My grandfather benefited from a GI bill, like millions of others who came home heroes. And somebody said, you know what, if we give them opportunity, if we give them a chance, there is no doubt that everybody will be better off.

I would not be standing here today if somebody had not made an investment and said, you know what, not everybody is going to be born wealthy, not everybody is going to be born well-connected; why don't we make sure that we've got college scholarships out there and student loans so that people can go to college and give something back to this country.

So those are the values that we're going to be fighting for. And I have confidence that those are the values of the American people. And I know those are your values. And it's because you were willing to invest so much, not in me, but in an idea that we can have a politics that is different, have a politics that's focused on not just the here and now, not just focused on party, but is focused on country, not just focused on the next election, but focused on the next generation. It's because you made that investment that we've already made some remarkable changes.

I mean, things are tough right now, but I want everybody to remember what we have accomplished because of you. [*Applause*] What we've accomplished because of you. As tough as things are right now, we were able to stabilize this economy and make sure it didn't go into a

great depression, because of you. Because of your efforts, we were able to pass health care reform, and 30 million people are going to get health insurance in this country.

I just had somebody who's here tonight—or here this afternoon—mention the fact that their daughter is very sick. And my prayers are with the family. But he said, "She is 23 years old right now. Because of the Affordable Care Act, right now she is able to stay on my insurance." And that is a huge relief for families across the country. A million extra young people have health insurance because of you, and we haven't even finished implementing that plan.

Because of you, as promised, the war in Iraq will end by the end of this year and all our troops will be home—[*applause*]*—*all of them. And by the way, the country is stronger, and it is safer. And we are making a transition in Afghanistan, and Al Qaida is on the run, and we have decimated their leadership because of you. Because of you, anybody can serve in our military now, regardless of who they love. "Don't ask, don't tell" is history because of you.

Because of you, there are millions of young people who are getting Pell grants and larger scholarships, because we're no longer subsidizing big banks who were basically just a pass-through for student loans. That money is directly going to the students now, and that's making a huge difference all across the country.

So we've made an enormous difference already, but we've got so much more work to do. We've got to pass comprehensive immigration reform. We've got to make sure that we have a system that reflects the fact that we're a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

We're going to have to have an energy policy in this country that makes sense, because I am tired of the U.S. economy being held hostage to the spot oil market. We've got to develop clean energy that will not only put money back in the pocket of consumers, but will also save our environment.

We still have to implement health care reform. We still have to implement financial regulatory reform. We have set up a consumer watchdog that is going to make sure no more hidden fees, no more abusive mortgage practices that had such a devastating effect here in Nevada. But we've got to make sure that it's actually implemented. And the other side, one of their main agendas is to roll it back.

And most of all, we've got to grow an economy that is based not on bubbles, not on shifting sands, not on financial maneuvers, but it's based on innovation and based on investment and based on entrepreneurship. We can do those things. We can close the deficit and make the investment in the future that we need. But I'm only going to be able to do it if you're there with me. [*Applause*] I'm only going to be able to do that if you're there with me.

You know, the—I turned 50 this summer. [*Laughter*] My hair is a little grayer now. You noticed that, huh? Yes. My girls say it's distinguished. [*Laughter*] Michelle says it just makes me look old. [*Laughter*] We've gone through some enormous challenges over the last 3 years, and as much good as we have done, I think there's so much left to do that, understandably, a lot of people feel a little disenchanted. A lot of people feel discouraged.

That old "Hope" poster is fading. It's getting dog-eared along the edges there. [*Laughter*] But I just want to remind all of you that we never said this was going to be easy. We never said that change was going to happen overnight. The problems that we confront didn't happen overnight; we weren't going to solve them overnight. The challenges we face in terms of rebuilding an economy that works for everybody, making sure that once again we have the best

education system in the world, making sure that once again anybody out there who has a good idea can go out there and make it, making sure that we've got a balanced approach to reducing our deficit and getting our fiscal house in order, all those things we knew were going to take some time.

And so the main challenge that I have for all of you here today is to make sure that you remember why we got on this path in the first place, why we took this journey from the start. We didn't do it because it was going to be easy. You supported a candidate named Barack Hussein Obama. Polls didn't need to tell you that that was going to be hard. You didn't do it because you thought that change would happen overnight. You didn't do it because you were easily discouraged.

These days people look back at the campaign, and they say, oh, that campaign was perfect, you know? It's like, well, no it wasn't. [*Laughter*] We had all kinds of setbacks. We defied the odds. So many of you remember. And we'll do it again. [*Applause*] But we will do it again. I still believe in you, and I believe in the American people. And I'm absolutely convinced that as long as we keep our eyes on where we need to go, here in Nevada and all across the country, that indomitable American spirit, that thing that that has gotten through—has gotten us through every single tough time we've ever been in—from Revolutionary War to Civil War, slavery, the women's rights movement, the union movement—every step of the way—world wars and great depressions—we've always come out stronger on the other side.

There's something about the American people where, when we are tested, when times are tough, it turns out we are tougher. And when our politics isn't working, then the American people rise up and make sure they work.

This is one of those moments. This is one of those times. And if you keep hoping, and you're willing to put your work and your effort behind it, I have no doubt that not only will we win this election, but more importantly, we're going to win the future, and this country is going to be greater than it's ever been.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:57 p.m. at the Bellagio Las Vegas hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen J. Cloobek, chairman and chief executive officer, Diamond Resorts International, in his capacity as chairman of the board of the Corporation for Travel Promotion, who introduced the President; and Mark Zandi, chief economist, Moody's Analytics.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraisers :: Las Vegas, NV.

Locations: Las Vegas, NV.

Names: Cloobek, Stephen J.; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Zandi, Mark.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Congress : Senate :: Minority leader; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Economy, national : Travel and tourism, promotion efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans,

elimination of subsidies to private providers; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : National energy policy; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations :: Review; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Young adults :: Insurance coverage as dependents, age limit extension; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Immigration and naturalization : Visa policy, U.S.; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Nevada : Democratic Party event; Nevada : President's visit; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Veterans : Hiring incentives.

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