

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

**Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Coral Gables, Florida
February 23, 2012**

The President. Hello, hello! Hello, Miami! It is good to see all of you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you.

First of all, I just want you to know that I am resentful I'm not going to the game tonight. [Laughter] I am mad about that. It's not right. It's not fair. [Laughter] The—but I wish you guys all the best.

I want to, first of all, acknowledge a couple of people who are in the audience. First of all, you just heard from somebody who I don't know where she gets her energy from— [laughter]—but is just doing a remarkable job as our DNC chair—Debbie Wasserman Schultz. Give her a big round of applause. Your senior Senator, who I expect to—you will send back to Washington, Bill Nelson is in the house. And my great friend and Florida finance chair, Kirk Wagar is here.

And of course, all of you are here. And this is a good-looking crowd. [Laughter]

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. You, especially. [Laughter] You're all raising your hand—"Yeah, that's me." [Laughter]

I—Miami, I am here today not just because I need your help, although I do. But I'm here because your country needs your help. There was a reason that so many of you got involved in the campaign back in 2008, and it wasn't because Barack Obama was a sure thing in the campaign. When you're named Barack Hussein Obama, the odds are not in your favor— [laughter]—in any election campaign. The reason you got involved was not because of me.

The reason you got involved was because we had a shared vision about what America could be, what America should be. We had an idea of a shared vision of an America in which everybody who works hard, everybody who has a vision of where they want to take their life, they can succeed. Doesn't matter where you come from, doesn't matter what you look like, doesn't matter what your name is. That idea that if you worked hard and took responsibility, that you could buy a home and send your kids to college and retire with dignity and respect, put a little bit away, that core American Dream felt like it was slipping away for too many people all across the country.

And we shared a vision in which we started making good decisions about energy and health care and education. And instead of trying to divide the country, we tried to bring it together—and that we could assure that America for the next generation and generations to come. That's why you got involved, because of that shared vision we had for America.

Now, 3 years later, I'm a little grayer—[laughter]—I'm a little dinged up here and there. But the message I have for you is that because of you, that change that you believed in has begun to happen. As tough as these last 3 years have been, think about everything that we've accomplished together.

Because of you, we averted a great depression. When I took office, 750,000 jobs were being lost every month. Last month, we gained 250,000 jobs. We are moving the economy in the right direction. That's because of you.

Because of you, there are millions of people around the country who didn't have health care and either already have health care or will soon have health care and will never again have to think about going bankrupt just because they get sick. That happened because of you.

Because of you, we were able to take \$60 billion that was going to subsidize banks in the student loan program, and we said, why aren't we sending that money directly to students? And as a consequence, we now have millions of young people all across the country who are getting higher Pell grants or are eligible for Pell grants for the first time or are seeing their student loan interest rates lower have access to college and the keys to the American Dream. That happened because of you. That's what change is.

Change is the decision to rescue the American auto industry from collapse. You remember there were a lot of people who didn't believe in that. Even when some politicians said we should just let Detroit go bankrupt, we stepped up. And as a consequence, probably a million jobs were saved and the American auto industry has come roaring back and GM is now once again the number-one automaker in the world. That happened because of you.

Change is the decision we made to start doing something about our oil addiction, not waiting for Congress. And so in a historic step, even without legislation, we doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars, applied them to light trucks, heavy trucks for the first time. It will save consumers billions of dollars. It will help our environment. It puts us at the forefront of the electric car industry, at the forefront of the clean energy industry. That all happened because of you.

Because of you, people across the country are going to still be able to serve the country they love, regardless of who they love. "Don't ask, don't tell" is history. That happened because of you.

Change is keeping another promise that I made back in 2008. For the first time in 9 years, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. We have refocused our efforts on those who carried out 9/11. Al Qaida is being dismantled, and Usama bin Laden will never again walk the face of the Earth. And that happened because of you.

So a lot's happened in 3 years. And none of this has been easy. None of this was automatic. Oftentimes we faced enormous opposition. And obviously, we're still recovering from the worst recession that we've had in our lifetimes. So we've got so much more work to do. But as I said, the good news is we're moving in the right direction.

Over the last 2 years, the private sector has created about 3.7 million new jobs—3.7 million new jobs. Our manufacturers are creating jobs for the first time since the 1990s. Our economy is getting stronger. The recovery is accelerating. America is coming back, which means the last thing we can afford to do is to go back to the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. That's what we can't afford.

Now, that's what the other candidates want to do. Now, I don't know if you guys have been watching the Republican primary debates, in case you need an incentive. *[Laughter]* They make no secret about what they want to do. They want to go back to the days when Wall Street played by its own rules. They want to go back to the days when insurance companies could deny you coverage or jack up your premiums without reason. They want to spend

trillions more on tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals, for people like me, who don't need it, weren't even asking for it, even if it means adding to the deficit, even if it means gutting our investments in education or clean energy or making it harder for seniors on Medicare. Their philosophy is simple: We are better off when everybody is left to fend for themselves, everybody makes their own rules, a few do very well at the top, and everybody else is struggling to get by. That's their core vision for America.

We've got a different vision. We see America as a bigger, bolder place. I'm here to tell them they are wrong about America. Because in America, we understand, yes, we're rugged individuals, yes, we don't expect a handout, we are going to do everything we can to make it and fulfill our dreams, but we also understand we are greater together than we are on our own. We're better off when we keep that basic American promise that if you work hard, you can do well, you can succeed, that you can own that home and send that—send your kids to college and put away something for retirement.

And that's the choice in this election. This is not just a political debate. This goes to who we are as a people, because we are in a make-or-break moment for the middle class and people who are trying to get in the middle class. And we can go back to an economy that is built on outsourcing and bad debt and phony financial profits; or we can build an economy that lasts, an economy that's built on American manufacturing, skills and education for American workers, and American-made energy, and most importantly, the values that have always made America great: hard work, fair play, shared responsibility.

We've got to make sure that the next generation of manufacturing ideas take place right here in the United States of America. Not in factories in Europe or China, but in Detroit and Pittsburgh and Cleveland. I don't want this Nation to be known just for buying and consuming things. I want us to be selling our products and making our products, inventing products, all around the world. That's who we are. It's time for us to stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas. We need to reward companies that are investing and hiring right here in the United States of America.

We need to make our schools the envy of the world. And that starts with the man or woman at the front of the classroom. A study recently showed a good teacher can increase the lifetime income of a classroom by \$250,000. A great teacher can help a child escape poor circumstances and achieve their dreams.

So I don't want to hear folks in Washington bash teachers. I don't want them defending the status quo. I want to give schools the resources they need to keep good teachers on the job. Reward the best ones, give schools flexibility to teach with creativity, stop teaching to the test.

Audience member. That's right.

The President. Replace teachers who aren't helping our kids. We can do those things. [Applause] We got some teachers in the house. [Applause]

When kids graduate, I want them to be able to afford to go to college. If they've been working hard, if they've gotten the grades to go to college, I don't want them to cut their dreams short because they don't think they can afford it.

Right now Americans owe more in tuition debt than they do in credit card debt. And that means Congress is going to have to stop the interest rates on student loans from going up. They're scheduled to go up in July right now. Colleges and universities are going to have to do their part. I've said to them—and I've met with university and college presidents—we're going

to keep on helping students afford to go to college. You've got to do your job in terms of keeping tuition down, because taxpayers can't fund this stuff forever. Higher education can't be a luxury; it's an economic necessity, an economic imperative for every family in America. And they should be able to afford it.

An America built to last is one where we're supporting scientists and researchers trying to find the next breakthrough in clean energy, making sure that happens right here in the United States. You know, we've subsidized oil companies for a century. It's time to end a hundred years of subsidies for an industry that's rarely been more profitable and make sure that we're doubling down on clean energy that's never been more promising: solar power and wind power, biofuels that can break our addiction to foreign oil, create jobs here in America. It's good for our national security, it's good for our economy, it's good for your pocketbook.

We need to build our infrastructure. I'm a chauvinist; I want America to have the best stuff. I want us to have the best airports and the best roads and the best ports right here in Miami that can create more jobs.

So what I've said is, let's take the money we're no longer spending on war, let's use half of it to reduce the deficit, let's spend the other half to do some nation-building right here at home. Let's put folks to work.

And we've got to make sure that everybody is doing their fair share. Everybody needs a fair shot, everybody has got to play by the same set of rules, everybody has got to do their fair share.

And when it comes to paying for our Government and making sure the investments are there so that future generations can succeed, everybody has got to do their part. Which is why I put forward the Buffett rule: If you make more than a million dollars a year, you should not pay a lower tax rate than your secretary. That's common sense. We've said if you make \$250,000 a year or less, you don't need your taxes going up right now. But folks like me, we can afford to do a little bit more.

That's not class warfare. That's not envy. It has to do with simple math. If somebody like me gets a tax break that the country can't afford, then one of two things happen: Either the deficit goes up, which is irresponsible, or we're taking it out of somebody else—that student who is now suddenly having to pay a higher student loan rate or that senior who's having to pay more for Medicare or that veteran who's not getting the help they need after having served our country.

That's not right. That's not who we are. Everybody in this room, we are here, successful, because somebody down the road was not just thinking about themselves, they were taking responsibility for the country as a whole. They were thinking about their future. The American story has never been about what we just do by ourselves, it's about what we do together. We're not going to win the race for new jobs and new businesses and middle class security if we're responding to today's challenges with the same old, tired, worn-out, you're-on-your-own economics that hasn't worked.

What these other guys are peddling has not worked. It didn't work in the decade before the Great Depression. It did not work in the decade before I became President. It will not work now.

And this is not just a matter of economics. Look, we all have a stake in everybody's success. If we attract an outstanding teacher by giving her the pay that she deserves and giving

her the training that she needs and she goes on to teach the next Steve Jobs, we all benefit. If we provide faster Internet service so that some storeowner in rural America suddenly can sell their products all around the world, or if we build a new bridge that saves a shipping company time and money, workers, consumers, all of us benefit. We all do better.

This has never been a Democratic or Republican idea. This is an American idea. It was the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, who launched a transcontinental railroad, the National Academy of Sciences, the first land-grant colleges, all in the middle of the Civil War. Think about that. I'm sure there were some folks at the time who were saying, "Why are we doing all that? I don't want to pay for that." But that laid the groundwork for a national economy.

A Republican, Teddy Roosevelt, called for a progressive income tax. Dwight Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System. Republicans supported FDR when he gave millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, the chance to go to college on the GI bill.

Everybody here has a similar story. I mean, think about Florida, think about Miami; it's a microcosm of the country, people from all over the world coming here, seeking opportunity. And the reason people came here, people—the reason people continue to come to America, is because there is a recognition that in America we will create the platform for people to succeed if they work hard. That's what is at stake in this election.

And I have to tell you that that sense of common purpose that binds us together regardless of our backgrounds, that still exists today. It may not exist in Washington, but out in the country it's there. You talk to folks on Main Streets, town hall meetings, you go to a VFW hall, you go to a coffee shop—it's there. You talk to the incredible members of our Armed Forces, the men and women in uniform—it's there. You go to places of worship, that sense of a bond to something larger—it's there.

So our politics may be divided—and obviously, the media loves to portray conflict—but most Americans, they understand that we're in this together, that no matter who we are, where we come from, whether you are Black or White or Latino or Asian or Native American, gay, straight, disabled or not, that we rise or fall as one nation, as one people. And that's what's at stake right now. That's what we are fighting for. That's what we've been fighting for, for the last 3 years.

And so the main message I have to all of you is, as tough as these last 3 years have been, that that vision you had that led you to get involved, you're not alone in that vision.

I know the change we fought for in 2008 sometimes hasn't come as fast as we want it. There have been setbacks. There have been controversies. And with everything that's happened in Washington, sometimes it's tempting to believe that, well, maybe that change we hoped for isn't completely possible. But remember what I said during the last campaign. People don't remember. People have a revisionist history. They remember the time from Grant Park until the inauguration. They don't remember how hard it was to get to Grant Park. *[Laughter]*

But I told you then, I said real change, big change is hard, and it's going to take time. It takes more than a single term. It takes more than a single President. Most of all, what it requires is individual citizens like you who are committed to keeping up the fight, to pushing and struggling and nudging the country so that it slowly inches closer and closer and closer to our highest ideals.

The other thing I told you in 2008 was I'm not a perfect man. If you hadn't talked to Michelle, you—[laughter]—in the interest of full disclosure, I told you I'm not perfect, and I won't be a perfect President. But you know what I promised? I said I'd always tell you what I thought, I'd always tell you where I stood, and I'd wake up every single day fighting as hard as I can for you. I've kept that promise. I've kept that promise.

So if you're willing to keep pushing with me, if you're willing to keep struggling with me, if you're continuing to reach out for that vision of America that we all share, I promise you change will come. If you are willing to get just as involved and engaged and motivated in 2012 as you were in 2008, I promise you we're going to finish what we started. If you stick with me, if you press with me, we will remind the world once again just why it is that America is the greatest country on Earth.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Thank you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:03 p.m. at the Biltmore Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Obama Victory Fund 2012 fundraisers :: Coral Gables, FL.

Locations: Coral Gables, FL.

Names: Buffett, Warren E.; Nelson, C. William; Obama, Michelle; Wagar, Kirk; Wasserman Schultz, Deborah.

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