

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Hollywood, Florida
April 10, 2012

The President. Hello, Florida!

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back.

It is good to be back in the Sunshine State. Well, there are some folks here I want to acknowledge. Everybody, have a seat. Relax. I've got a few things to say. *[Laughter]* First of all, your own Debbie Wasserman Schultz is in the house. Outstanding Members of Congress, Ted Deutch is here. Federica Wilson is here. Our Florida finance chair, Kirk Wagar is here. Broward County finance chair, Andrew Weinstein is here.

The outstanding John Legend is in the house. John wanted me to sing a duet. I said no. *[Laughter]* Not tonight, but maybe if you practice a little bit. *[Laughter]* And I want to thank Gerri Ann for that wonderful introduction. Give her a big round of applause as well.

Now I am here not just because the weather is really good. *[Laughter]* I'm not here just because there are a lot of great friends in the audience. And I'm not even here just because I need your help. I'm here because your country needs your help. A lot of you got involved in this campaign back in 2008. Some of you worked your hearts out. It wasn't, by the way, because you thought it was going to be easy. When you support a guy named Barack Hussein Obama for President—*[laughter]*—you're not looking at the oddsmakers. You don't need a poll to know that's not a sure thing. *[Laughter]*

You didn't join the campaign just because of me. This wasn't just about a candidate; this was about a vision that we shared for America, a vision that all of you shared. It wasn't a vision where people are left to fend for themselves and the most powerful can play by their own rules. It was a vision of America where everybody works hard, everybody is responsible, and everybody has a chance to get ahead, not just those at the very top. The notion that no matter where you come from, what you look like, what your last name is—Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled or not—it doesn't matter, you've got a shot at the American Dream.

That's the vision we shared. That's the change that we believed in. And we knew it wasn't going to come easy. We knew it wouldn't come quickly. But we had confidence and faith in the American people and our capacity to bring about an America that was moving closer to our ideals. And you know what, in just a little over 3 years, because of what you did in 2008, we've started to see what change looks like.

Change is the first bill I signed into law that says women deserve an equal day's pay for an equal day's work. Our daughters should have the same opportunities as our sons. You made that happen.

Change is the decisions that we made to help prevent a second great depression, to rescue the American auto industry from collapse, even when some politicians were out there saying we should let Detroit go bankrupt. We had a million jobs on the line if we had let that happen. And I wasn't going to let that happen. And today, GM is back on top as the world's number-one automaker, making record profits, hiring back workers. More than 200,000 new jobs over

the last 2½ years in the American auto industry, it is coming back. That happened because of you.

Change is the decision we made to stop waiting for Congress to do something about our oil addiction. We doubled fuel-efficiency standards on cars and trucks. And by the middle of the next decade, we're going to be driving American-made cars that get almost 55 miles to a gallon, saves the typical family \$8,000 at the pump. That happened because of you.

We decided let's stop handing out \$60 billion in taxpayer giveaways to banks that were managing the student loan program, let's give the money directly to students. And because of you, millions of young people have gotten help affording college and being able to compete in this 21st century economy. That happened because of your work back in 2008 and beyond.

Yes, change is health care reform that we passed after a century of trying, reform that says in the United States of America, the greatest country on Earth, nobody should go broke because they get sick. And because of that law, right now 2.5 million young people have health insurance that didn't have it before because they can stay on their parent's plans.

Right now millions of seniors are paying less for their prescription drugs. Right now, every American has the assurance that they can't be denied coverage or dropped by their insurance company when they need care the most. And they can get preventive care, regardless of who they are, regardless of where you come from. That's what change is. That happened because of you.

Change is the fact that for the first time in our history you don't have to hide who you love to serve the country you love because we ended "don't ask, don't tell." It's over.

And change is keeping another promise I made in 2008: For the first time in 9 years there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. We've refocused our efforts on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11. And because of our brave men and women, Al Qaida is back on its heels and Usama bin Laden is no more. That's what change is.

Now, we've——

Audience members. Four more years. Four more years. Four more years.

The President. It's actually 4½. [*Laughter*]

And we've begun to transition in Afghanistan to put Afghans in the lead, bring our troops home.

Record investments in clean energy, record investments in education, restoring science to its rightful place, well, none of this has been easy. And everybody here knows we've got a lot more work to do. There are still so many Americans out there that are still looking for work or trying to find a job that pays a little more, too many families who are barely able to pay the bills, homes underwater. We're still recovering from the worst economic crisis in generations.

But even on the economic front, over these last 2 years, we've seen businesses add more than 4 million new jobs, manufacturers creating jobs for the first time since the 1990s. The economy is getting stronger. The recovery is accelerating. And the last thing we can afford to do right now is to go back to the same, worn-out, tired, uninspired, don't-work policies that got us into this mess in the first place.

But of course, that's exactly what the other side wants to do. They make no bones about it. They don't make—they don't hide the ball. They want to go back to the days when Wall Street

could play by its own rules. They've said, we want to roll back all the reforms that were put in place to protect consumers and make sure that we don't end up seeing taxpayer bailouts again. They want to go back to the days when insurance companies could deny you coverage or jack up premiums without reason. They want to spend trillions of dollars more on tax breaks for the very wealthiest of Americans, even if it means adding to the deficit, even if it means gutting things like education or clean energy or Medicare.

Their philosophy is simple: If we just let those who have done best keep on doing what they do, and everybody else is struggling to get by, somehow that's going to grow the economy.

They're wrong. In the United States of America we are greater together than we are on our own. We are better off when we keep that basic American promise: If you work hard, you can do well enough to raise a family, own a home, send your kids to college, put a little away for retirement.

And that's the choice in this election. This is not just your run-of-the-mill political debate. We have not seen a contrast like this in a long time. This is the defining issue of our time, this make-or-break moment for our middle class and all those who are fighting to get into the middle class. And are we going to stand with those folks who have been the backbone of economic growth in this country throughout our history?

We could go back to an economy built on outsourcing and bad debt and phony financial profits. Or we can fight for an economy that's built to last, an economy built on American manufacturing and American energy and skills for American workers and the values of everyday Americans of hard work and fair play and shared responsibility.

And I know—I know what side I am in that debate. I know what side I'm on in that debate. I think we've got to make sure that the next generation of manufacturing takes root not in Asia, not in Europe, takes root right here in the United States of America, right here in Florida, in Detroit, in Pittsburgh, in Cleveland. I don't want this nation just to be known for what we buy and consume. I want us to be a nation known for what we produce and invent and sell all around the world. It's time to stop rewarding businesses that are shipping jobs overseas. Let's reward companies that are investing right here in the United States of America.

Let's make our schools the envy of the world. And that starts, by the way, with the men and women at the front of the classroom. You know, a good teacher can actually increase the lifetime earnings of a classroom by \$250,000. A great teacher can inspire and plant that seed of possibility in a child, no matter how poor they are.

And that's why I don't like hearing folks just bashing teachers. I don't want them—I don't believe in just defending the status quo. I want schools to have the resources they need to keep good teachers on the job, reward the best ones, give schools the flexibility to teach with creativity and passion, stop teaching to the test. Give us a chance to train teachers that aren't doing a great job, get rid of those who are—we can create accountability in the system and high standards, but we've got to make sure that we're thinking about our kids first.

And when kids do graduate, the most daunting challenge ends up being the cost of college. Americans owe more in tuition debt than credit card debt right now, which means, by the way, Congress needs to stop the student interest—the interest rates on student loans from doubling, which is scheduled to happen in July.

And colleges and universities have to do their part. They've got to keep tuition from going up. And State legislatures need to keep their part by supporting higher education. This is not a

luxury higher education; it is an economic imperative that every American should be able to afford.

An economy built to last is one where we support scientists and researchers that are trying to make the next breakthrough happen right here in the United States in biotech and nanotechnology and clean energy.

We've subsidized oil companies for a hundred years. It's time to end the hundred years of taxpayer giveaways for an industry that is plenty profitable, doing just fine, have more than enough incentive to keep on producing. Let's give it to clean energy industries that have never been more promising: solar and wind and biodiesel.

Let's rebuild America. I think about what was built in my grandparents' generation: Hoover Dam, Golden Gate Bridge, the Interstate Highway System. We've got to give our businesses the best access to the best roads and the best airports and the fastest railroads, faster Internet access. It's time for us to take some of that money that we spent on war, use half of it to pay down our debt, use the rest of it to do some nation-building here at home. We can put folks back to work right now rebuilding America.

[At this point, the lights flickered.]

Is there a little light show going on here? *[Laughter]* It's nice. *[Laughter]* Sort of a—it's a disco—disco rally. *[Laughter]* Somebody going to pull the roller skates out now? *[Laughter]* What's going on here?

And finally, we've got to make sure that we've got a tax system that reflects everybody doing their fair share. I just spoke about this earlier today. We have to reduce our deficit. It's a long-term challenge. And we've got to do it in a balanced way. We've made some very tough spending cuts. We're going to have to make some smart choices in terms of health reform. That's what's driving a lot of increased Government spending.

We've also got to make sure that revenues are there to pay for the things that are absolutely necessary for us to grow our economy, to maintain a basic safety net for our seniors and folks who are vulnerable.

Now, the other side, they've got a different idea. They want to decimate basic Government investments that historically have helped this economy grow and use it to finance tax cuts for the very wealthiest. And I've got a different idea. I say, let's follow what we call the Buffett rule: If you make more than a million dollars a year—I'm not saying you've got a million dollar nest egg that you accumulated over the course of years saving for your retirement. I'm saying if you make a million dollars a year, then you shouldn't pay a lower tax rate than your secretary. That's common sense. That's not—they may call in class envy or—that's just being fair. And by doing that, that also allows us then to say to folks who are making \$250,000 a year or less—like 98 percent of American families—that their taxes don't go up.

This is not class warfare. This is not about envy. We want Americans to be wealthy. We want them to be successful. But this is just basic math. Because if somebody like me, who is doing just fine, gets tax breaks I don't need and that the country can't afford, then one of two things is going to happen: either it gets added to our deficit—now, the other side say they care about the deficit; well, these tax cuts add to the deficit—or alternatively, you've got to take it away from somebody else, a student who's trying to pay for their college or a senior trying to get by with Social Security and Medicare or a veteran who needs some care after he or she has

served this country with distinction or a family that's just trying to get by. That's not right. That's not who we are.

You know, when I hear politicians during an election year talk about values—well, what kind of values does that reflect? Hard work, that's a value. Responsibility, that's a value. Honesty, looking out for one another—I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper—that's a value. Our budget should reflect those values. Our politics should reflect those values.

Everybody here—look at this room, people from every conceivable background, every part of the country—everybody here, you're here because somebody, somewhere felt some responsibility not just for themselves, but for others. It started with your parents, grandparents. Some may have come to this country with nothing but wanted more opportunity for their kids; they worked on behalf of their family. They worked on behalf of their neighborhoods, their community. They worked on behalf of their country. They understood that the American story is not about just what you can do on your own. We're rugged individualists. We expect everybody to carry their own weight. But we also understand that what makes us great is what we can do together.

We won't win the race for new jobs and businesses, we won't restore middle class security with the same old you're-on-your-own economics. It doesn't work. It never worked. We tried it before the Great Depression, back in the twenties—didn't work. We tried it in the last decade. We were promised how this was going to unleash all this unbelievable economic growth. And what ended up happening? Sluggish job growth, wages and incomes flatlined for middle class families struggling to get by, and then culminated in the worst financial crisis we've seen since the 1930s. We tried it. Their theories don't work.

And most people understand this. They understand there's a different way to think about the economy and this journey we're on together. It says we've got a stake in each other's success. If we attract an outstanding teacher to the profession by paying them properly, by giving them the training they need, the professional development, and that teacher goes on to educate the next Steve Jobs, well, you know what, we all benefit. If we provide faster Internet service to rural America and then suddenly some store owner has access to a global market and they're selling goods and services and growing that business and hiring, that's good for all of us. If we build a bridge that cuts on commuting times and suddenly that shipping company is saving time and money, workers and customers, the whole country does better.

And this is not historically a Democratic or Republican idea. It was Republican Teddy Roosevelt who called for a progressive income tax. Dwight Eisenhower, Republican, built the Interstate Highway System. It was, with the help of Republicans in Congress, FDR who gave millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, a chance to get ahead through the GI bill. Abraham Lincoln, first Republican President, helped to bind this country together through the transcontinental railroad, started the land-grant colleges, National Academy of Sciences. This is not just a Democratic idea.

And here's the good news: That spirit of common purpose, it still exists all across this country. Maybe not in Washington—[laughter]—but out in America, it's there. It's there when you talk to folks on Main Street, in town halls. It's there when you talk to our unbelievable members of our Armed Forces. It's there when you go to places of worship.

Our politics may be divided, but most Americans understand that we're greater together than we are apart, and that no matter where we come from, who we are, we rise or fall as one nation. That's what's at stake in this election.

I know this has been a tough few years for America. We've seen a lot of stuff in these last 3 years, and I know that the change we fought for in 2008, as much as we've gotten done, we've got so much more to do. And there are times when change just doesn't come fast enough. I don't watch some of these cable news shows and all this sniping, but I imagine if you're sitting back, or, lord knows if you live in a swing State and you're watching these negative ads and, at a certain point, you must just step back and sort of say, maybe this change we believed in, maybe it's just not possible. It's tempting to be cynical and say you know what, this just is too hard.

So I'm here to remind you, I didn't say it was going to be easy. I told you real change, big change, takes time. These problems didn't build up overnight, and they're not going to be solved overnight. It will take more than a single term, more than a single President. What it takes is ordinary citizens. It takes folks like you who are committed to this larger project of making sure that America is constantly moving closer and closer to its highest ideals.

Back in 2008, I used to tell you, I'm not a perfect man; I will never be a perfect President. But I made a promise to everybody. I said, I will always tell you what I think; I'll tell you where I stand. And I told you I would wake up every single day fighting for you as hard as I know how. And I have kept that promise. I've kept that promise.

And so if you're willing to stick with me on this thing, if you're willing to keep pushing through the obstacles and knocking on doors and making phone calls and fighting for what is right, if you're willing to work even harder than we did in 2008, we will finish what we started. And we will remind the world just why it is that America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. at the Westin Diplomat Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Deborah Wasserman Schultz, chair, Democratic National Committee; Gerri A. Bongiovanni-Capotosto of Pompano Beach, FL; and entertainer John Legend.

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

Locations: Hollywood, FL.

Names: Bongiovanni-Capotosto, Gerri A.; Deutch, Theodore E.; Legend, John; Wagar, Kirk W.B.; Wasserman Schultz, Deborah; Weinstein, Andrew J.; Wilson, Frederica A.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; Civil rights : Wage equality; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Career training and continuing education; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, interest rates and refinancing; Education : Standards and school accountability; Education : Teachers; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Domestic sources; Energy : Fuel efficiency

standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Subsidies, elimination; Florida : Democratic Party events; Florida : President's visits; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Science and technology : Research and development; Social Security and retirement : Social Security program; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

DCPD Number: DCPD201200265.