

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in New York City
May 14, 2012

Thank you! Well, it is wonderful to be with all of you. There are a couple of special acknowledgements I want to make. First of all, I just want to thank Ricky Martin for being here today. Those of you who haven't caught "Evita" yet, go out there. I'm sure there's still tickets available. *[Laughter]* But you know that he's going to be spectacular in it. And I'm so grateful for him stepping out and being willing to support me in this way.

I want to thank Donald and Shelley Rubin for not only making this extraordinary event possible, but all that they've done for the civic life of New York. Please give them a big round of applause.

I want to thank Raj Goyle, who helped to put this together. And he's got two beautiful daughters, one of whom he's still holding like this, and it's—*[laughter]*—it reminds me of when Malia and Sasha were like this, and now they're like this. *[Laughter]* But I want to thank Raj for this.

Your outstanding attorney general, Eric Schneiderman, is in the house, so please give him a big round of applause as well.

So we've been busy. *[Laughter]* We've got a few things to do here. I'm here to ask for your help, but I'm also here because your country needs your help. When we ran 4 years ago, I think we all understood that the campaign wasn't just about me. It was about the commitment we made to each other to make sure that this country lived up to the meaning of its creed. The idea that all of us, if we worked, if we tried, we could make it here in America, regardless of what we look like, where we came from, who we loved, what our surnames were; the notion that those basic values of responsibility and hard work, of giving back, that that's what built this country and we built it together. And we felt like we had lost some of those core values.

When I was first elected, we were looking backwards at a decade of manufacturing moving overseas and the middle class struggling with flat wages and flat incomes, even though the cost of everything from college to health care had been skyrocketing. We had seen recklessness by some on Wall Street, almost bringing the economy to its knees, an auto industry that was on the verge of collapse, a foreign policy that had not gained us the kind of respect that we needed in the world and had cost us over a trillion dollars.

And so we understood we had a lot of work to do. And the month that I took office we were losing 800,000 jobs that month, and we had already lost 4 million, and we'd lose another 3 million after that. And so these have been tough times. It's been tough times for the country, tough times for a lot of families all across America.

But the good news is the American people have proven to be tougher. And so for all the challenges that we've gone through, we have seen families across America willing to cut back on things they didn't need, to make sure that they were looking after their kids and doing the things that they did need to do. There were some people who had to go back and retrain because the industries that they were in were no longer operating at that same capacity. We've seen businesses that had to scale back, but did everything they could to keep their workers.

And because of all these individuals efforts and, frankly, some tough, but good decisions that we made early on, we're weathering this storm and we've seen the country start to come back. Four million jobs created over the last 2 years alone. Just in the last 6 months, over a million jobs. The auto industry all the way back, so that GM is now once again the biggest carmaker in the world and producing better cars, because we doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars so that by the middle of the next decade everybody is going to be getting 55 miles a gallon, and that will save the average family about \$8,000. And we'll be taking a whole bunch of carbon out of the atmosphere so that we can make sure that all these wonderful kids who are in attendance are inheriting a planet that hasn't been wrecked because we didn't take the proper decisions.

We've doubled our production of clean energy, even as our oil production is higher and our imports of oil from other countries are lower.

We ended the war in Iraq as promised, and we're now winding down the war in Afghanistan.

And so we've done a lot over these last 3½ years to make sure that the country was able to manage through this crisis that we have not seen in our lifetimes before. But we—I did not just run and you didn't just support me just to get back to the status quo. And we know that there are still families out there that are having a tough time, people whose homes are still underwater. We still know that there are too many children all across America who don't have the kind of opportunities that we want them to have and that America needs them to have.

And so we now come to this point this election where the American people are going to have a choice, and this choice is going to be as important as any choice that we've made in a very long time; in some ways, more important than 2008, because we've got a very clear contrast this time.

John McCain believed in climate change and believed in immigration reform. On some issues, there was a sense of independence. What we've got this time out is a candidate who said he'd basically rubber stamp a Republican Congress who wants us to go backwards and not forwards on a whole range of issues.

They've got an economic theory that basically says the only way to grow the economy is to slash everybody's taxes further, especially the wealthiest Americans, to dismantle Government in so many ways. And that somehow, if everybody—the most powerful in our society are left to do whatever it is that they want, that somehow we're going to be better off.

And we've just got a completely different vision about how America has succeeded. And it's rooted in fact and it's rooted in history. [Laughter] It's based on what we've seen, because the ideas that they're putting forward have been tried. We tried them between 2000 and 2008, and it resulted in the most sluggish job growth that we've ever seen, resulted in all kinds of phony financial profits and debt, and resulted in the worst financial crisis and economic crisis we've seen since the 1930s. So we—it's not as if they're offering any new ideas. They're basically saying you're on your own, and when everybody is on their own, somehow we're better off.

And we've got a contrasting vision that says we are stronger together, that America was built together, that all of us have responsibilities, that we thrive in a free market where risk takers and innovators are rewarded for taking a bet, taking a chance. But we also understand that we grew because we made a decision at some point we were going to have public schools where every kid—immigrants who showed up here in New York City fleeing wars in Europe—

that they could come here and suddenly go into a public school and learn and end up winning Nobel prizes and starting Fortune 500 companies. That was how we built this country.

We built this country around the idea that everybody should have access to a great college education. And so as a consequence, we set up—President Lincoln, the first Republican President, set up land-grant colleges all across this country, where the kid of a farmer could suddenly go and learn something new and all of us would become more productive because of it.

This country was built because together we built the Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge and the Interstate Highway System. That's how we sent a man to the Moon, that's how the Internet was invented, because we did these things together.

My grandfather went to college on the GI bill because we understood that that would help make everybody rich. We didn't do those things just because it was good for one group or one individual. We did it because we understood that when everybody has got a shot, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, we all do better. And that's what's at stake in this election. Those are the contrasting visions. And we know which direction this country needs to go in.

This is a country that needs to invest in clean energy because we don't need to be subsidizing big oil companies to the tune of \$4 billion a year. We need to double down on solar and wind and biofuels that are going to help reduce our dependence on foreign oil and clean up our environment. We know that it's important for us to make sure that young people are able to afford to go to college—everybody, not just some.

We know that we have to invest in science and technology and stem cell research and all the things that can help lead to amazing medical and scientific breakthroughs. We know that we've got to rebuild this country, which is why I want to spend half of the money that we're saving on wars we're no longer fighting to build our roads and our bridges and our airports.

And we also know that if we're going to restore a sense of middle class security, that we've got to make sure that we're rewarding businesses that are investing here in the United States, not businesses that are shipping jobs overseas. We know these things.

And we can do it. And we can do it in a balanced way. And one of the big arguments we're going to have over the next 4 or 5 months is, how do we pay for stuff? And I happen to believe that it makes sense for us to make these investments to make sure that Social Security and Medicare are still there for the next generation, to make sure that we're not kicking poor kids and people with disabilities and seniors who don't have any other means off of Medicaid just to balance our budgets. I think that I can afford to pay a little bit more, and frankly, some of the people in this room can afford to pay a little bit more, so that we can bring down our debts in a responsible way: cutting out waste, cutting out programs that don't work anymore, but also making sure that everybody is paying their fair share.

And at root, so much of this has to do with a belief that not only are we all in this together, but all of us are equal in terms of dignity and in terms of respect, and everybody deserves a shot. So part of what we've been spending a lot of time doing is just making sure that those ideals that we profess are made real.

The first bill I signed, the Lilly Ledbetter Act—a simple proposition—equal pay for equal work. I don't want my daughters treated differently than my sons. That's the reason why we're fighting for comprehensive immigration reform, because I believe that a child who's here,

raised with our kids, playing with our kids, has as much talent as our kids, the notion that somehow they would not have the capacity, the ability to proclaim themselves Americans and to fulfill their American Dream, that's not who we are and that's not what we're about.

The announcement I made last week about my views on marriage equality, same principle. The basic idea—I want everybody treated fairly in this country. We have never gone wrong when we expanded rights and responsibilities to everybody. That doesn't weaken families, that strengthens families. It's the right thing to do.

On each and every one of these issues, there is a fundamental difference between the candidates. And when we passed health care reform, we did it because a country this wealthy, we shouldn't have 30 million people without health insurance. That's not an efficient way to go. We shouldn't have people showing up at emergency rooms that we end up having to pay for indirectly because we couldn't give them preventive care. I don't want women being charged more than men for their ailments. That's not right. I want to make sure that seniors who have been paying into Medicare, that they've got Medicare that they can count on in their golden years. And we've got to make some changes, but we're not going to voucherize that program.

So I'm—it's been said that this election is going to be about values, and I absolutely agree. It's about the economic values we have, about the values that I believe are what makes America so special: the idea that everybody gets a fair shot, everybody does their fair share, everybody plays by the same set of rules. So everything we do—from Wall Street reform, making sure that banks aren't taking risks with other people's money that taxpayers may have to end up bailing out later, to repealing DOMA, to getting the "DREAM Act" passed, to investing in our schools, to rebuilding manufacturing in America—all of these things are designed to make sure that we're restoring middle class security for all those folks out there that are struggling for their small portion of the American Dream.

And the good news is, I think the American people are on our side on this. When you ask them specifically about all these issues, they ultimately choose the vision that I'm presenting over the one that the other side is presenting. The only thing that's holding us back is the fact that things are still tough out there. There are still too many people without work, and there are still too many people who are struggling to get by even if they've got work.

And what's also going to make this a very close race is the fact that you've got special interests and these super PACs that are spending money on negative ads in unprecedented ways. And their message is going to be very simple: You know what—you're frustrated, you're dissatisfied, and it's Obama's fault. You can boil down the message. [*Laughter*] That's—we were traveling around trying to prevent a doubling of student loan rates, and the Republicans said, he's trying to distract from the economy. Well, now, the last I checked, making sure our kids got a good education and weren't loaded down with debt, that had something to do with our economy. But what they really meant was, this distracts from our basic argument that you're frustrated and it's Obama's fault. [*Laughter*] And they will spend hundreds of millions of dollars trying to drill that home.

But I'm not worried. And the reason I'm not worried is because of you, because I believe that if we are getting our message out effectively, if we are describing not only what we've done over the last 3½ years, not only the 2½ million young people who have health insurance who wouldn't otherwise have it because they can stay on their parents' plan, not just everything that we've done to make sure that we're changing the rules on things like people being able to visit their loved ones in hospitals, not just everything that we've done in terms of restoring the auto

industry, but when we describe what we plan to do for the future, if we can get that message out effectively, I believe we'll win. But more importantly, the country will win.

But I'm going to need all of you. This is going to be a tough race. It is going to be a tight race. Nobody should be taking this for granted, especially when I come to New York sometimes people go around and say, I don't know anybody who is not supporting you, Barack. [Laughter] I say, you live in Manhattan, man. [Laughter]

This is going to be a challenging race. But we can win as long as all of you are activated, as long as all of you are motivated, as long as you're doing everything you can, not just making phone calls, not just raising money, but I want folks out hitting the streets, knocking on doors, talking to your family, talking to your friends.

In 2008, a lot of people were skeptical, but we showed them that when ordinary folks are motivated, they can't be stopped. When they decide it's time for change to happen, change happens. And that's going to happen this time as well.

I used to say in 2008, I'm not a perfect man, and I'm not going to be a perfect President, but I'd always tell you what I thought, I always would tell you where I stood, and I'd work every single day—every day I would wake up thinking about how I could make your lives better and making sure that every kid out there has the same kind of amazing possibilities that Malia and Sasha have. And that promise I've kept.

So I still believe in you. I hope you still believe in me. And if you do, I'm absolutely positive we're going to win this election.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:40 p.m. at the Rubin Museum of Art. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Ricky Martin; philanthropist Donald and Shelley Rubin; former Kansas State Rep. Rajeev K. Goyle; 2008 Republican Presidential candidate Sen. John S. McCain; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts.

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elimination; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Marriage : Defense of Marriage Act; New York : Democratic Party events; New York : President's visits; Science and technology : Research and development; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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