

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Denver, Colorado

August 8, 2012

The President. Hello, Denver! Oh, it is good to be back in Denver.

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

The President. Thank you. Well, I tell you what, we win Colorado, I'll get 4 more years.

A couple of people I just want to acknowledge. First of all, I just want to say thank you to Sandra for that wonderful introduction. She is one tough and poised young lady. She was generous to stand up for her friend. She was brave to stand up for herself and an eloquent advocate for women's health. And I suspect she's going to be doing some even greater things as time goes on. So give her a big round of applause.

A couple other people I want to acknowledge: Your own mayor, Michael Hancock is in the house. One of the best Senators in the country, Michael Bennet is in the house. A passionate advocate for working families, Ed Perlmutter is here. My dear friend, campaign cochair, former mayor, former Secretary of Transportation and Energy—I'm getting tired just listing his resume—Federico Pena is in the house. He's here somewhere. Where did Federico go?

And finally, I also want to acknowledge another campaign cochair, John Register, a veteran and Paralympian. We are very proud of him: John Register.

It's been 2½ weeks since I was last here in Colorado. And, well, as many of you know, I was in Aurora to meet those who lost loved ones during that terrible shooting. And I just had a chance to see some of the first-responders who helped to save lives and comfort families during that terrible, terrible day. Unfortunately, since that time, we've had another tragedy in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, where six members of our community were killed as they entered into a house of worship.

And so I think we can all acknowledge, we've got to put an end to this kind of senseless violence, whether it's in Aurora, whether it's in Oak Creek, whether it's in Tucson, whether it's in cities all across America where too many lives are cut short because of senseless violence. This is going to have to stop. And as an American family—as one American family—we're going to have to come together and look at all the approaches that we can take to try to bring an end to it.

And I want you to all know that the thoughts and prayers of the entire Nation remain with those in Aurora. And even though the perpetrators of these acts have received a lot of attention, attention on them will fade and what will be replaced are the stories of heroism and hope that we've seen here in Colorado and in Wisconsin and across the Nation. That's what we'll remember. That's what's going to matter. That's what we will value: the strength and the resilience and the care and the love of the American people.

Now, unless you've managed to completely avoid your television set—[laughter]—or your cable is broken, you are aware that there is a pretty intense campaign going on right now. And the reason it's intense is because the choice that we face in November could not be bigger. It's not just a choice between two candidates. It's not even just a choice between two parties. More than any election in recent memory, this is a choice between two fundamentally different paths for our country's future.

And the direction that you choose—the direction you choose when you walk into that voting booth 3 months from now—will have a direct impact not just on your lives, but on the lives of your children and the lives of your grandchildren.

And that's true for everybody. But it's especially true for the women in this country, from working moms to college students, to seniors. Because when it comes to the economy, it's bad enough that our opponents want to take us back to the same policies of the last decade, the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place, the same policies that saw jobs going overseas and ended up seeing people's wages and incomes going down even as the costs of everything from health care to college were going up, policies that culminated in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression and that we've spent, now, 3½ years trying to recover from. That's bad enough. But when it comes to a woman's right to make her own health care choices, they want to take us back to the policies more suited to the 1950s than the 21st century.

And, Colorado, you've got to make sure it does not happen. The decisions that affect a woman's health, they're not up to politicians, they're not up to insurance companies——

Audience members. No!

The President. They're up to you. And you deserve a President who will fight to keep it that way. That's the President I've been. That's the President I will be if I get a second term as President of the United States, to keep moving this country forward.

On the issues that matter, you don't have to take my word for it, you can take me at my record. Four years ago, I delivered on my promise to pass health reform before the end of my first term. That's what we did. The affordable health—the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare—I actually like the name—*[laughter]*—because I do care. That's why we fought so hard to make it happen.

The Affordable Care Act helps make sure you don't have to worry about going broke just because one of your loved ones gets sick. Insurance companies can no longer place lifetime limits on your care. They can no longer jack up your premiums without reason. They can no longer drop your coverage when you need it most. They can no longer discriminate against children with preexisting conditions. And pretty soon, they'll no longer be able to deny you coverage based on a preexisting condition, like breast cancer or cervical cancer, or charge you more for care just because you're a woman. They can't do that anymore. Those days are over.

This is a law that allows young adults under the age of 26 to stay on their parents' health care plans, and that's already helped 6.6 million young Americans.

If you're a little bit over 26, it gives seniors a discount on their prescription drugs, a discount that's already saved millions of seniors on Medicare hundreds of dollars each.

Right now nearly 13 million Americans are getting a rebate from insurance companies—that's right, they're sending you a check—because under the law, we've capped the amount of money that they can spend on administrative costs and CEO bonuses instead of your health care. And when they violate that rule, they've got to send you a check.

Last year, Obamacare secured new access to preventive care like mammograms and cancer screenings—with no co-pay, no deductible, no out-of-pocket cost—for more than 20 million women. Last week, insurance companies began covering even more services. And now most health plans are going to begin covering the cost of contraceptive care.

Now, understand this is crucial for women's health. Doctors prescribe contraception not just for family planning, but as a way to reduce the risk of ovarian and other cancers. And it's good for our health care system in general, because we know the overall cost of care is lower when women have access to contraceptive services.

And listen, we recognize that many people have strongly held religious views on contraception, which is why we made sure churches and other houses of worship, they don't have to provide it, they don't have to pay for it. We worked with the Catholic hospitals and universities to find a solution that protects both religious liberty and a woman's health.

So the fact is nearly 99 percent of women have relied on contraception at some point, and more than half of all women between the ages of 18 and 34 have struggled to afford it.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. And we're changing that. Before health care reform, many health care plans charged high deductibles or co-pays for all these preventive services, or they just didn't cover them at all. And according to one study, more than half of all women put off the care they needed because of that. How many of you have gone without care that you needed or a checkup because you knew that you might not be able to afford the insurance co-pays? And you had to choose between gas or groceries or your kid's new soccer uniform.

I don't think a working mom in Denver should have to wait to get a mammogram just because money is tight. I don't think a college student in Colorado Springs should have to choose between textbooks or the preventive care that she needs. That's why we passed this law. It was the right thing to do.

Now, my opponent has a different view. As Sandra said, he said he would take the Affordable Care Act and "kill it dead" on the first day of his Presidency—"kill it dead."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Which, I mean, just understand what this means. This means 26-year-olds, 6.5 million young people don't have health insurance. The preventative care gone. Seniors paying more for prescription drugs. Preexisting conditions, you're out of luck. Then he said he'd "get rid of" Planned Parenthood.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Then he said he would have supported an extreme measure in Mississippi that could have outlawed some forms of contraception.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Then he joined the far right of his party to support a bill that would allow any employer to deny contraceptive coverage to their employees. So it would be up to the employer to decide—

Audience members. Boo!

The President. —your boss telling you what's best for your health and your safety.

Now, let me tell you something, Denver, I don't think your boss should get to control the health care that you get. I don't think insurance companies should control the care that you get. I don't think politicians should control the care that you get. I think there's one person to make these decisions on health care, and that is you. You should make that decision.

Mr. Romney is running as the candidate of conservative values. There's nothing conservative about a Government that prevents a woman from making her own health care decisions. He says he's the candidate of freedom. But freedom is the chance, the opportunity to determine for yourself the care that you need, when you need it. It's the ability to change jobs or start your own business without fear of losing your health insurance.

We're not going back to the days when it was acceptable to charge women more than men for health care. And we're not going back to the days when women with preexisting conditions, like being a cancer survivor, were denied affordable care. We're not going to kick more than a million young women off their parent's plan. We are not going backwards, Denver. We're moving forward. That's why I'm running for President again.

And understand this: At a time when women make up nearly half the workforce, an increasing share of family breadwinners, these aren't just health issues, and they're not just women's issues. These are economic issues. They affect every family in America. Think about it. Think about what it means when a woman is the main breadwinner for her family, but she's taking less pay home, doing the same work as a man, just because she's a woman. That's not right.

Audience members. No!

The President. When my opponent's campaign was asked if he'd fight to guarantee an equal day's pay for an equal day's work, you know what the campaign said? They said, "We'll get back to you on that."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's not a good answer. "We'll get back to you on that"? He won't say what he'd do about it. You've got my answer: Upholding the principle of equal pay for equal work was the first bill I signed into law. The Lilly Ledbetter Act, first bill I signed.

And one other thing. Today is the 3-year anniversary of Sonia Sotomayor taking her seat on the Supreme Court. Yesterday was the 2-year anniversary of Elena Kagan taking her seat on the Supreme Court. So let's be very clear: The next President could tip the balance of the Court in a way that turns back the clock for women and families for decades to come. The choice between going backward and moving forward has never been so clear.

And let me say this. When I talk about women's issues, I'm talking about the experiences that I've seen in my own life. Everybody knows Michelle. The fact that we are partners in this process, this journey of life, has been my source of strength. And I want to make sure that she has control over her health care choices. I want to make sure that when she's working, she is getting paid the same as men. I've got to say, First Ladies right now don't—[laughter]—even though that's a tough job.

You know, my own mom would have been 70 years old this year. And my sister and I lost her to cancer when she was just 52 years old. And she got to meet Michelle, but she never got a chance to meet her granddaughters or watch them grow up. And I often think about what might have happened if a doctor had caught her cancer sooner, or if she had been able to spend less time focusing on how she was going to pay her bills and more time on getting well.

Audience member. She is still with us!

The President. She is still with us. She is in a better place.

I think about Malia and Sasha, and I think to myself, well, we're not going to have an America where they have fewer opportunities than somebody's sons.

Audience members. No!

The President. I don't want them having fewer choices than anybody's boys do.

And then, 4 years ago, as I had the privilege to travel all across this country and meet Americans from all walks of life, I heard so many stories like mine. And I decided nobody else should have to endure the heartbreak of a broken health care system. No one in the wealthiest nation on Earth should go broke because they get sick. Nobody should be able to tell their daughters or sons that the decisions they can and cannot make for themselves are constrained because of some politicians in Washington.

And thanks to you, we've made a difference in people's lives. Thanks to you, there are folks that I meet today who have gotten care and their cancer has been caught, and they've got treatment, and they are living full lives. And it happened because of you, because of your efforts 4 years ago.

And, Denver, we've come too far to turn back now. We've got too much work to do to implement health care. We've got too much work to do to create good jobs. We've got too many teachers that we've got to hire. We've got too many schools we've got to rebuild. We've got too many students who still need affordable higher education. There's more homegrown energy to generate. There are more troops that we've got to bring home. There are more doors of opportunity that we've got to open to anybody who's willing to work hard and walk through those doors.

We've got to keep building an economy where no matter what you look like or where you come from, you can make it here if you try. And you can leave something behind for the next generation. That's what at stake right now, Colorado. That's why I'm running for President of the United States of America. That's why I'm asking for your vote.

I still believe in you. And if you still believe in me, and if you're willing to stand with me, and knock on some doors with me, and make some phone calls with me, and talk to your neighbors and friends about what's at stake, we will win Colorado. And if we win Colorado, we will win this election. We will finish what we started, and we'll remind the world why America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m. at the Auraria Event Center at the University of Denver. In his remarks, he referred to Sandra K. Fluke, graduate, Georgetown University Law School, who testified before the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee on student health insurance coverage of contraceptive services; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Denver, CO.

Locations: Denver, CO.

Names: Bennet, Michael F.; Fluke, Sandra K.; Hancock, Michael B.; Kagan, Elena; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Pena, Federico F.; Perlmutter, Edwin G.; Register, John; Romney, W. Mitt; Soetoro-Ng, Maya; Sotomayor, Sonia M.

Subjects: Arizona : Shootings in Tucson; Civil rights : Wage equality; Colorado : Democratic Party events; Colorado : President's visits; Colorado : Shootings in Aurora; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Health and medical care : Contraception and family planning; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justices; Wisconsin : Shootings in Oak Creek.

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