

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2012*

## **Remarks at a Campaign Rally in North Las Vegas, Nevada**

*August 22, 2012*

*The President.* Hello Nevada! Hello, Las Vegas! Oh, it is good to be back in Nevada!

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

*The President.* Thank you! And I want to thank our host, Canyon Springs High School. Go Pioneers! *[Applause]* Go Pioneers!

A couple of people I want to acknowledge: First of all, can everybody please give a big round of applause to Claritssa for the great introduction and the great job she's doing? I want to acknowledge U.S. Senate candidate, your current Congresswoman Shelley Berkley is in the house. We also have congressional candidates Steven Horsford and John Oceguera. And all of you are here, and I'm really excited.

Now, first of all, if you've got a seat, feel free to take a seat. If you don't have a seat, make sure you bend your knees while you're standing there. We don't want you fainting. Usually, in these rallies, one or two people kind of drop off right in the middle. *[Laughter]* So I want to make sure everybody——

*Audience member.* We love you!

*The President.* Thank you. I love you back.

Now, the first thing I want to say is, I didn't know it rains in Las Vegas. *[Laughter]* I have never seen it raining here, and we got a nice little rain out there. So that's good. That kind of keeps the plants alive and cools things off a little bit.

This is a busy time of year. Sports teams are already practicing, teachers are finishing up and fine-tuning their lesson plans, and next week, here in Clark County, classes begin. And——

*[At this point, an audience member screamed.]*

*The President.* Good. This young lady is very excited about going to school. *[Laughter]* And I want all the young people to feel that same kind of excitement. And although, I have to say, as a father, I know that not every student is always as excited as this young lady about school starting back up again, even though their parents are always very excited. *[Laughter]* Get them back in school.

But I've come to Canyon Springs High School today because we all understand there is nothing more important to our country's future than the education we give our children. *[Applause]* Nothing more important. It is central to the very idea of America, that if you're willing to study hard and you're willing to work hard, no matter who you are, no matter what you look like, no matter where you came from, no matter what your last name is, here in America you can make it if you try.

Now, I'm a big believer that education starts at home. It starts with parents who are reading to their kids and turning off the TV sometimes, instilling a lifelong love of learning. You can't replace that kind of attitude that you get at home, and so parents have to make sure that they're staying on top of their kids' educations.

It also means, students, you've got to have a lifelong love of learning. Sometimes when I'm talking to young people, I try to explain to them, you know what, an education is not something you receive passively. We don't just tip your head over and pour education in your ear. [Laughter] You've got to want it. You've got to be engaged and curious and interested and be willing to ask questions and push yourself. And especially when subjects are hard, you've got to be willing to work at it. It doesn't come easy. That's the nature of a good education, and that will last you your whole life. [Applause] That will last you your whole life.

But as important as parents are, as important as the attitudes of students are, what happens at schools like this will shape the future of the vast majority of our kids. What happens in the classroom matters. And that begins with the person at the front of the classroom. For weeks now, teachers like Claritssa across the country have been working behind the scenes. They've been preparing their classrooms. They've been decorating bulletin boards. They've been digging into their own pockets all too often to pay for school supplies.

I know because my sister is a teacher, and I know how much effort they put into this. They don't ask for a lot of recognition. They're certainly not going into teaching for the money. [Laughter] They do it because they care about children. They care about their future. I was just meeting with another teacher backstage who said teaching is the closest you can get to immortality.

And in fact, in a meeting that I had with teachers, I had a chance to meet with one teacher who was an adviser to Claritssa when she was a student, so he's had the opportunity to see his own student now doing what he's been doing for 18 years. That's—what satisfaction that must give you.

The right teacher can change a child's life forever. And look, I know this from personal experience. When I was in fifth grade, I had a teacher named Mabel Hefty. That was her name, and she was a great teacher. She was full of curiosity and she was full of enthusiasm. And most importantly, she went that extra mile. Fifth grade can be a tough time for a kid. And I was different and had a funny name, and I had just come back from living a few years overseas with my mom and wasn't sure how I'd fit in. And she noticed that, Ms. Hefty. And she took me under her wing, and she made me feel like I had something to say and that I had some talent. And she wasn't too obvious about it, but she made sure that during this transition year, I was able to steady myself and start focusing on my work. I still remember her all these years later. She's passed away now, but I still remember her.

I'm only standing here as President because I had a bunch of great teachers like Ms. Hefty. Teachers matter. A good teacher can increase the lifetime income of a classroom by more than a quarter million dollars. A great teacher can change the trajectory of a child's life. They can offer an escape from poverty to a child who dreams beyond his or her circumstances. Sometimes a teacher can fill in where the parent isn't always there. So they're on the front lines of our country's future.

But here's the thing: This year, fewer teachers are going back to school. Since June of 2009, even as we've created millions of new jobs in the private sector, we've lost more than 300,000 teachers, aides, and staff in our schools, largely because of budget cuts at the State and local levels. Think about what that means for our kids. Claritssa mentioned it: crowded classrooms, canceled programs for preschoolers, less learning time. Here in Clark County, the average class size was already the largest in the country last year; this year, it's getting even bigger. Cutting back on teachers is the last thing we should be doing as a country.

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

*The President.* We should be hiring more teachers, especially in areas like math and science where we need to be at the cutting edge. If we want America to lead in the 21st century, we've got to give all our children the best education possible—from the day they start in preschool to the day they start their career—because other countries are racing, they are doing everything they can to out-educate us because they know that means they'll be able to out-compete us. They know that new businesses and new industries will take root and create jobs wherever the best educated, most highly skilled workers are.

*Audience member.* [Inaudible]

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

*The President.* So that young man probably needed a good teacher. We all need it.

So businesses are going to locate where they've got the best workers, the best educated, the most highly skilled workers. And I want that place to be Nevada. I want that place to be Clark County. I want that place to be the United States of America.

And that's why even as we face the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes, I've fought to keep teachers in the classroom. The actions that we took during the first 2 years of my administration helped save the jobs of 400,000 educators. That made a difference for our kids; it made a difference in our communities.

Part of the jobs bill that I sent to the new Congress last September would have helped States like Nevada prevent further layoffs, would allow them to rehire teachers who have lost their jobs. But Republicans in Congress led——

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* No, no, no, don't boo, vote. That's right. Vote.

The Republicans in Congress, led by Congressman Ryan, joined together to block the bill that would have helped States hire and retain more teachers. And as a result, tens of thousands of teachers are not coming back to school this fall. Now, not only is that unfair to our kids, it's foolish for our future.

Now, my opponent in this election doesn't seem to understand this. Governor Romney says we've got enough teachers, we don't need anymore. The way he talks about them, it seems as if he thinks these are a bunch of nameless Government bureaucrats that we need to cut back on—those are his words. And his economic plan certainly would do that. The plan Governor Romney has put forward would cut America's investment in education by nearly 20 percent.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* And here's the thing: He's not making these cuts because he wants to create jobs or pay down the deficit. He's doing it to pay for a new \$5 trillion tax cut that's weighted towards the wealthiest Americans.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* So I've got a question for Governor Romney: How many teachers' jobs are worth another tax cut for millionaires and billionaires? How many kids in Head Start are worth a tax cut for somebody like me who doesn't need it? How many grants and loans for college students are worth a tax cut for Governor Romney, who certainly doesn't need it?

We are a better country than one that short changes the next generation just so we can shower tax cuts on folks who are already doing really well. We're a better country than one that pulls the rug out from under young people working so hard to make it just to give more to folks who've already got a lot. That's not who we are. That's not how we built the greatest economy and the strongest middle class in the world. That's not a plan for our future. That's not where I want to take this country. That's why I'm running for reelection as President of the United States of America.

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

*The President.* Governor Romney has made his time as an investor the basis for his candidacy. And his economic plan makes clear he doesn't think our children's education is worth investing in. I do. And that's the choice this November.

When a teacher in West Philadelphia, somebody on the front lines of our education system, told Governor Romney that having too many kids in his class made it harder for him to do his job, Governor Romney told him that class sizes don't matter. Now, there are a lot of studies that say that class sizes do matter, especially in the early grades. But more importantly, why wouldn't we be listening to the teachers who are actually in the classroom? Have you ever met a teacher who said, you know what, I have too few kids in my class, I want a lot more kids? [*Laughter*] Would any parent want their kids to go to a school with much bigger class sizes?

Claritssa was telling me that in the first couple of weeks of school, she might have 45 students in a class. They don't have enough desks, so they've got some kids sitting on the floor getting assignments. Now, eventually, the school district tries to work to level things out, but she says even at that point, she may have 38. Anybody ever try to be with 38 13- or 14-year-olds? [*Laughter*] And some of them may not be reading at grade level; some of them, English may be a second language. Imagine how difficult that is.

So instead of listening to teachers or working with teachers, Governor Romney said the only reason he would keep the Department of Education around is to push back against teachers. He thinks that teachers need to have somebody policing them and checking them and that's the main purpose of the Department of Education. That's like saying you keep the Department of Agriculture around so you can push around farmers. [*Laughter*] And the sad thing is, education should not be a Democratic or a Republican issue. It's an American issue. It's about what's best for our kids.

And I haven't just talked the talk, I've walked the walk on this. Over the past 4 years, we've broken through the traditional stalemate that used to exist between the left and the right, between conservatives and liberals. We launched a national competition to improve all our schools. We put more money into it, but we also demanded reform. We want teachers to be paid better and treated like the professionals that they are. But we're also demanding more accountability, including the ability of school districts to replace teachers that aren't cutting it. For less than 1 percent of what our nation spends on education each year, almost every State has now agreed to raise standards for teaching and learning, and that's the first time it's happened in a generation. And then, we've worked with Democrats and Republicans to fix No Child Left Behind.

So here in Nevada, a waiver has been granted because we want high standards, but we don't want teachers teaching to the test. We told Governors and their States that if you're willing to set higher, more honest standards for our kids, we're going to give you more

flexibility to meet them, because what works best in New York might not work as well in Nevada and vice versa.

We know that when students aren't allowed to walk away from their education, more of them walk on that stage to get their diplomas. And that's why I've called on every State to require that their students stay in high school until they graduate or turn 18.

And when kids do graduate, the most daunting challenge can be the cost of college. And that's why we've helped over 3 million more students afford a college education with grants that go farther than before. We fought to make sure the interest rate on Federal student loans didn't go up over the summer. We won that fight. We stood up to special interests and fixed a student loan system that gave tens of billions of taxpayer dollars to big banks, and we used that money to double grant aid to students.

Governor Romney is on the wrong side of each of these issues. His plan would cut aid to 10 million students, turn student loans back over to big banks, wasting billions of dollars of taxpayer money. When he was asked, well, what are you going to do about the rising cost of tuition—he was asked this by a student—he just said, well, you need to go borrow money from your parents.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* That's not a plan. That's the choice in this election. So let me just say this. Over the next 3 months—it's actually less than 2 months, it's less than 11 weeks, not that I'm counting, but—[*laughter*]*—*we will see the other side spend more money than we've ever seen on ads. And these aren't, like, positive ads where they're putting out their plan, because they don't really have a plan. And the plan they've got won't work. [*Laughter*] So what they'll do is they will run these ads over and over again just saying the economy is not where it should be and it's all Obama's fault.

And that's the only argument they have because they know their economic plan is not popular. They know that gutting education to pay for massive new tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires, that's not going to be popular among voters. So they're counting on the fact that, after watching so many of these ads every day, you will get so discouraged that you'll decide your vote doesn't matter. You'll decide you can't compete with some rich guy writing a \$10 million check.

But, Vegas, I'm counting on something different. Claritssa is counting on something different. The students at this school are counting on something different. We need your help. We need you. We need you to register to vote. We've got staff and volunteers who can help you do that on your way out today. They'll grab you if you're not registered.

Here in Nevada you can register online. You can go to the web site [gottaregister.com](http://gottaregister.com). Now, that's "gotta," g-o-t-t-a—[*laughter*]. For the teachers in the audience, I know that's not how you're supposed to spell it, but that's how it is: "gotta" [*Laughter*]

So that means you can grab your friends, grab your neighbors, grab your aunt, grab your uncle, cousins, and you can register—you can help them get registered online.

But here's the thing, we've come too far to turn back now. We've been through a tough 3½ years, and Nevada has been through tougher times than most States. But the fact is that everything I've done has been focused on how we rebuild that strong middle class, how we make sure everybody is getting a fair shot, everybody is doing their fair share, everybody is playing by the same set of rules. That's how we saved an auto industry. That's how we've seen

4½ million jobs created. That's how we ended the war in Iraq. That's how we are creating jobs in clean energy.

We've got more work to do. We've got more good teachers to hire. We've got more good schools to build. We've got more young people to send to college. We've got more good jobs to create. We've got more solar panels we've got to create. We've got more troops we've got to bring home. We've got more veterans we've got to help. We've got more doors of opportunity we've got to open up to every single American.

That's why I'm asking for a second term. And if you're willing to stand with me and knock on some doors with me and make some phone calls with me, this November, we will win Nevada. We will win this election. And we'll remind the world why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you, and God bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. at Canyon Springs High School. In his remarks, he referred to Claritssa Sanchez, teacher, Canyon Springs High School; former State Sen. Steven A. Horsford and former State Rep. John Ocegüera of Nevada; Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and Vice Presidential candidate Rep. Paul D. Ryan; and Isaac Barron, teacher, Rancho High School in North Las Vegas, NV. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :North Las Vegas, NV.

*Locations:* North Las Vegas, NV.

*Names:* Barron, Isaac; Berkley, Rochelle; Horsford, Steven A.; Ocegüera, John W.; Romney, W. Mitt; Ryan, Paul D.; Sanchez, Claritssa; Soetoro-Ng, Maya.

*Subjects:* Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : American Graduation Initiative; Education : Class size, reduction efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : No Child Left Behind Act; Education : Parental involvement; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Standards and school accountability; Education : Teachers; Education, Department of : Race to the Top Fund; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth ; Nevada : Democratic Party events; Nevada : President's visit; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects.

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