

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Norfolk, Virginia

September 4, 2012

The President. Hello, Norfolk State! Go Spartans! Can everybody please give Ed a huge round of applause not just for that introduction, but for his extraordinary service to our country and to our veterans? It's good to see all of you. We've got Bobby Scott, your great Congressman in the house. We've got your next Congressman, Paul Hirschbiel is here. We are very proud to have an Olympic gold medalist, Francena McCorory, 4x400 relay winner. I'm not that fast. [*Laughter*] I was watching those folks on TV; I said, those are some fast people.

It is good to be back in Norfolk! This is our last stop on the way to the convention in Charlotte. I decided to come back here today despite the fact that, back in March, Norfolk State ruined my NCAA bracket. I had Missouri going pretty deep. But I want you to know I've got no hard feelings. [*Laughter*] Let's just say you owe me one. [*Laughter*]

Now, I know that whatever I say here today, it's going to be, at best, a distant second to the speech you will hear tonight from the star of the Obama family, Michelle Obama. This is just like a relay, and you start off with the fastest person. [*Laughter*] So I'm going to be at home and I'm going to be watching it with our girls. And I'm going to try not to let them see their daddy cry, because when Michelle starts talking, I start getting all misty.

The President. But I'm looking forward to being in Charlotte myself; I'll go down there tomorrow. And last week, our friends in the other party had their convention.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, vote! Vote!

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

The President. Now, just in case some of you missed it, some of you didn't DVR the Republican Convention, let me give you a basic recap. Basically, they said, first of all, everything is bad and it's Obama's fault and Governor Romney knows the secret to creating jobs and growing the economy. The only problem was, he kept it secret. [*Laughter*] There was a lot of talk about "hard truths" and "bold choices," but they never bothered to tell you what they were. And when my opponent had the chance to offer his secret sauce, he did not offer a single new idea. It was just retreads of the same old policies that have been sticking it to the middle class for years.

They spent a lot of time talking about me, but they didn't spend a lot of time talking about you. They didn't talk a lot about how we're going to move forward so that the middle class is strong, so that the economy is growing for everybody. They spent even less time talking about their plans. And that's not just because they know you won't like it, but it's because they know you saw what happened when we tried it. You've lived through it, and you know we can't afford to repeat it.

I mean, think about it. A plan that says we're going to make middle class families pay for another budget-busting \$250,000 tax cut for people making \$3 million a year or more, that's not really persuasive to most people. We don't think that will magically translate into jobs or prosperity for people. We know families won't be better off if we undo all the Wall Street reforms we've put into place to prevent another financial crisis or that we're going to be better

off if we remove rules to protect our air and our water or if we're going to take away protections we put in place to make sure that health care is there for you when you get sick.

And we are certainly positive that the best way to strengthen Medicare isn't to turn it into a voucher that leaves seniors paying additional costs out of pocket.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's not a plan to create jobs. It's not a plan to lower the deficit. It's not a plan to strengthen the middle class. It's not a plan to strengthen this country.

Audience members. No!

The President. We believe in something better. We believe in an America that says our economic strength doesn't come from the top down, it comes from the middle out. It comes from the bottom up. It comes from workers and students and small-business owners and a strong, thriving middle class.

We believe in an America where going to school doesn't depend on how much money you have. We believe in an America where getting decent health care doesn't depend on how much money you've got.

We believe in an America that leads with our military, but also takes care of our veterans and stands up for our ideals and shows the power of our example.

We believe in an America where no matter who you are, where you come from, what you look like, what your last name is, you can pursue your own happiness, and you can make it if you try. That's what these last 4 years have been about, that's what this campaign is about, and that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States of America.

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

The President. Now, the other side may not have been eager to talk about their ideas. But on Thursday night, I'm going to look forward to sharing mine with you. On Thursday night, I will offer what I believe is a better path forward, a path that will create good jobs and strengthen our middle class and grow our economy. And the good news is, Virginia, that in just 2 months, you get to choose which path we take.

You can choose their path: give massive new tax cuts to folks who have already made it. Or you can choose my plan. I want to keep taxes low for every American who's out there still trying to make it. I've cut taxes by a total of about \$3,600 for the typical family. I kept my promise to cut taxes for middle class families and for small businesses.

And now I'm running to make sure that taxes aren't raised by a single dime on your family's first \$250,000 of income, which, by the way, means 98 percent of Americans wouldn't pay a single dime more in income tax.

But that will be up to you. It will be up to your vote. I mean, you can decide whether we give new jobs and new industries to countries like China or whether we fight for those jobs in places like Virginia. Unlike my opponent, I want to stop giving tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas. Let's give those tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in American plants and American factories and American jobs so we can go out there and make products stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's why I'm running for a second term.

When a young person asked Governor Romney what he could do to help folks go to college, he suggested, "borrow money from your parents."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo——

Audience members. Vote!

The President. Vote! But maybe he wasn't aware that there are actually some young people whose parents would love to give them the money and don't have it. So that's one path.

My path is to make sure America once again leads the world in educating our kids and training our workers. Let's help more young people afford the kind of education you students get here at Norfolk State. Let's keep investing more in our HBCUs. Let's continue to make sure that Pell grants are there for folks who need it. Let's help more folks go to community college to get the skills and the training that companies are hiring for right now.

Governor Romney wants to end the tax credit we created that is saving families up to \$10,000 over 4 years in tuition costs. I want to expand it. Because higher education, that's not a luxury anymore, it is an economic necessity in the 21st century for every family, and every family should be able to afford it. That's what we're fighting for. That's why I'm running for a second term.

But it's going to be up to you. You'll make the choice. Virginia, you can choose an energy plan written by and for the big oil companies. That's Governor Romney's plan. Or you can choose a strategy that taps into all of America's resources and ingenuity. Renewable energy isn't "imaginary." Those jobs that we're creating in wind power and solar power, those aren't a "fad." And I think it's time to stop giving \$4 billion a year in taxpayer subsidies that are going to big oil companies that are making money every time you go to the pump, and let's invest in homegrown energy sources that will create good jobs here in the United States of America. That's the choice in this election.

And it's up to you whether we go back to a health care system that says insurance companies can deny you coverage whenever they want. I think we need to keep moving forward with the new health care law. It's cutting costs, it's covering more people, it's saving lives. They like to call it Obamacare. Well, let me tell you, I do care. I care about all the young people who are able to stay on their parents' plans now. I care about the seniors who are seeing lower prescription drug costs. I care about folks with preexisting conditions who can't be denied care now.

Governor Romney has promised that he would overturn Obamacare on his first day in office, which means he'd kick nearly 7 million young people off their parents' plans. He'd make seniors' prescription drugs more expensive. Maybe we should call his plan "Romney-doesn't-care." [*Laughter*] But I do care. And this law is here to stay. And we're not going to refight the battles we've already fought over the last 4 years. We're not going backwards, we're moving forward. That's why I'm running for reelection.

This November, you get to decide the future of the war in Afghanistan. By the end of this month, I will have brought home 33,000 troops. I've said we will end this war in 2014. Governor Romney last week didn't have a word to say about Afghanistan. He said the way I ended the war in Iraq was "tragic."

Listen, I promised I'd end the war in Iraq, and I did. I said we'd take out bin Laden; we did. Getting our troops out of Iraq was the right thing to do. Bringing our troops home from Afghanistan in a responsible way is the right thing to do. And as long as I'm Commander in Chief, we will serve our veterans as well as they've served us, because nobody who fights for this country should have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads when they come home. That's a solemn obligation.

That's why I fought to strengthen the post-9/11 GI bill. That's how—why we secured the largest increase in VA funding in decades. That's why I fought to create a new tax cut for business owners who hire veterans. That's why Michelle and Jill Biden challenged CEOs to hire 100,000 of our veterans by the end of the next year. Last month, Michelle and Jill stood with those CEOs and announced they've already hit 125,000 veterans being hired. They are beating their schedule by a year. That's the commitment we've shown.

So, Virginia, Norfolk, on issue after issue, Governor Romney and Congressman Ryan, they want to take us backwards. But the story of America is not about going backwards, it's about going forward. And in 2 months, you will actually choose whether or not we travel that path.

But I want everybody to understand, over these next 2 months, over these next 63 days, you will see more ads, more negative ads, more insults and distractions and baloney, than you've ever seen. And it will be supported by \$10 million checks from wealthy donors that like things just the way they are. And they're counting on you, maybe not to vote for Romney, but they're counting on you to feel discouraged. And they figure if you don't vote, then big oil will write our energy future and insurance companies will write our health care plans and politicians will dictate what a woman can or can't do when it comes to her own health. They're counting on you just to accept their version of things.

But I'm counting on something different. Those who oppose change, those who benefit from an unjust status quo, they're always betting on complacency and cynicism of the American people. But throughout America's history, they've always lost that bet, and I think they're going to lose that bet this time too.

But, Virginia, that depends on you. It depends on you registering to vote. It depends on you showing up to vote. It depends on you setting an example for the next person in class or at your workplace or in the next town or your cousin in the next State. You've got to call them. You've got to let them know what is at stake: that we can close the gap between what America should be and what it is right now. Because they may be waiting on you. They're waiting to see if you register. They're waiting to see if you vote.

We've come too far to turn back now. We've created a lot of jobs, but we've got more jobs to create. We've created a lot of homegrown energy, but we've got more energy to generate. We've got a lot more young people to send to college. We've got a lot more good teachers we've got to hire and more good schools we've got to build. We've got more troops we've got to bring home, and we've got more veterans we've got to take care of. We've got more doors of opportunity we've got to open up to everybody who is willing to work hard and walk through those doors. And that's why I'm running for a second term.

And if you're willing to stand with me and you're willing to make some phone calls for me, if you're willing to knock on some doors for me, if you're willing to vote for me, we'll win Norfolk again. We'll win Virginia again. We'll win this election. We will finish what we started. And we'll remind the world why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you, Virginia, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:37 p.m. at Norfolk State University. In his remarks, he referred to Air Force veteran Edward F. Meagher, advisory board member, Aleethia Foundation; Paul Hirschbiel, owner and president, Eden Capital; Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney and Vice Presidential nominee Paul D. Ryan; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies : Norfolk, VA.

Locations: Norfolk, VA.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Hirschbiel, Paul; McCorory, Francena; Meagher, Edward F.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Romney, W. Mitt; Ryan, Paul D.; Scott, Robert C.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Education : Postsecondary education :: Tax credits, expansion; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Domestic sources; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Subsidies, elimination; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Sports : Olympic Games; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; United Kingdom : 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London; Veterans : Benefits; Veterans : Hiring incentives; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Funding; Virginia : Democratic Party events; Virginia : President's visits.

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