

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Seminole, Florida

September 8, 2012

The President. Hello, St. Pete's! I am fired up! I am ready to go forward!

Oh, it is good to be back in Florida. It is good—how's everybody doing today?

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

The President. All right. Now, first thing I want to do is make sure everybody is staying hydrated, and if you've been standing here a while, bend your knees. I don't want everybody—anybody falling out.

I want to thank Charlie Crist for his introduction, for his support, for showing that the values that we're fighting for are not Democratic values or Republican values, they are American values. That's what we're fighting for.

We've got one of the finest Senators in the country, your Senator, Bill Nelson, here. One of the best Members of Congress that we've got, Kathy Castor is here. And all of you are here. I'm really excited about that.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back; that's why I came.

Now, we just had our convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. Folks there could not have been more welcoming. Michelle—what can I say? As the other men in the audience know, our main goal when we marry is to improve our gene pool. [*Laughter*] That's why my daughters turned out good. [*Laughter*] Because you just—you marry up and you marry somebody superior to yourself. And you just—you beg them until they marry you. [*Laughter*] It's just—persistence is the key.

And then you've got President Clinton who made the case as only he can. After he spoke, somebody sent out a tweet; they said, you should appoint him secretary of explaining stuff. [*Laughter*] I like that: secretary of explaining stuff. Although, I have to admit, it didn't really say "stuff." I cleaned that up a little bit. [*Laughter*]

And then 2 days ago, I did my best to lay out the stakes in this election, because they are big stakes. Both sides have made their arguments now. And I know you have a lot of national Republicans in the neighborhood making their argument.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. We've made ours. And so now you've got a big choice to make. And by the way, don't boo, vote. Vote.

I honestly believe this is the clearest choice of any time in our generation, because it's a choice not just between two candidates or two political parties. This is a choice between two fundamentally different paths for America, two fundamentally different visions for our future.

Now, ours is a fight on behalf of that basic bargain that built the largest middle class and the strongest economy the world has ever known. The bargain that says if you work hard it will pay off. The bargain that says responsibility will be rewarded and everybody has got a fair shot

and everybody does their fair share and everybody plays by the same set of rules, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, DC. That's what we're fighting for.

That basic bargain is why I ran for President in the first place, because too many jobs were disappearing overseas. Too many families were struggling to make the mortgage, to put food on the table. People were having to borrow just for day-to-day expenses, to fill up the gas tank. And over time, more and more of that debt built up. And then this whole house of cards came tumbling down in the worst economic crisis, the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression. And millions of innocent Americans lost their jobs and their homes and their life savings, a tragedy that we are still fighting to recover from.

Now, our friends, at their convention, they were more than happy to talk about everything they think is wrong with America, but they didn't say much about how they'd make it right. They want your vote, but they don't want you to know their plan. And that's because—

Audience member. We want you, President!

The President. That's because all they've got to offer is the same prescriptions that they've had for 30 years: tax cuts, tax cuts, gut a few regulations, some more tax cuts. Tax cuts when times are good. Tax cuts when times are bad. Tax cuts to help you lose a few extra pounds—*[laughter]*—tax cuts to help your love life. *[Laughter]*

Audience member. It doesn't help! *[Laughter]*

The President. Somebody said it doesn't help. *[Laughter]* You tried those tax cuts, huh? *[Laughter]*

Now, listen, actually, it does help when you give it to folks who need it. That's why I've cut taxes for middle class families and for small-business owners 18 times. But I don't believe, and you don't believe, that another round of tax breaks for millionaires is going to bring good jobs back to our shores or pay down our deficit.

Audience members. No!

The President. I don't believe that firing teachers or kicking students off of financial aid—students who go right here to this institution—that somehow that's going to help our economy or help us compete with scientists and engineers coming out of China.

After all that we have been through, do we really think that it would make sense to roll back regulations on Wall Street?

Audience members. No!

The President. That somehow that's going to help small-businesswomen expand or laid-off construction workers keep their homes?

Audience members. No!

The President. Let me tell you that we have been there. We've tried what they're peddling. It didn't work. We're not going back. We're going forward. *[Applause]* We are going forward. We are going forward.

I won't pretend the path I'm offering is quick or that it's going to be easy. I never have. Sometimes, I ask people to go back to 2008 and look at what I said. I said this was going to take some time because these problems have been building up for a long time. Bill Clinton reminded us on Wednesday night, it's going to take more than a few years to solve challenges that have been built up for decades.

But let me tell you something. When our opponents say this nation is in decline, they are dead wrong. This is America. We still have the best workers in the world and the best entrepreneurs in the world. We've got the best scientists and the best researchers. We've got the best colleges and the best universities. We are a young nation with the greatest diversity of talent and ingenuity from every corner of the globe. So no matter what the naysayers may say for political reasons, no matter how dark they try to make everything look, there's not a country on Earth that wouldn't gladly trade places with the United States of America.

And I am here to tell you our problems can be solved and our challenges can be met. The path we offer may be harder, but it leads to a better place. And I'm asking you to choose that future. I am asking you to rally not just behind me, but around a set of goals for your country: goals in manufacturing and energy, in education and national security, in reducing our deficit. Real, achievable goals that will lead to new jobs and more opportunity and rebuild this economy on a stronger foundation.

That's what we can do in the next 4 years, and that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

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

The President. That's why I'm asking for 4 more years.

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

The President. Now, I want you to—in case you missed it 2 days ago, I want to repeat in very plain terms what goals I'm talking about.

Audience member. Go ahead, Mr. President!

The President. You say I can go ahead? Okay. I'm going to go ahead then. [*Laughter*]

Number one, I've got a plan to export more products and outsource fewer jobs. After a decade of decline, this country has now created over half a million jobs in the last 2½ years alone just in manufacturing. That's faster than any time since the '90s. We reinvented a dying auto industry that's back on top of the world. And now you've got a choice: we can keep giving more tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas, just like the other side is arguing for——

Audience members. Boo!

The President.——or we can start rewarding companies that open new plants and train new workers and create new jobs right here in Florida. We can help big factories and small businesses double their exports and create a million new manufacturing jobs in the next 4 years. You can make that happen. That's part one.

Part two: I've got a plan to control more of our own energy. After 30 years of inaction, we raised fuel standards so that by the middle of the next decade, your cars and trucks will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. That will save you money. It will help the environment.

We've doubled our use of renewable energy, and thousands of Americans now have jobs building wind turbines and long-lasting batteries. Today, the United States of America is less dependent on foreign oil than at any time in nearly two decades. Think about that.

So we're moving to control our own energy. The other side, they don't have a real plan. So you've got a choice between a plan that wants to just reverse the progress we've made or one that builds on it. And let me tell you, unlike my opponent, I'm not going to let oil companies

write this country's energy plan or endanger our coastline or collect another \$4 billion in corporate welfare from our taxpayers. We're not going to let them do that.

We've got a better path. We're going to invest in wind and solar, clean coal technology. We're going to help farmers and scientists harness new biofuels to power cars and trucks. We're going to put construction workers back to work building homes and factories that waste less energy and retrofitting old buildings and homes to use less energy.

We're developing a hundred years' supply of natural gas that's right beneath our feet. If you choose this path, we can cut our imports in half by 2020 and support more than 600,000 new jobs in natural gas alone.

That's the second part of the plan. You want to hear the third?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Okay. Third, I've got a plan to give more Americans the chance to gain the skills they need to compete. Education was the gateway to opportunity for me and Michelle. It's the gateway to a middle class life.

For the next time—for the first time in nearly a generation, every State just about has answered our call to raise their standards for teaching and learning. Some of the worst schools in the country have made real gains in math and reading, including here in Florida. Millions of students are paying less for college today, including students here, because we took on a system that was wasting billions of dollars giving student loan money to banks and lenders instead of directly to students.

So now you've got a choice. We can gut education like these other folks were recommending.

Audience members. No!

The President. Or we can decide that in the United States of America, no child should have her dreams deferred because of a crowded classroom or a crumbling school. No family should have to set aside a college acceptance letter because they don't have the money. No company should have to look for workers in China because they couldn't find ones with the right skills right here at home.

So help me recruit 100,000 math and science teachers in the next 10 years and improve early childhood education and give 2 million workers the chance to learn skills at that community college that will lead directly to a job. And let's help work with colleges and universities to cut in half the growth of tuition costs over the next 10 years, because higher education is not a luxury anymore; it is an economic necessity that everybody should be able to afford.

And we can meet that goal together. You can choose that future if you're willing to move forward with me.

Fourth, fourth, my plan—yes, I've got four. [*Laughter*] Fourth, my plan would reduce our deficit without sticking it to the middle class. We're all concerned about the deficit. After two wars, two tax cuts that weren't paid for, we have a challenge that we've got to now deal with—

Audience member. Can't go back.

The President. Can't go backwards.

Independent analysis shows that the plan I've put forward would cut our deficit by \$4 trillion. And I've already worked with Republicans to cut \$1 trillion in spending. I'm willing to do more. We've got to make sure Government is lean, and programs that don't work, we've got to get rid of them so we can pay for the things that do.

And I want to reform the Tax Code so that it is simple and fair, and so that it asks the wealthiest households to pay higher taxes on incomes over \$250,000. Keep in mind, that means if you're a millionaire, you'd still get a tax—you'd keep your tax cut for the first 250. [*Laughter*] But after that, you'd pay the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was President, the same rate when we created 23 million new jobs, the biggest surplus in history and a whole lot of millionaires to boot.

And by the way, the reason that I want to keep tax cuts for middle class families—but I don't need one, Mitt Romney doesn't need one—is because what happens when middle class families, when teachers and construction workers and receptionists, what happens when folks have a little money in their pocket?

Audience members. They spend it!

The President. And when they spend it that means business has more customers, and that means business makes more profit, which means business hires more workers, who then spend more money. The whole economy gets stronger. Not from the top down, but from the middle out, from the bottom up. That's how we grow an economy. [*Applause*] That's how we grow an economy.

Now, this week, President Clinton pointed out the single biggest thing missing from my opponent's plan: arithmetic. When Governor Romney and his allies tell us we can somehow cut our deficit by spending \$5 trillion more on tax breaks for the wealthy, well, you do the math. How is that going to work?

The fact is Mr. Romney's plan and Congressman Ryan's plan don't add up. And by the way, they don't add to jobs either. They like to talk about how we're going to create more jobs. But economists who've looked at their plan say this would make the recovery slower, not faster.

I refuse to let that happen. I refuse to ask middle class families to give up their deductions for owning a home or raising their kids just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I refuse to ask all the students here to pay more for college to pay for my tax cut. I'm not going to kick children out of Head Start programs or eliminate health insurance for millions of Americans who are poor or elderly or disabled, all so those with the most can pay less.

And by the way, Florida, you should know I will never turn Medicare into a voucher system. No American should have to spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies. They should retire with the dignity and the respect and the care that they have earned. So yes, we will reform and strengthen Medicare for the long haul; that needs to be done. But we're going to do it by reducing the cost of health care, not by just dumping the cost on seniors and asking them to pay more, thousands of dollars more.

And while we're at it, we're going to keep the promise of Social Security by taking the responsible steps to strengthen it, and that's not by turning it over to Wall Street.

Audience members. No!

The President. Now, rebuilding the economy is essential, but everybody knows our prosperity at home is linked to what we do abroad. Four years ago, I promised to end the war

in Iraq; I did. I said that we would begin to wind down the war in Afghanistan, and we are. A new tower rises above the New York skyline; meanwhile, Al Qaida is on the path to defeat, and Osama bin Laden is dead.

So we're going to keep moving forward. As long as I'm Commander in Chief, we will sustain the strongest military the world has ever known. And when our troops come home and take off their uniform—like this veteran right here—we will serve them as well as they have served us. Because no one who fights for this country should ever have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads or the care that they need when they come home.

My opponent has a different view. He said the way I ended the war in Iraq was "tragic." He won't tell us how he'll end the war in Afghanistan. I have, and I will. And while he wants to spend more money on military programs that the Joint Chiefs don't even want, say it won't make us safer, I'm going to use some of that money that we're no longer spending on war to pay down our debt and to put more people back to work rebuilding schools and bridges and runways and roads, because after a decade at war, I think it's time to some nation-building here at home.

So this is the choice that we face. This is what the election comes down to. Over and over, the other side spent all the time they had here in Florida saying that bigger tax cuts and fewer regulations are the only way. They kept on arguing over and over again that since government can't do everything, it should do almost nothing. Their basic theory is: If you can't afford health insurance, hope you don't get sick. If a company releases toxic pollution into the air that your children breathe, well, that's just the price of progress. If you can't afford to go to college, take my opponent's advice and borrow money from your parents.

You know what, that's not who we are. That's not what America is about. America, we believe and insist on personal responsibility. We believe in individual initiative. We know we're not entitled to success; we've got to earn it. We honor the businessmen and the strivers and the dreamers and the risk-takers who've always been the driving force behind our free enterprise system, the greatest engine of growth and prosperity that the world has ever known.

But you know what, we also believe that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another, to future generations. We believe in the idea of citizenship: the idea that America is not just about what can be done for us, but what can be done by us, together, as one Nation, as one people.

That's what you believed 4 years ago. I told you the election wasn't about me, it was about you. And as I look out on this crowd, I am reminded, you were the change. Folks here in Florida from every walk of life—Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, young, old, gay, straight, abled, not—disabled—listen, you're the reason that seniors across Florida are saving an average of \$600 every year on prescription drug because of Obamacare, because of health care reform. You did that.

By the way, I do care. So I like the term Obamacare. Mr. Romney says he's going to repeal it, which means his plan is "Romney-don't-care."

You're the reason. You're the reason that a woman in Doral, who's already working full-time during the day, can now afford to go to school at night because she's getting the financial aid that she needs. That's because of you and what you did. You're the reason there's a working family from Hollywood who was able to save their home from foreclosure, keep their piece of the American Dream. You made that possible.

You're the reason a young immigrant who grew up here and went to school here and pledged allegiance to our flag will no longer be deported from the only country she's ever called home. You're the reason why an outstanding soldier won't be kicked out of the military because of who they are or who they love. You're the reason why thousands of families have been able to say to loved ones who serve so bravely, "Welcome home."

Audience member. Thanks for bringing me home!

The President. You're welcome. Welcome home. Thank you for serving us.

And if you turn away now, if you buy into the cynicism that somehow the change we fought for isn't possible, then of course, change won't happen. Change won't happen without you. If you give up on the idea that your voice can make a difference, then other folks are going to fill the void: the lobbyists, the special interests, the people who are writing \$10 million checks, the folks who are trying to keep people from voting——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——the politicians who want to tell you who you can marry, tell women they can't have control over their own health care choices. Only you can make sure that doesn't happen, Florida. Only you have the power to move us forward. But you've got to use that power.

If you're not registered to vote, go to gottaregister.com. Not "got to"—"gotta," g-o-t-t-a-register.com. If you're not sure about how to vote, go to gottavote.com. Talk to your friends, talk to your neighbors, talk to your coworkers. Don't just talk to people who agree with you; reach out to folks who don't follow politics that closely. Talk to somebody who's undecided. Talk to some of your Republican friends. And talk to them about a vision for the future that moves everybody forward, not just a few.

I'm asking for your help. So, Florida, can you make some phone calls for me? Can you knock on some doors for me? Will you tell your friends and neighbors what's at stake in this election? Will you register? Will you vote? Because if you do, we will finish what we started. We'll create more good jobs. We'll generate more homegrown energy. We'll hire more great teachers. We'll send more young people to college. We'll bring home more troops. We'll take care of more veterans. We will open the doors of opportunity to everybody who's willing to work hard and walk through them.

We'll win this county. We will win Florida. We'll finish what we started and remind the world why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. at St. Petersburg College. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; and Ben Greenman, staff editor, the New Yorker magazine.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies : Seminole, FL.

Locations: Seminole, FL.

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