

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Kissimmee, Florida
September 8, 2012

The President. Hello, Florida! Oh, it is good to be in Kissimmee! This crowd looks fired up. And they definitely look ready to go.

Well, first of all, can everybody give a big round of applause to Vivian for the great introduction? Yay, Vivian! It's good to know that we've got one of the finest Senators in the country here: Your Senator Bill Nelson's in the house. And an outstanding Member of Congress, Corrine Brown is here. And all of you are here. All the VIPs, right here.

The—listen, I'm having such a great time. Anybody who wants to sit down, go ahead and sit down. I'm going to talk for a while. [*Laughter*] You guys don't sit down because you don't have chairs. [*Laughter*] But you guys all have to bend your knees a little bit so you don't faint. You've been standing a while, it's a little hot. All right?

So—

Audience member. We love you!

The President. The—you know, let me just say this. I've got to say, Kissimmee, that sometimes when the reception's this good, I just want to say thank you and leave the stage. [*Laughter*] I mean, how am I going to top this? You guys are being so kind.

Well listen, we—[*applause*—so—you folks look fired up! [*Applause*]

[*At this point, the President pretended to leave the stage. He then returned to the podium and continued his remarks as follows.*]

All right, all right, all right. Everybody settle down for a second here. [*Laughter*] Settle down.

Now, we just had our convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. And folks could not have been more welcoming. We were so grateful to North Carolina and Charlotte for throwing a great party. Michelle, what can I say? She was amazing. For the young men out there who are not yet married, just give you a tip. You're trying to improve your gene pool, so you marry somebody who is superior to you. That's what I did, and it works good. That way you end up with some good-looking kids, smart, talented.

President Clinton, he made it—the case as well as anybody could. Somebody tweeted after he spoke; they said, somebody needs to appoint him secretary of explaining stuff. [*Laughter*] Right? He broke it down. Secretary of explaining stuff, I love that.

And then on the final night, I laid out my case about what's at stake in this election. Now, both sides have now made their argument. The other guys, they came down to Florida, and so now you know what the choice is, and you've got a big choice to make. And I honestly believe this is the clearest choice of any time in a generation. It is not just a choice between two candidates, it's not just a choice between two parties; it's a choice between two different paths for America, two different visions for our future.

Now, here's what—here's our vision. We're fighting to restore that basic bargain that built the largest middle class the world has ever known, that built the greatest economy the world

has ever known. And the whole bargain is real simple: the promise that if you work hard, it will pay off; the promise that if you act responsibly, you'll be rewarded; that everybody in this country gets a fair shot and everybody does their fair share and everybody plays by the same rules, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, DC.

Now, some of you know I started my career in public service working in the shadow of steel mills that had closed and working with folks trying to rebuild their neighborhoods. And that process of jobs disappearing overseas, families struggling with the costs that keep on going up even though their paychecks aren't going up, people taking more and more debt just to pay for tuition or gas or food on the table—that process had been going on for a decade. And then it culminated in the worst financial crisis and depression we've had—or recession that we've had since the Great Depression. And millions of people lost their jobs, lost their homes, lost their savings. And it's that tragedy that we've been fighting to recover from ever since.

Now, we've made progress. But we know we haven't made enough. We've got more work to do. Nobody is satisfied with the status quo. There are too many folks out there who still need a job, too many folks whose homes are still underwater. We've got a lot of work to do. And the question is not whether we need to make more progress. The question is how do we do it?

Our friends at the Republican Convention were more than happy to talk about everything they think is wrong with America, but they didn't have much to say about how to make it right. They want your vote, but they don't want you to know their plan. That's because they're offering the same wornout plan that they've had for 30 years: Tax cuts, tax cuts, roll back some regulations, and then let's have some more tax cuts. Tax cuts when times are good. Tax cuts when times are bad. Tax cuts to lose an extra few pounds—[*laughter*]*—tax cuts to improve your love life. [Laughter]* Whatever the issue, tax cuts.

By the way, when I said that at the last stop we had, in St. Petersburg, a guy yelled out in the crowd—he said, "It didn't work!" [*Laughter*]

Now, listen, I've cut taxes for folks who need it. In 2008, I promised that we would lower the tax burden on middle class families, and the typical family is paying \$3,600 less in Federal taxes compared to when I came into office. We've cut taxes for small businesses 18 times. But I don't believe that another round of tax breaks for millionaires is going to bring back jobs from overseas or bring down our deficit. I don't think that firing teachers is going to strengthen our economy, or I don't believe kicking students off of financial aid will help us compete against engineers coming out of China.

I sure don't believe, after everything we've gone through with the crash on Wall Street, that rolling back regulations on Wall Street somehow is going to help local businesses here in Florida or strengthen our housing market. We have been there. We have tried that. It didn't work. It didn't work then; it won't work now. We're not going back. We are moving forward. That's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States. We're going forward. We're going forward. Forward.

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

The President. Now, I won't—I will not pretend that the path I'm offering is easy or quick. I didn't promise in 2008 that it was going to be easy or quick, because these problems have been going on for decades. Bill Clinton made that point on Wednesday night. He said you can't expect that we're going to solve these massive challenges that we've been dealing with for years overnight. But let me tell you something, we will solve these problems.

You've got my opponent and his Vice President saying the Nation's in decline. Now, I don't know whether they're saying that just because they want to win some votes or because they actually believe it. But either way, they're wrong. America has got the best workers in the world. We've got the best entrepreneurs in the world. We've got the best scientists, the best researchers, the best universities, and the best colleges. We are a young nation. We've got a diversity of talent just like you see in this auditorium.

People are coming here from every corner of the globe. Why do you think they want to come here? Because they know that no matter what the other side says, no matter how dark they try to paint the picture, most folks, they would do anything to have a chance to be right here in the United States of America.

So our problems can be solved. Our challenges can be met. The path we offer is harder, but it leads to a better place. And I'm asking you to choose that future. I'm asking you to rally not around me, but rally around a set of goals for our country in manufacturing and education and energy, national security, reducing the deficit. I've got a plan that will lead to new jobs and more opportunity and rebuild this economy on a stronger foundation.

And we can keep making the kinds of progress that's needed over the next 4 years, which is the reason I'm running for a second term, because I'm confident we can get to where we need to go. I'm confident about it.

But in case you missed it, in case you missed what I said—what day was that, Thursday? What today—what day is it today? Is it Saturday? I mean, I'm just on the road all the time. I forget what date it is. All right, so it was Thursday, now it's Saturday. In case you missed it on Thursday, let me say again what our plan is.

First of all, I've got a plan to export more products and outsource fewer jobs. So after a decade of decline, this country created over half a million new manufacturing jobs in the last 2½ years. We reinvented a dying auto industry that's back on top of the world.

So now you've got a choice. You can go along with the plan you heard in Tampa and give more tax breaks to corporations that are shipping jobs overseas.

Audience members. No!

The President. Or we can start giving tax breaks to companies that are opening new plants and training new workers and creating new jobs here in Florida, in Kissimmee, here in the United States of America. That's my plan.

We can help big factories and small businesses double their exports. And by the way, here in Florida, you're the gateway for an entire market in Latin America, which is why when you hear these folks talking about the Recovery Act and he didn't do this and he didn't do that, listen, we're expanding ports and infrastructure here in Florida precisely because we can export more. We can create a million new manufacturing jobs in the next 4 years, because we're selling goods around the world stamped with three proud words: Made in the U.S.A. Made in the U.S.A. Made in the U.S.A. That's part one of our plan, making it here in the United States of America. Now——

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. U.S.A.!

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. All right. So you've got a choice on that issue. Let me give you another choice. We need 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 get twice as—go twice as far on a gallon of gas. That will save you money.

We've doubled our use of renewable energy, which is not only producing power for businesses and homes here in Florida, but it's also creating thousands of jobs building wind turbines and solar panels and long-lasting batteries. Today, the United States is less dependent on foreign oil than at any time in the last two decades. Think about that. Think about that.

So we—that's—we've made progress. And now the big idea coming out of Tampa was to reverse the progress we've made.

That's option one. Option two is to build on that progress. So unlike my opponent, I'm not going to let oil companies write this country's energy plan. I'm not going to let them continue to collect \$4 billion in corporate welfare from our taxpayers. We've got a better path.

We want to keep investing in wind and solar and cleaner coal. And we want farmers and scientists to harness new biofuels to power our cars and our trucks. We want to put construction workers back to work rebuilding factories and homes so they're more energy efficient, so they waste less energy. We can develop a hundred years' supply of natural gas that's beneath our feet here in the United States.

And if you choose the path I'm offering, we can cut our oil imports in half by 2020 and we can support 600,000 new jobs just in natural gas alone. Think about that. But that path is open only if you take it through your vote. All right, so that's two.

Number three, I've got a plan to give more Americans the chance to gain the skills they need to compete. Education was a—was the key to opportunity for me. It was the key for Michelle. It was the key for many of you. It's the gateway to a middle class life.

So what have we already done? For the first time in a generation, nearly every State 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. Millions of students are paying less for college because we stopped using banks and lenders as middlemen for student loans, saved billions of dollars, and sent that directly to students to help millions get a better education and not have as much debt.

Now, you've got a choice. We could reverse some of those things that we've done.

Audience members. No!

The President. Or we can decide in the United States of America, no child should have their dream deferred because of an overcrowded classroom. No family should be excited about a college acceptance letter and then realize, you know what, honey, we can't afford to send you there. No company should have to look for workers in China because they couldn't find workers here in Florida or here in the United States that had the skills they needed.

So my path is let's recruit and train another hundred thousand math and science teachers. Let's improve early childhood education. Let's give 2 million more workers the chance to get better skills at community colleges, skills that will lead directly to a job. And let's work with colleges and universities to cut in half the growth in tuition so that everybody can afford it. We can meet that goal together. These are achievable goals. That's the path I want you to choose.

Number four, we need to reduce our deficit without sticking it to the middle class. It's important for us to reduce our deficit. It's important for us to do it in a responsible way. We don't have to do it all at once, but we got to get started on it. An independent analysis shows that my plan would cut our deficit by \$4 trillion. And I've worked with Republicans in Congress to cut a trillion dollars in spending already, and I'm ready to do more.

I want to reform the Tax Code so that it is simple and so that it is fair. I want to get rid of programs that don't work. I want to consolidate some agencies so they're more efficient and more customer friendly. But I also want to ask the wealthiest households to pay a little bit higher taxes on incomes over 250—over \$250,000.

Now, keep in mind, let's say you make a million dollars——

Audience member. Yeah. [Laughter]

The President. So that sounds good to you, right? You'd still keep your tax cut for the first 250. So it's not like you're not getting any relief at all. The first 250, you still get your tax break. But for every dollar you make after 250, we go back to the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was President, when our economy created 23 million new jobs, when we had all kinds of small businesses succeeding and starting up, when we had the biggest surplus in history and a lot of millionaires to boot.

Now, the reason why this works is because this whole top-down thing doesn't work. If you give a teacher or a construction worker or a receptionist—just working folks—if you give them a little more money, what do they do?

Audience members. Spend it!

The President. And if they spend it, then businesses have more customers. And then businesses make more profits. And then the businesses say, let's build another plant and let's hire more workers. And now everything gets rolling in a positive direction.

So that's how we build an economy, from the middle out, from the bottom up. It helps everybody when you do it that way. And if you're concerned about the deficit, the first thing you should be concerned about is growing the economy. But let's say even if all you were thinking about is how do we close the deficit gap, as President Clinton pointed out, the thing that's missing from my opponent's plan is arithmetic. It doesn't add up. He says that we can give a \$5 trillion tax cut, mostly to wealthy individuals, and that somehow the deficit's going to get smaller. Now, how do you think that's going to work? That's not going to work. That's not going to work.

And the only way it does work is if you are gutting education, you're stopping—you're not investing in basic science and research, where we're not rebuilding our infrastructure and we are fraying our safety net and we're voucherizing Medicare——

Audience members. No!

The President. ——and maybe, to top it off, we're increasing taxes on middle class families.

Audience members. No!

The President. That doesn't sound like a good plan.

Audience members. No!

The President. It doesn't add up.

Audience members. No!

The President. And by the way, it does not add up to jobs either. Some people looked at Romney's plan, and they said, you know what, this actually would make the recovery slower. Slower. I refuse to let that happen. 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 a tax cut for me. I'm not going to ask students to pay more for college or kick kids off Head Start programs or eliminate health insurance for the poor and the elderly and the disabled so those with the most can pay less.

And I want you to know, AARP—I want you to know I will never turn Medicare into a voucher. These guys are out there running these ads about how somehow we're weakening Medicare. We strengthened Medicare, extended its life for 8 years. Don't take my word for it; AARP says the same thing.

Because I believe no American should ever have to spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies. After a lifetime of labor, you should retire with dignity and respect. You've earned it. So we do have to reform and we will strengthen Medicare over the long haul, but we're going to do it by reducing the costs of health care, not by dumping those costs onto seniors. And we're going to keep the promise of Social Security. We'll take responsible steps to strengthen it, not by turning it over to Wall Street.

Now, there's one last point I want to make, and that's about foreign policy, because these things are connected. Our prosperity at home is linked to our policies abroad. Four years ago, I promised to end the war in Iraq; we did. I said we'd wind down the war in Afghanistan, and we are. While a new tower rises above the New York skyline, as we come up on September 11, we know that Al Qaida is on the path to defeat and Usama bin Laden is dead.

So I want you to know, as long as I'm Commander in Chief, we will sustain the strongest military the world has ever known. When our troops take off the uniform, we will serve them as well as they've served America. Nobody who fights for this country should ever have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads when they come home.

Now, my opponent's got a different view. He said it was "tragic" for me to end the war in Iraq as I did. Well, I did it anyway. [*Laughter*] He won't tell us how he'll end the war in Afghanistan; in fact, didn't even mention it in his speech at his convention.

My opponent would spend more money on military programs that our Joint Chiefs don't even want, won't make us safer. I'm going to use that money we're no longer spending on war to pay down our debt and put more people back to work rebuilding roads and bridges and schools and runways. Let's do some nation-building here at home. That will make us safer.

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

The President. So that's what this election comes down to. There's a choice on every issue. Over and over we've been told by the other side that bigger tax cuts, fewer regulations, they're the only way to go; that since government can't do everything, it should do almost nothing. Their basic theory is if you can't afford health insurance, don't get sick.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. A company releases pollution in the air that our children breathe, well, that's the price of progress. If you can't afford college, take their advice and ask your parents if you can borrow the money. [*Laughter*]

I've got a different idea, because I don't think that's what our country is about. We insist on hard work and personal responsibility and individual initiative. And we know we're not entitled to success, we've got to earn it. We honor the strivers and the dreamers and the entrepreneurs, the risk takers who've always been the driving force behind our free enterprise system. And we believe it—that free enterprise system is the greatest engine of growth and prosperity the world's ever known. That's what attracts people to our shores.

But we also believe that the market doesn't work, this country doesn't work, unless we accept certain obligations to one another, unless we're thinking about future generations, unless we believe in something called citizenship; that we understand America is not just about what can be done for us, it's about what can be done by us, together, as one Nation and one people.

So the election 4 years ago, it wasn't about me, it was about you. You're the change. The American people rose up, and as a result of what you did, seniors across Florida are saving an average of \$600 every year on prescription drugs. That's because of Obamacare. You did that.

You're the reason a woman in Doral, who is already working full time during the day, now can afford to go to school at night because she's got the financial aid that she needs. You did that.

You're the reason there's a working family over in Hollywood who was able to save their home from foreclosure and keep their piece of the American Dream. You made that possible.

You're the reason that 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 we ended "don't ask, don't tell." You're the reason why our troops are coming home.

You made that happen. You made that happen. Don't let anybody tell you you can't make a difference. Don't let anybody tell you that somehow you have no influence, that you can't change the system.

We may not be able to change everything all at once just the way we want it, because this is a big, complex democracy, and not everybody has got a same opinion. And there's nothing wrong with that. And yes, sometimes things get tangled up in Washington, and sometimes it's frustrating and change isn't happening the way it should. But whenever the American people stand up, whenever you get involved, whenever you participate, then amazing things happen, because the American people have great instincts. You are a good and decent people.

And so if you turn away now, if you turn away now, and you buy into the cynicism that you won't make a difference, well, of course, change won't happen. You know who will fill the void, who will step in where you should have been? Lobbyists, special interests, the folks writing the \$10 million checks trying to buy this election, the folks who are trying to make it harder for people to vote.

Audience members. No!

The President. Washington politicians who want to control who you can marry, want to control health care choices that women are perfectly capable of making themselves.

You can't let that happen.

Audience members. No!

The President. You can't let that happen.

Audience members. No!

The President. I'm talking to you. [Laughter] Only you have the power to move us forward. But that depends on you using that power. I'm asking you for your help. I'm asking for your vote. I'm asking you to make phone calls. I'm asking you to knock on some doors. I'm asking you to talk to your neighbors and talk to your friends and talk to your coworkers. I'm asking you to stand up. I'm asking you to be heard.

And if you do, we will win Florida and we will win this election. We'll finish what we started, and you and I together will march into that better future. Let's make it happen.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:40 p.m. at Kissimmee Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to campaign volunteer Viviana M. Janer; Ben Greenman, staff editor, the New Yorker magazine; Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; and Republican Vice Presidential nominee Paul D. Ryan.

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