

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Bowling Green, Ohio
September 26, 2012

The President. Hello, Bowling Green! Oh! Hello, Falcons! Thank you so much. Thank you. Now, let me begin by asking everybody to give Seth a big round of applause for that great introduction. I was backstage, and I had trouble hearing. Did he explain what was going on with his arm? So Seth was playing, I think—ultimate frisbee, that's what it was. *[Laughter]* He was playing ultimate frisbee. He went up, he was going to make this amazing touchdown, and he had the frisbee, and somebody cut him under his legs, cut out from under him. It is clear replacement refs were in the game. *[Laughter]* He broke his wrist. He was supposed to get it set yesterday, but he didn't want to miss this. So when he came up here, his wrist was not yet set, and he's going to have to go to the hospital afterwards to get his wrist set.

Now, I just want to make the point that if Seth can come up here with a broken wrist, then there is not a student here who cannot get registered and make sure they go to vote. No excuses. *[Applause]* No excuses. You got to play through injuries, Falcons. *[Laughter]*

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. I'm good—I'm glad to be here.

Now, it's great to be here with your next Congresswoman, Angela Zimmann. I'm thrilled to be with all of you, and unless you live under a rock or your cable is busted, you may have noticed that there's an election going on here in Ohio. By the way, those of you guys who have seats, feel free to sit down. I'm going to be talking for a while here. *[Laughter]* And those of you who don't, make sure to bend your knees, because sometimes, people faint, fall out, not because I'm so exciting, but just because you've been standing a long time. *[Laughter]*

So there's an election going on here in Ohio, and in case you're wondering what kind of impact that's having, I was talking to my campaign manager; he was meeting with this couple who had this adorable 4-year-old son named Sammy. And they were very proud that Sammy knew what was going on, and there was a picture of me up on the wall, and the parents said, "Who's that, Sammy?" And Sammy said, "That's Barack Obama." And then the parents asked, "And what does Barack Obama do?" And Sammy thinks for a second, and he says, "He approves this message." *[Laughter]* True story. *[Applause]* True story.

That's what I do. I approve this message. *[Laughter]* And, Ohio, that's because, starting on October 2, which is just 6 days from now, you get to start voting. You get to have your say. You can register to vote all the way up until October 9, but if you're already registered you can start voting in 6 days. And this is important, because you've got a big choice to make. And it's not just a choice between two parties or two candidates. It is a choice between two fundamentally different paths for America, two fundamentally different choices for our future.

My opponent and his running mate are big believers in top-down economics. They basically think that if we just spend another \$5 trillion on tax cuts that favor the very wealthiest, then——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, vote. *[Applause]* Vote. Vote. Vote.

But their theory is, these tax cuts for the folks at the top, then prosperity and jobs will rain down on everybody else. The deficit will magically go away, and we will live happily ever after.

There's only one problem. We just tried this during the last decade, during the previous Presidency. It didn't work. Top-down economics never works. The country doesn't succeed when only the rich get richer. We succeed when the middle class gets bigger, when more people have a chance to get ahead, more people have a chance to live up to their God-given potential.

Look, I don't believe we can get very far with leaders who write off half the Nation as a bunch of victims who never take responsibility for their own lives. And I've got to tell you, as I travel around Ohio and as I look out on this crowd, I don't see a lot of victims. I see hard-working Ohioans. That's what I see. We've got students who are trying to work their way through college. We've got single moms who are putting in overtime to raise their kids.

By the way, your outstanding president of this institution, Bowling Green—charming woman, really smart—and there she is right there. We were talking, because we both were raised by single moms, and she was telling the story about how her mom worked at a resort in West Virginia, but she was doing the hard work and ended up raising one college president and one Federal judge.

That's what we believe about the economy, when you give folks a chance. I see in this audience senior citizens who have been saving for retirement their entire lives. Veterans who served this country so bravely. Soldiers who are today defending our freedom.

Look, so let's just get something straight in case anybody is confused. We don't believe that anybody is entitled to success in this country. We don't believe government should be helping people who refuse to help themselves. But we do believe in something called opportunity. We do believe that hard work should pay off. We do believe in an America where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. We do believe in an America where no matter who you are or what you look like or what you're your last name is or who you love, you can make it if you try.

That's the country I believe in. That's what I've been fighting for for 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. Now, I've got to say this. This country has gone through a very tough time, and we've still got a lot of folks who are hurting out there. And I'm not somebody who is coming here offering some easy, quick solutions. The truth is it's going to take more than a few years to solve the challenges that were building up over decades: jobs being shipped overseas, paychecks flat, even as costs of everything from college to health care were going up.

Audience member. [Inaudible]—in Ohio.

The President. That too.

But here is what I want everybody to be confident about: Our problems can be solved. Our challenges can be met. We've still got the best workers in the world. We've got the best businesses in the world. We've got the best scientists in the world and researchers. We definitely have the best colleges and universities in the world.

So especially for the young people out here, I want you to understand, there is not a country on Earth that wouldn't gladly trade places with the United States of America.

But we've got work to do. We've got work to do. And the path I'm offering may be harder, but it leads to a better place. And I'm putting forward a practical, five-point plan to create jobs and to grow the middle class and rebuild this economy on a stronger foundation.

So just in case you guys missed the convention and—[*laughter*—I know you didn't miss Michelle, so—[*applause*]. Let me reprise what this plan consists of.

First, I want to export more products and outsource fewer jobs. When my opponent said we should just "let Detroit go bankrupt"—

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo—

Audience members. Vote!

The President. Vote.

That would have meant walking away from an industry that supports one in eight Ohio jobs. It supports businesses in 82 of 88 Ohio counties. So when he said that, I said, no, I'm going to bet on America. I'm betting on American workers. I'm betting on American industry. And today, the American auto industry has come roaring back with nearly 250,000 new jobs.

And now you've got a choice. We can give more tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas, or we can start rewarding companies that open new plants and train new workers and create new jobs right here in the United States.

Now, I understand my opponent has been spending some time here in Ohio lately, and he's been talking tough on China. Have you been hearing this?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. He's been talking tough on China. He says he's going to take the fight to them. He's going to go after these cheaters. And I've got to admit, that message is the better—is better than what he's actually done about this thing. [*Laughter*] It sounds better than talking about all the years he spent profiting from companies that sent our jobs to China.

So when you hear this newfound outrage, when you see these ads he's running promising to get tough on China, it feels a lot like that fox saying, "You know, we need more secure chicken coops." [*Laughter*] I mean, it's just not credible.

Now, Ohio, I'll tell you what I've done, because I'm not just talking the talk. I have woken up every single day doing everything I can to give American workers a fair shot in this global economy. So we've brought more trade cases against China in one term than the previous administration did in two, and by the way, we've been winning those cases. We've stood up for autoworkers against unfair trade practices. When Governor Romney said stopping an unfair surge in Chinese tires would be bad for America, bad for our workers, we politely declined his advice. We went after China on that, and we got over a hundred—a thousand American workers back to work producing American tires.

So when you want—if you want to know who is going to actually fight for workers and fight for American jobs when it comes to trade, you can look at the records. You can look at who said what before election time. And right now I am asking you to choose a better path than the one that my opponent's offering, one that helps big factories and small businesses double their exports; that sells more goods stamped with "Made in America" to the rest of the world. We can create one million new manufacturing jobs in the next 4 years with the right policies.

That's what I'm fighting for. That's why I'm running for a second term as President. That's what's going to be important to Ohio.

Second part of the plan: I want us 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. We've doubled the amount of renewable clean energy we generate from sources like wind and solar. There are thousands of Americans—including here in Ohio—who have jobs today building wind turbines and long-lasting batteries. Today, America is less dependent on foreign oil than any time in nearly 20 years.

So now you've got a choice between a plan that builds on this progress or a plan that reverses it like my opponent's suggesting. And this is a clear plan, because—a clear difference, because I will not let oil companies write this country's energies plan. And I want to stop oil companies collecting another \$4 billion in corporate welfare from our taxpayers.

We have a better plan. Let's take that money we're giving to companies that are already hugely profitable—every time you go to the pump, they're making money; they don't need a tax break—let's use that money and invest in wind and solar and clean coal technology. Let's help farmers and scientists harness new biofuels to power our cars and our trucks. Let's put construction workers to work retrofitting homes and factories so they waste less energy. Let's develop a hundred-year supply of natural gas that's right beneath our feet. And if we do all these things, we can cut our oil imports even more, cut them in half by 2020, and support hundreds of thousands of new jobs in the process. That's why I'm running. That's what's going to be good for Ohio.

Number three: I want to give more Americans the chance to get the skills that they need to compete.

Audience member. Apprenticeships!

The President. That's a good idea. Education, it was my gateway to opportunity. That's the only reason I'm standing here. It was Michelle's path to opportunity. It's the path more than ever to a middle class life. Today, millions of students are paying less for college because we took on a system that was wasting billions of dollars using banks and lenders as middlemen on the student loan process. We said, let's give that money directly to students, and as a consequence, millions of students are getting more grants, and we kept interest rates on students' loans low. All right? That's what we fought for. That's what we fought for. We already got that done.

So now you've got a choice, because my opponent, he would gut education to pay for more tax breaks for the wealthy. That's one choice. That's door number one. Door number two: We can decide that the United States of America should never have a child's dreams deferred just because she's in a overcrowded classroom or a crumbling school or has outdated textbooks. No family should have to set aside an acceptance letter to a college like Bowling Green because they don't have the money. You know?

No company should have to look for workers in China because they can't find workers with the right skills here in the United States. That's not the future that we want.

So, Ohio, I need your help, because I want to recruit 100,000 new math and science teachers, and I want to improve early childhood education. I want to give 2 million more workers the chance to learn skills that they need at community colleges that will directly lead to a job.

And I want to work with college presidents to keep tuition costs down. We can cut in half the growth of tuition if we're focused on this. We can meet this goal. You can choose that future. That's why I'm running, because I want to make sure that the folks coming behind me have the same opportunities I had. That's what America is about.

Number four: I want to reduce the deficit without sticking it to the middle class. Now, I've already worked with Republicans in Congress to cut a trillion dollars in spending, and I'm willing to do more. I put forward a very specific plan, \$4 trillion in deficit reduction. I want to simplify the Tax Code so that it's fair. But I also want to ask the wealthiest households to pay a higher rate on incomes over \$250,000, the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was President, our economy created nearly 23 million new jobs, we had the biggest surplus in history, and by the way, a whole lot of millionaires did really well too. Because that's how you grow an economy. I want to keep taxes low for middle class families and working families. But if we're going to close the deficit, we've got to ask folks like me to do a little bit more.

And understand what happens. When you get a tax break, what do you do? You spend it, because you've got—times are already tough. So maybe you trade in finally that 10-year-old car, or maybe you buy a computer for your kid who's about to go off to college. And that mean business now has more customers and they make more profits, which means they hire more workers, and the whole economy does better. That's how you grow an economy: from the middle out, not from the top down.

And that's also how we'll reduce our deficit. Now, in fairness, my opponent has a plan, too. The problem is it's missing what President Clinton called arithmetic. [*Laughter*]

So just understand my opponent and his allies in Congress tell us somehow we can lower the deficit by spending trillions more on new tax breaks for the wealthy. No matter how many times they promise to "reboot" their campaign, no matter how many times they start saying they're going to explain the specifics of this thing, they can't; they won't. They can't say how they'd pay for \$5 trillion in tax cuts without raising taxes on middle class families. They can't explain how they're going to pay for \$2 trillion in new military spending that our military has said won't make us safer. They can't explain it because the math doesn't add up.

Now, my opponent may think it's fair that somebody who makes \$20 million a year, like he does, pays a lower rate than a teacher or an autoworker who makes \$50,000 a year. But I disagree. I don't think that's fair. I don't think it helps grow our economy. I refuse to ask middle class families to give up their deductions for owning a home or looking after their kids just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. We're not going to do that. [*Applause*] We're not going to do that.

I'm not going to ask the students here to pay more for college or kick some kids off of Head Start or eliminate health insurance for millions of Americans who are poor or elderly or disabled just to give myself a tax cut. We can't afford it.

And I want you guys to know, I will never turn Medicare into a voucher. No American should ever have to spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies. They should retire with dignity and the respect that they've earned. We'll reform and strengthen Medicare for the long haul, but we'll do it by reducing the actual cost of care, not by dumping those costs onto seniors. And we're going to keep the promise of Social Security. We'll strengthen it, but we're not going to turn it over to Wall Street. We're not going to do that.

Now, obviously, Governor Romney and I have a lot of differences when it comes to domestic policy, but our prosperity here at home is linked to what happens abroad. Four years

ago, I promised to end the war in Iraq. We did. I said we'd responsibly wind down the war in Afghanistan, and we are. You've got a new tower that's rising over the New York skyline, and meanwhile, Al Qaida is on the path to defeat and Osama bin Laden is dead. We made that commitment.

But as we saw just a few days ago, we still face some serious threats in the world. And that's why, as long as I'm Commander in Chief, we're going to maintain the strongest military the world has ever known. And when our troops come home and they take off their uniform, we're going to serve them as well as they've served us, because nobody who fights for America should have to fight for a job when they come home. I believe that.

My opponent has got a different view. He said the way we ended the war in Iraq was "tragic." He still hasn't explained what his policy in Afghanistan will be. But I have, and I will. And I—one more thing: I will use the money we're no longer spending on war to pay down our debt and to put more people back to work rebuilding roads and bridges and schools and runways. Because after a decade of war, it's time to do some nation-building right here in Ohio, right here at home. *[Applause]* Right here at home.

So this is the choice that you face; this is what this election comes down to. And over the next 41 days, you will be seeing more money than has ever been spent and a whole bunch of it on the other side from folks who are writing \$10 million checks to these super PACs. And they'll tell you that bigger tax cuts and fewer regulations are the only way to go. Their basic argument is since government can't do everything, it should do almost nothing. Their basic theory is you're on your own. If you can't afford health insurance, hope you don't get sick. *[Laughter]* If a company is releasing toxic pollution that your kids are breathing, well, that's the price of progress. If you can't afford to start a business or go to college, just borrow more money from your parents. *[Laughter]*

Let me tell you something: that's not who we are. That's not what this country is about. We don't think government can solve all our problems, but we don't think it's the source of all our problems, either. Just like we don't think that folks who are having a tough time are our problem or welfare recipients are our problem or corporations are our problem or unions are our problem or immigrants or gays or all the other groups that we're told to blame for our troubles. Because here in America, we believe we're in this thing together. We believe that all of us have responsibilities. We believe we've got responsibilities to look after ourselves and work hard and show individual initiative. But we also believe we have responsibilities to each other and to this country and to future generations, to make sure that America continues to be the place where there's more opportunity and possibility than any other nation on Earth. That's what we believe. That's what we're fighting for.

We understand that America is not about what can be done for us, it's about what can be done by us, together, as one Nation and as one people. And that's what I've always said. That's why I ran for this office, because I have faith in you.

Four years ago, I told you this wasn't about me. It was about you, the American people. You were the change. You are the reason a mother in Cleveland right now doesn't have to worry about her son being denied medical coverage because of some preexisting condition. You made that happen.

You are the reason a factory worker who lost his job in Toledo or Lordstown is back on the line building some of the best cars in the world. You did that.

You're the reason a student in Akron or Columbus or Bowling Green has some help paying for a college education. You're the reason a veteran can go to school on the new GI bill.

You're the reason a young immigrant who grew up here and went to school here and pledged allegiance to the flag is not in danger of being deported from the only country she's ever known.

You're the reason some outstanding soldier won't be kicked out of our military because of who they are or who they love. You're the reason why thousands of families have finally been able to welcome home their loved ones who served us so bravely, to say, "Welcome home."

And the interesting thing is, my opponent maybe doesn't understand this concept about how change happens, because I made this point down in Florida. I said one of the things we learned is, we can't change Washington just from the inside. You got to change it from the outside. You change it with the help of ordinary Americans who are willing to make their voices heard.

And my opponent got really excited. He heard me say this. He changed his speech. *[Laughter]* He said, I'm going to get the job done from the inside. That's what he said: I'm going to get the job done from the inside. And I'm thinking to myself, well, what kind of inside job is he talking about? *[Laughter]*

Is he talking about the inside job to rubberstamp the agenda of this Republican Congress? Because if he is, we don't want it. If he's talking about the inside job of letting oil companies write the energy policies and insurance companies writing health care policies and outsourcers rewriting our Tax Code, we don't need that. If he's talking about the inside job where politicians in Washington are controlling the health care choices that women are perfectly capable of making for themselves, we'll take a pass. We don't need an inside job. We want to change Washington.

I've always said change is hard; it takes more than one term or even one President. And the way our democracy works, we're never going to get everything that each of us individually want. But if we're working together, you can make things happen. Now, you can't make it happen if you write off half the nation before you take office.

It's interesting: In 2008, 47 percent of the country did not vote for me. They voted for John McCain. But on election night, in Grant Park in Chicago, I said to all those Americans who didn't vote for me, I said, I may not have won your vote, but I hear your voices, and I need your help. And I will be your President too. That's what I said.

So I don't know how many votes I'll get in Ohio this time, but no matter who you are, no matter what party you belong to—and I want everybody who's listening on television to understand—I will be fighting for you. Because I'm not fighting to create Democratic jobs or Republican jobs, I'm fighting to create American jobs.

I'm not fighting to improve blue-State schools or red-State schools, I'm fighting to improve schools in the United States of America.

The values of hard work and personal responsibility, those values that we believe in don't just belong to workers or businesses or the rich or the poor, the 53 percent or the 47 percent, the 1 percent or the 99 percent. Those are American values. They belong to all of us.

So I want you guys to understand we are not as divided as our politics suggests. I still believe, no matter how many times I'm called naive about this, I still believe that we have more in common than divides us. I still believe in that. I still believe in one Nation and one people.

I still believe in you. And I'm asking you to keep believing in me. And if you do, I need you to register to vote. I need you to start voting 6 days from now on October 2. And if you're with me and if you work with me, we'll win Wood County again. We'll win Ohio again. We'll finish what we started. We'll remind the world why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you, everybody. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:25 p.m. at the Stroh Center at Bowling Green State University. In his remarks, he referred to Seth Melchor, student, Angela Zimmann, instructor, and Mary E. Mazey, president, Bowling Green State University; Robert B. King, brother of Ms. Mazey; James A. Messina, manager, Obama 2012 reelection campaign; Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney and Vice Presidential nominee Paul D. Ryan; and 2008 Republican Presidential nominee John S. McCain III.

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