

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Dubuque, Iowa

November 3, 2012

The President. Hello, Iowa! It is good to be back in Dubuque! It is good to be back close to home.

I was just talking backstage; you get close to the Midwest, and suddenly, everybody is just nice. [*Laughter*] Feels good.

Can everybody please give Sandy a big round of applause for the great introduction? And give Sandy's son a big round of applause for serving our country. Give it up for John Mellencamp!

It is wonderful to be here. For the last several days, all of us have been focused on one of the worst storms in our lifetime, what's been happening on the East Coast. And I know I speak for the country when I say our thoughts and prayers are with those who've lost loved ones, people whose lives have been upended. Folks here in Iowa know something about flooding; you remember what happened just a few years ago. And the recovery process is tough.

But when I visited New Jersey, I told folks there that everybody all across the country feels the same way. We are going to be with people every step of the way, down the long, hard road of recovery. We're going to help them rebuild. We're going to do it together. That's what Americans do.

In fact, in the middle of the tragedy, we were also inspired by heroes running into buildings, wading through water; our first-responders, our firefighters, EMS teams; neighbors helping neighbors cope with tragedy; leaders of different parties working together to fix what's broken; a spirit that says no matter how bad a storm is, no matter how tough times may get, we always bounce back. We're all in this together. We rise or fall as one Nation.

That's what we believe, and that spirit has guided this country along its improbable journey for two centuries now. And it's carried us through the last 4 years. Remember, in 2008, we were in the middle of two wars and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Today, our businesses have created nearly 5½ million new jobs. The American auto industry is back on top. Home values are on the rise. We're less dependent on foreign oil than any time in the last 20 years. Because of the service and sacrifice of our brave men and women in uniform, the war in Iraq is over, the war in Afghanistan is winding down, Al Qaida is on the run, Usama bin Laden is dead.

So we have made real progress, Iowa, these past 4 years. But we're here this evening because we know we've got more work to do. As long as there's a single American who wants a job and can't find one, our job is not done. As long as there are families working harder, but falling behind, we've got more work to do. As long as

there's a child anywhere in Iowa, anywhere this country, who's languishing in poverty or barred from opportunity, our fight goes on.

Our fight goes on because we know this country cannot succeed without a growing, thriving middle class and strong, sturdy ladders for everybody who's willing to work hard to get into the middle class. Our fight goes on because America has always done best when everybody has a fair shot, everybody is doing their fair share, everybody is playing by the same rules. That's what we believed in 2008, that's what we believe today, and that is 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, in Iowa, in 3 days, you have a choice to make. And some of you have made it, because we have early vote in Iowa. But if—but for those of you who have not, it's not just a choice between two candidates or two parties. It's a choice between two different visions of America. It's a choice between going back to the top-down economics that crashed our economy or embracing a future where we're building a strong and growing middle class.

As Americans, we honor the strivers and the dreamers, the small-business men and women, the entrepreneurs, the risk takers, the free enterprise system that's the greatest engine of prosperity the world has ever known. But we also know that our markets work best, the free enterprise system works best when everybody is participating, when we make sure that everybody has got a good education and everybody can learn new skills, when we support research into medical breakthroughs or clean energy technology.

We think that America is stronger when everybody can count on affordable health care and Medicare and Social Security in their retirement. We think the markets work better when there are rules in place to protect our kids from toxic dumping, to protect consumers from being taken advantage of by unscrupulous credit card companies or mortgage lenders.

We don't want government doing everything; we think that we can do most things ourselves, but there are times where we can come together. And we certainly don't want government getting involved in the wrong things; for example, we think we don't need politicians—especially, mostly male politicians—to try to control health care choices that women are perfectly capable of making themselves.

Now, for 8 years, we had a President who shared these beliefs; his name was Bill Clinton. His economic plan, like mine, asked the wealthiest Americans to pay a little bit more so we could reduce our deficit, invest in the skills of our people, invest in the ideas we needed to succeed in a new economy. And at the time, back in the '90s, the Republican Congress—and a Senate candidate by the name of Mitt Romney—said Bill Clinton's plan would hurt the economy and kill jobs. Sound familiar? Turns out, his math back then was just as bad as it is now. Because by the end of President Clinton's

second term, we'd created 23 million new jobs, incomes were up, poverty was down, our deficit became the biggest surplus in history.

So, Iowa, we know our ideas work. We've put them to the test. We also know that their ideas don't work, because they've been tested also. In the 8 years before I came into office, we tried what they're selling. We tried giving big tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans. We tried giving insurance companies and oil companies and Wall Street the free license to do whatever they pleased. Here's what we got: falling incomes, record deficits, slowest growth in jobs in half a century, and an economic crisis we're still cleaning up after. So we know what works; we know what doesn't.

Now, Governor Romney, he's a very talented salesman. And in this campaign, he's been working overtime to try to repackage the old bad ideas that didn't work and try to sell them to you as new ideas. He's trying to say that they're change. But here's the thing, Iowa: We know what change looks like, and what he's selling is not change.

Giving more power to the biggest banks, that's not change. Another \$5 trillion tax cut that favors the wealthy, not change.

Audience members. No!

The President. Refusing to answer questions about the details of your policies until after the election, that's definitely not change. Politicians do that all the time. Ruling out compromise, pledging to rubberstamp the Tea Party agenda in Congress, that's not change. That's what we need to change. That's why I'm running for a second term. Changing the facts when they're inconvenient to your campaign, that is definitely not change.

So what he's selling, we tried it, it didn't work, we're not going back. Those are the attitudes in Washington we need to change.

And that raises something about the choice you have to make, Iowa. A lot of choosing a President is about trust. Iowa, I started my Presidential journey right here in this State. So after 2 years of campaigning and after 4 years as President, you know me by now. You may not agree with every decision I've made. You may have sometimes been frustrated at the pace of change. But you know—[laughter]—you know that I say what I mean and I mean what I say. You know what I believe. You know where I stand.

When I said I'd end the war in Iraq, I ended the war in Iraq. When I said I'd cut taxes for middle class families, I cut taxes for middle class families. When I said I'd pass health care reform so nobody goes broke when they get sick, I passed health care reform so nobody goes broke when they get sick. When I said we'd end "don't ask, don't tell," I ended "don't ask, don't tell." When I said I'd invest in clean energy, we've doubled clean energy production in this country. When I said we'd go after bin Laden, we went after bin Laden.

You know I tell the truth. And you know I'll fight for you and your families every single day as hard as I know how. That's what you know.

So if this is a debate about real change, I know what change looks like, because I've fought for it and I've delivered it and I've got the scars to prove it. And you guys have stood with me. And after all we've been through together, we can't give up on it now.

Audience members. No!

The President. So let me paint a vision of change for the next 4 years. This is going to be a country where every American has a shot at a good education. And government can't do it all; parents have to parent, teachers have to teach. But don't tell me more teachers won't help this economy grow, because I know that great teachers are what we need in America and what we need in Iowa.

Don't tell me that students who can't afford college should just borrow more money from their parents. That wasn't an option for me; I'll bet it wasn't an option for a whole lot of you. That's why I want to cut the growth of tuition in half over the next 10 years. I want to recruit 100,000 math and science teachers so our kids don't fall behind the rest of the world. I want to train 2 million Americans at our outstanding community colleges with the skills that businesses are hiring for right now. That's what real change is. That's what we're fighting for in this election. That's what's at stake.

Change comes when we live up to this country's legacy of innovation. I could not be prouder that I bet on American workers and American ingenuity and on the American auto industry. And today, we're not just building cars again, we're building better cars, cars that in the middle of the next decade will go twice as far on a gallon of gas.

And it's not just in the auto industry. There are thousands of workers right here in Iowa building wind turbines, all across the country, building long-lasting batteries, advanced manufacturing. I don't want a Tax Code that just subsidizes oil company profits when they're making money hand over fist, I want to support the energy jobs of future, the new technologies that will create new jobs and energy independence, cut our oil imports in half. I don't want to reward companies for creating jobs overseas, I want to reward companies that are investing right here in Dubuque, right here in Iowa. That's my plan for jobs. That's my plan for growth. That's the future I see for this country.

Change is turning a page on a decade of war so we can start doing some nation-building here at home. As long as I'm Commander in Chief, we're going to pursue our enemies with everything we've got, with the strongest military the world has ever known. But it's time to use the savings from ending the wars in Iraq and winding down the war in Afghanistan to pay down our debt, rebuild America. We could put thousands of folks back to work right now, rebuilding our roads, our bridges, making sure our schools are state of the art, hiring our veterans, because if you fought for our country and defended our freedom, you shouldn't have to fight for a job when you come home. You shouldn't have to fight for the benefits you've earned when you come home.

That's my commitment to veterans, but that's also my commitment to America. That's how we'll keep ourselves strong. That's what's at stake in this election.

Change is a future where we reduce our deficit in a balanced way, a responsible way. Now, I've signed a trillion dollars' worth of cuts, taking out programs we don't need, and I want to do more. But if we're serious about reducing our deficit—not just using it for a talking point during elections—if we're serious about it, then we've also got to ask the wealthiest Americans to go back to the rate they paid under Bill Clinton. Because budgets are about choices, and if we're going to cut back, let's make sure that we're not cutting back on things that are going to help us grow in the future. And let's make sure everybody is sharing in the sacrifice.

I'm not going to turn Medicare into a voucher just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I'm not going to sacrifice investments in basic research to pay for a tax cut for me and certainly not for Mr. Romney.

Audience members. No!

The President. We don't need it. But America needs those investments to make sure we grow.

So that's the change that we need. We know what change is, Iowa. We know what the future requires. And we also know it's not going to be easy. Back in 2008—some of you remember, because I was campaigning here—I said we need change we believe in. I wasn't just talking about changing Presidents or changing parties, I was talking about changing how our politics work.

I ran because the voices of the American people—your voices—had been shut out too long; by the lobbyists and special interests, the politicians who will do whatever it takes to keep things just the way they are, the protectors of the status quo. And over the last 4 years, the status quo in Washington, they have fought us every step of the way.

They tried to—they spent millions of dollars trying to prevent us from reforming our health care system, millions of dollars trying to prevent us from ending taxpayer-funded bailouts on Wall Street, millions of dollars trying to prevent us from protecting consumers. They engineered a strategy of gridlock in Congress, refusing to compromise on ideas that in the past Democrats and Republicans had supported—suddenly, Republicans didn't support them anymore—including, by the way, the health care bill that my opponent designed in Massachusetts. [*Laughter*]

And what they're counting on now is that you'll be so worn down by all the squabbling in Washington, so tired of all the dysfunction—

Audience member. No way!

The President. —that you're just going to give up, walk away, and leave them in power.

Audience members. No!

The President. They're betting on cynicism. But, Iowa, my bet is on you. My bet is on the decency and the goodness and the resolve of the American people. And the fights we're fighting, they're not partisan. When the other party has been willing to

work with me to help middle class families, to help folks have ladders of opportunity, like when we cut taxes for middle class families and small businesses, and when we came together to repeal "don't ask, don't tell," I've embraced them. I want to work together. I believe we're all Americans first, not Democrats or Republicans first.

As long as I'm President, I will work with anybody of any party to move this country forward. And if you want to break the gridlock in Congress, you'll vote for leaders who feel the same way—whether they're Democrats, Republicans, or Independents—folks who put people first, not the next election first.

But, Iowa, look, I'm going to confess to you, there are times where we need to fight. If the price of peace in Washington is just cutting deals that will kick students off of financial aid or get rid of funding for Planned Parenthood or let insurance companies discriminate against people with preexisting conditions or eliminate health care for millions on Medicaid who are poor or elderly or disabled, that price is too high. That's not a price I'm willing to pay. That's not bipartisanship. That's not real change. That's surrender to the same status quo that has hurt middle class families for way too long. And I don't know about you, but I'm not ready to give up on that fight.

I may be full of gray hair now, but I'm just as determined as I was 4 years ago. I'm not tired, and I'm not weary. And, Iowa, I hope you are not either. See, the folks at the very top in this country, they don't need a champion in Washington. They'll always have a seat at the table. They'll always have access. They'll always have influence. That's the way things are.

The people who need a champion are the Americans whose letters I read late at night after I'm done with my work in the office, the men and women I meet on the campaign trail every day, the folks I met that first summer when I was traveling around Iowa and nobody could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*]

The laid-off furniture worker who suddenly has to retrain at the age of 55 for a new career, trying to figure out how to pay for community college, she needs a champion. The restaurant owner who's got some great food, but needs a loan to expand, and the bank turned him down, he needs a champion. The cooks and the waiters and the cleaning staff at a hotel, trying to save enough to buy a first home or send their kids to college, they need a champion.

The autoworker who never thought he'd be back on the job, but then suddenly, things start picking up, and he got recalled, and now he's back on the line building a great car and full of pride and dignity because that job is not just about a paycheck, that's about knowing that you're contributing to something that's important, that you're helping the economy grow, that you're building your community, he needs a champion.

All the firefighters and police officers and first-responders who sacrifice so much to help their communities, they need a champion. And that teacher who's in an overcrowded classroom, outdated schoolbooks, having to dig into her own pocket to buy school supplies, sometimes just feeling discouraged, but then knowing that every day there might be just that one kid that she's touching that day, she needs a champion.

All those kids in inner cities and small farm towns, the rolling hills of Virginia, the valleys of Ohio, right here in Dubuque—kids dreaming of becoming scientists or doctors or engineers or entrepreneurs, following the family tradition of farming the land, maybe becoming a diplomat, maybe becoming a President, starting a business—they need champions in Washington, because they don't have lobbyists. The future will never have as many lobbyists as the protectors of the status quo, but it's the dreams of those children that are our saving grace. They're the ones who will carry forward the vision of America that makes us so special.

And that's why I need you, Iowa: to make sure their voices are heard, to make sure your voices are heard. We've come too far to turn back now. We've come too far to let our hearts grow weary. Now is the time for us to keep pushing forward: to educating all our kids, to training all our workers, to creating new jobs, to rebuilding our infrastructure, to discovering new sources of energy, to broadening opportunity, to growing our middle class, to restoring our democracy, to making sure that in this country, it doesn't matter where you come from or how you started or what you look like or what your last name is, what race you are, what faith you are, it doesn't matter, you can make it if you try in America.

That's why I'm asking for your vote. And if you're willing to work with me, if you're willing to keep on knocking on some doors with me, making some phone calls with me, turning out to vote for me, we'll win Iowa. We'll win this election. We'll renew the bonds and reaffirm the spirit that makes the United States the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:42 p.m. at Washington Park. In his remarks, he referred to Sandy Hockenberry, volunteer, Obama 2012 reelection campaign; musician John C. Mellencamp; and Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Dubuque, IA.

Locations: Dubuque, IA.

Names: Clinton, William J.; Hockenberry, Sandy; Mellencamp, John C.; Romney, W. Mitt.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Promotion efforts; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Financial regulations, strengthening efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: U.S. production; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion

efforts; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Women's health issues; Iowa : Democratic Part events; Iowa : Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Iowa : President's visits; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Natural disasters : Hurricane Sandy; New Jersey : Hurricane Sandy, damage and recovery efforts; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Veterans : Benefits.

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