

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

**Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in
Portola Valley, California**

June 6, 2013

The President. Thank you, everybody. Well, first of all, I want to thank Vinod and Neeru and the entire family and these beasts—[*laughter*—for hosting us here today. These two could eat Bo in one gulp. [*Laughter*] But it's wonderful to be here in this spectacular setting on such a beautiful day in Northern California, one of my favorite places.

There are a couple other people I want to acknowledge. First of all, we've got three of the finest Senators in the country who are here with us today. The person who has the thankless, but absolutely critical job of maintaining the Democratic majority in the Senate, Michael Bennet from Colorado is here. We've got my fellow Midwesterner, who is doing wonderful work on a whole range of issues, Amy Klobuchar from Minnesota. Where's Maria? There she is. And from the closest thing to being your neighbor and somebody who obviously knows the extraordinary capacity, ingenuity, and entrepreneurship because she's been in the field herself and does great work in the Senate every day: Maria Cantwell.

We're going to have some time for questions and, hopefully, some answers in this great setting, so I'm going to be fairly brief. I was telling Vinod that this morning, I was in North Carolina at Mooresville Middle School. And Mooresville Middle School ranks 110th out of 115 districts in North Carolina when it comes to spending per pupil. They now rank second in performance in North Carolina. And the reason is, is because they have this incredible superintendent who, several years ago, made what many considered a pretty radical decision. He said: "We're just going to eliminate textbooks. We're going to use the money to buy a laptop for every student and we are going to completely redesign our curriculum and how we engage our young people, and we're going to train our teachers so that we completely transform the learning experience in this middle school."

Actually, it starts in third grade and continues all the way through 12th, but I went to the middle school. And so I had a chance to go from station to station: kids who were creating their own films and poetry based on a book that they had read in English class; kids who were designing their own business plans in math class, figuring out when they'd go from red to black; young people who were debating the merits of studying mythology, using research that had been done entirely online.

And what they've discovered is, is that the passion that young people now have for learning because of the—since the ownership that they've got, because of the sense that instead of just sitting there passively with somebody at the front of the classroom, they are fully engaged in this constant creative exchange with each other and their teachers. Because of that, the school has transformed itself.

And so we were down there to announce our goal, which is that in 5 years, every school in America will be sufficiently equipped with broadband and wireless so that you've got 100 percent coverage—or 99 percent coverage. This is something, it turns out, we can do without Congress. We're going to meet this deadline, and it has the potential to be transformational in our education system and save money in the process.

And I say that because, not only am I in Silicon Valley and around the world this is rightly viewed as the center of innovation, but also because so many of you who I've gotten to know over the years are yourselves innovators and entrepreneurs who have transformed the world because of the work that you've done.

The central question for America now is, how do we engage the entire country in a conversation about using this incredible advantage we've got of openness and inquiry and discovery, how do we use that to make ourselves more competitive? And how do we make sure that every single person in America has access to the platforms and the frameworks that they need so that if they're willing to work hard, they can succeed as well, the way Vinod succeeded, the way Mark succeeded, the way Steve succeeded, the way all of us in this room—so many of us who started with not too much—have been able to live out that American Dream.

Now, the good news is that after an extraordinary economic crisis, the economy has stabilized. We're growing; housing is coming back; deficits are going down; auto industry has recovered; we're creating jobs. And as I travel around the world, it turns out, actually, we've got probably the best cards out of any country. I know everybody worries about China—I'm going to be meeting with the President of China on—

Audience member. Tomorrow.

The President. —tomorrow, on Friday. Tomorrow, right. [Laughter] And the transformation that's taking place in China is extraordinary. And never in the history of humanity have we seen so many people move out of poverty so rapidly, in part because of what's happening in China and what's happening in India. And yet, when you look at the challenges they face and you look at the challenges we face, I'll take our challenges any day of the week.

In order for us to meet those challenges, though, we've got to have a functioning Government. This is not an argument that Government can do it all. It's an argument that Government has a critical role to play in funding science and research, in creating the infrastructure, not only the old infrastructure of roads and bridges and ports, but the new infrastructure of smart grids and broadband. Government has a role in educating our kids, to make sure that they've got the skills they need to compete. Government has a role in creating a regulatory structure that ensures that we're encouraging the development of clean energy and that we're protecting intellectual property.

Government has a role in all these things. And if we're able to get that part of it right, nobody can stop us. Because the innovation that's taking place in places like Silicon Valley, they'll move it, but we've got to make sure that what happens here is happening in a small town in Ohio and in rural parts of North Carolina; that we're not creating two societies—one that's hypercompetitive and innovative and extraordinarily prosperous and then another half in which folks are struggling just barely to get by and are having a tough time competing—but rather a situation in which all of us have a chance of success.

That's what we're fighting for. And from my perspective, that's what it means to be a Democrat. And I think that I speak for Maria and Amy and Mike as well; that's what leads us to believe in this democratic ideal.

So in order for us to accomplish that we're going to need to have a Democratic Senate. In order for us to accomplish that, I'd also like a Democratic House. Not because Democrats have a monopoly on wisdom and not because I'm more interested in politics than governance,

because I've run my last election. I just want to get stuff done. And I'm going to be spending the next 3½ years, every day, reaching out to Republicans and seeing where we can agree.

Michael Bennet is doing some great work on immigration reform. I think we have a great chance of getting that done this year. We recently announced the need to pull together a bipartisan effort around dealing with patent trolls, something that everybody here is deeply interested in. We have a chance of getting that done.

But on too much of the big stuff, what we see coming out of the other party is an interest in winning elections or in obstruction, not enough interest in solving problems. And too often, what we see is the notion that compromise is a dirty word. And sometimes, we see just the denial of science around climate change, for example. And in that environment, it's going to be hard for us to make progress on things that all of us here care so deeply about.

So I'll just leave you with this thought. For all the frustrations of Washington, though, I've never been more optimistic about this country, because of those kids I saw in Mooresville, because of the businesses that I see popping up every single day here in Silicon Valley. We've got what it takes to make sure the 21st century is the American century, just like the 20th, and that impact ripples around the world.

But I'm going to need your help to make it happen. Michael, Amy, Maria, we're all going to need your help to make that happen. And if you're willing to engage and be involved and stay committed as deeply as you were in 2008 and 2012, then I think we'll be successful.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:56 p.m. at the residence of Vinod and Neeru Khosla. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Michael F. Bennet, in his capacity as chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Mark A. Edwards, superintendent, Mooresville Graded School District in Mooresville, NC; and President Xi Jinping of China. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee fundraisers :: Portola Valley, CA .

Locations: Portola Valley, CA.

Names: Bennet, Michael F.; Cantwell, Maria; Edwards, Mark; Khosla, Neeru; Khosla, Vinod; Klobuchar, Amy J.; Xi Jinping

Subjects: California : Democratic Party events; California : President's visit; China : President; Communications : Broadband technology; Communications : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Congress : Bipartisanship; Democratic Party : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee ; Education : Technology and innovation, expansion effort; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Science and technology : Patent approval process, improvement efforts; Science and technology : Research and development; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

DCPD Number: DCPD201300396.