

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

**Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in
Highland Park, Texas**

November 6, 2013

The President. Thank you so much. Well, I'm going to be very brief on the front end because I want to spend some time getting questions and comments.

First, I just want to say thanks to Russell and Dorothy for their hospitality. This is not the first time that they have hosted us here. I think the first time I was here, I was still running for the Senate, or at least I had—maybe I had been elected to the Senate and I was helping the DSCC, although I'm trying to remember who was the chair at the time.

Fundraiser Host Russell W. Budd. It was November of 2005, and we also had Senator Joe Biden—

The President. And Harry Reid.

Mr. Budd. And Harry Reid.

The President. It was a powerful combination. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Budd. Yes, it was.

The President. But the Budds couldn't have been more gracious then and have continued to be supportive in so many efforts throughout the years. So we appreciate their friendship and their support.

Some of you I know well; some of you I'm meeting for the first time. I hope all of you get a chance to know Michael Bennet, because although he's not your Senator—he's the Senator from Colorado—he is not only heading up the DSCC, but he's also one of the best public servants that we've got in the country. And we're really proud of all the great work he's doing, so give him a big round of applause.

We have had an interesting year, most recently, a Government shutdown, and we came close to defaulting for the first time in 200 years. And I think it's fair to say that that was a—just a symptom of a larger challenge that we've got, which is that although the American people are full of common sense and in their workplaces and in their families and their congregations, on the soccer fields and all the various parts of their life, they're looking out for one another, and they're making good decisions and are resilient in the face of challenges, that's not very often reflected in Washington.

And we've got two parties, but one party has become captive, I think, to a fairly extreme faction that thinks compromise is a dirty word and has not thought of government service—and the Federal Government in particular—as a potential engine for individuals across the country making it if they work hard and if they act responsibly.

Traditionally, we had a bipartisan consensus that this country runs because of individualism and self-reliance, but that we also create various ladders of opportunity so anybody anywhere, no matter what they look like, where they come from, who they love, they can make it; that there are certain things that we do in common. We make sure there are schools for every child. We make sure that we have regulations to keep our air and water clean. We build transportation hubs and networks so that businesses can move products and goods,

not just across the country, but around the world. We invest in research and development so that we can stay on the cutting edge. We enforce our laws so that everybody has equal access to justice.

And historically, those things have been struggles, but at least in most of my lifetime, you had both Democrats and Republicans who would affirm those values even if they had differences in tactics or different particular political programs. That's not what we have right now. And the result is not just gridlock, but it's actually a little more destructive than that.

I mean, the shutdown cost this country money. It was bad for business. It was bad for families. And yet it still happened. Default would have been worse, could have triggered a financial crisis worse than the one we had in 2008. And yet that was a real possibility.

The only way that we can realign our politics so that it matches up with the decency and goodness of the American people is if elections matter and we're able to both deliver a message and organize ourselves so that folks who aren't acting responsibly pay a consequence and that we're lifting up and rewarding candidates who are serious about the challenges this country faces and are willing to work together in a spirit that is constructive in order to deliver for the American people.

So that's what 2012 was about, and that's what 2014 was about, and I suspect that's what 2016 is going to be about. And I have to say that I'm a proud Democrat and am committed to the values that the Democratic Party represents, but I'm also interested in getting the Republican Party back in a functioning state. Because this country has two parties, and we need both of them operating in a way that allows us to move forward.

And I think that will eventually happen. Voters have an ability, I think, to help parties self-correct, although sometimes, it takes more than one cycle to do it. But in the meantime, we can't just be standing still.

So on issues like immigration reform, where we know we've got a bipartisan consensus and the majority of the people support it and we've already passed it through the Senate, Michael Bennet worked with folks like Marco Rubio and John McCain and Jeff Flake, Republicans who recognize we've got a broken system and we need to fix it. On issues like early childhood education, where some of the reddest States in the country are making these investments and doing the right thing, there's no reason why that should be a partisan issue.

On issues like rebuilding our infrastructure, putting people back to work right now, medical research that can provide cures to things like cancer and Alzheimer's, these are all areas where we should be able to get things done. But that's going to require that not only we maintain a Democratic Senate, but also that we send a message that empowers some of the more commonsense Republicans to do the right thing.

So I'm optimistic that over the long term, Washington starts working better, but I've got to tell you, it's not going to happen unless we've got a strong showing in this election. And you can't ignore the short term because, for example, Supreme Court Justices, Federal bench decisions that ultimately are going to be made about women's reproductive health, about how we treat our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters, those are decisions that are going to be made based on my ability to nominate qualified candidates and make sure that we can get them through.

So this is important. This counts. But you know that; otherwise, you wouldn't be here. So I just want to say thank you for everything you've already done, but I want to remind everybody

the work is not yet done. We've got a long way to go. And I'm confident we'll get there, but we're going to need your help.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:53 p.m. at the residence of Russell W. and Dorothy A. Budd. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee fundraisers :: Highland Park, TX.

Locations: Highland Park, TX.

Names: Bennet, Michael F.; Budd, Dorothy A.; Budd, Russell W.; Flake, Jeffrey L.; McCain, John S., III; Reid, Harry M.; Rubio, Marco A.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Public debt limit; Congress : Bipartisanship; Democratic Party : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Education : Early childhood education programs; Elections : 2014 congressional elections; Elections : Voter participation; Government organization and employees : Funding lapse and partial furlough; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Science and technology : Research and development; Texas : Democratic Party events; Texas : President's visit; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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