

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Baltimore, Maryland

September 12, 2014

Thank you, everybody, have a seat. Well, to Howard and the whole family, thank you so much for opening your gorgeous home. It is actually the fact that Howard has been a great friend dating back to when a lot of folks still couldn't pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And those are the friends that you always remember and the people you really count on are folks who were there early for you and believed in your vision. And so Howard and his whole family have been wonderful, and I'm very, very grateful.

A couple other people to acknowledge, although Howard has already mentioned them. You have two of the best Senators in the country in Barbara Mikulski and Senator Cardin. You've got some of the best Members of Congress in the country: Elijah Cummings, Dutch Ruppersberger, John Sarbanes. You've got an outstanding mayor in Baltimore in Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. And although he is not from around these parts, he is just a wonderful person who has a pretty thankless job and that is making sure that Democrats retain control of the Senate, and he is doing outstanding work and is just a model public servant: Michael Bennet from Colorado.

So I'm not going to speak long at the top. I want to spend most of the time just answering questions. I'm among friends here. So many of you have heard me speak and been supporters, and we've had a lot of interactions, so this is really just a great chance for me to have a good conversation with you.

As Howard indicated, we live in deeply troubled times internationally. Challenging times. I made a speech this week discussing what is the most prominent threat that we face in the Middle East when it comes to terrorism, and that is the organization ISIL, that has not only taken over large swaths of Iraq and Syria, but displayed the kind of brutality that even by the standards of terrorists is extraordinary. And I am very confident that with an Iraqi Government in place that is committed to the kind of inclusive Government that is needed there and sadly has not been there for some time, and the kind of coalition that we're putting together internationally, and most importantly, the incredible courage and dedication and skills of our men and women in uniform, we're going to be able to push them back and ultimately destroy them.

But it's a sobering time, because any time as Commander in Chief that I order our men and women in uniform into harm's way, there are risks involved. And so I'm grateful to them. What gives me confidence is that we're on the right side of history here. And what also is a silver lining in the terrible mayhem that ISIL has wrought throughout the region is that it has focused attention, I think, for the first time in a long time in the Muslim world, a great clarity about the need to completely distance from and ultimately snuff out this particular brand of Islamic extremism that really has no place in the 21st century.

And so we're going to be able to build the kind of coalition that allows us to lead, but also isn't entirely dependent on what we do. And that's, I think, a measure of how we've got to approach these problems, because they're not going to go away immediately. We will defeat ISIL, but there are always going to be these threats of terrorism, and we're going to have to

make sure that we are creating the structure and the partnerships and the commitment that allows us over the long haul to win this fight.

But obviously, that's not the only challenge that we have. On Ukraine, we've seen a Russian Government that has rejected international norms, violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a neighbor. And that raises important challenges for us as leaders of NATO. I just came back from Wales, where, once again, because of American leadership, we've seen all 28 NATO countries and partner countries mobilize themselves to isolate Russia and to support Ukrainian bids for independence and freedom.

And if it were not for us, I think it's fair to say that the situation would be much worse. But it's something that we are going to have to not just pay attention to, but continue to organize, not so much because Ukraine itself is a vital national security threat to us—we do very little trade with Ukraine, and geopolitically, it doesn't—what happens in Ukraine doesn't pose a direct threat to us—but because we are expected to uphold basic international rules and norms. And those rules and norms are what not only allows us to prosper, but has allowed an unprecedented number of people to rise out of poverty and wealth to spread to vast corners of the world and the Internet to connect the world together.

It's because we, over the course of the entire post–World War II era, created these structures. And we're obliged to continue to tend to them and protect them and defend them. And that's what I intend to do.

But in addition to these big international challenges, I think it's important for us to remember that for most Americans, day to day, what they're concerned about is, can I send my kid to college? Day to day, what they're thinking about is, boy, I'm working really, really hard, and I haven't had a raise or an increase in my wages in a very long time; I'm a woman and I know that I'm doing as good of a job as the person next to me, and somehow, I don't think I'm being treated quite the same when it comes to compensation or promotions.

Those are the issues that people experience viscerally in their day-to-day lives. And if you want to know why we're here today, it's because having a strong Democratic Senate allows us to continue to pursue a vision of an inclusive, progressive, economic agenda that is going to continue to give more and more people the chance to pursue the American Dream in the way that I have and Howard has and so many people around this room have.

We have made extraordinary strides over the last 5 years. And sometimes, I think we take for granted the fact that we've had the longest uninterrupted stretch of job growth in American history; that we have cut the deficit by more than half; that our energy production is higher than we've seen in decades and our clean energy is being produced at a rate we've never seen before; that we've got more kids going to college now, the high school graduation rate has increased during this period of time. And despite a few bumps along the way, we've got millions of people who have health care who didn't have it before, and by the way, the costs of health care have been growing at a slower rate than any time in the last 50 years.

So we've made unbelievable progress: an auto industry that rose up from the ashes and now is producing better cars than ever, a financial system that stabilized more manufacturing any time in the last 20 years. And around the world, when you ask people, where is the number-one place to invest, they don't say China anymore, which is what they had been saying recently. They now say, once again, the United States of America.

So we've got all the cards. We have the most powerful military on Earth by a massive margin. We have the best workers. We've got the most innovative companies. We are at the

cutting edge of every piece of technology. We are the envy of the world, but in order to actually fully realize that potential, we've got to have a government that works. And the reason you're here today is you recognize that and you're willing to make sacrifices for it.

And for that, we are extraordinarily grateful. And we want to make sure that Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin and Michael Bennet—all the folks in Senate—and then all those folks in the House, that they're able to pursue a vision that assures our children and our grandchildren are going to have just the same amazing opportunities and the same security and the same prosperity as we've enjoyed in our lives.

So thank you for making that sacrifice. Appreciate it very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. at the residence of Howard E. Friedman. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee fundraisers :: Baltimore, MD.

Locations: Baltimore, MD.

Names: Bennet, Michael F.; Cardin, Benjamin L.; Cummings, Elijah E.; Friedman, Howard E.; Mikulski, Barbara A.; Rawlings-Blake, Stephanie; Ruppertsberger, C.A. "Dutch"; Sarbanes, John P.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Democratic Party : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Improvement; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Iraq : Reconciliation efforts; Maryland : Democratic Party events; Maryland : President's visits; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence.

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