

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate Mary P. Burke in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

October 28, 2014

The President. Hello, Milwaukee! Give it up for your next Governor, Mary Burke! Oh, it's good to be back in Wisconsin! It's good to be at North Division! Go, Blue Devils! We've got a proud North Division alum, Congresswoman Gwenn Moore, in the house. We've got your outstanding mayor, Tom Barrett; Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele; Wisconsin's next attorney general, Susan Happ. And all of you are here.

You know, I got off the plane, and I said it's—it just felt good being back in the Midwest. I was tired of all these 75-, 80-degree days. [*Laughter*] Aww, you got to be tougher than that. [*Laughter*] Got to have a little nip in the air.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back.

So 1 week, Wisconsin. One week. One week from today, you get to choose a new Governor. And because early voting runs through this Friday, you don't have to wait till election day. You can vote all week. I mean, you can only vote once. [*Laughter*] This isn't Chicago, now. [*Laughter*] You can only—I'm teasing, Chicago. I'm messing with you. That was a long time ago. You can only vote once, but you can vote any time this week. So you got to go visit burkeforwisconsin.com/vote. I'm going to repeat that: burkeforwisconsin.com/vote. And that way you can find your polling place. And then, you can grab your friends, you grab your coworkers, you grab the lazy cousin who's sitting at home, never votes during the midterm elections. He's watching reruns of old Packer games. [*Laughter*] Just grab him up. Take all of them to cast their ballot and cast their ballot for Mary Burke.

Let me tell you why. Now, I mean, part of it is you meet Mary, right away you just know this is an honest person. You get a sense, this is somebody who cares about people. You have an impression of somebody with integrity. But there's also some policy reasons and some political reasons why you need to vote.

This country has made real progress since the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. When I came into office, the economy was in free fall. Auto industry was on the verge of collapse. But over the past 4½ years, America's businesses have created more than 10 million new jobs. Here's the only problem: Wisconsin lags the rest of the country when it comes to job growth. So the country as a whole is doing better; Wisconsin is not doing so good. Over the next week, you have a chance to change that. You have a chance to choose a Governor who doesn't put political ideology first, who's not thinking partisan first. She's going to put you first.

And she has a track record. She is a successful businesswoman, helped to grow Trek into a company that employs nearly a thousand Wisconsin workers. Then she was Secretary of Commerce; she helped reopen the mill in Park Falls. She brought companies to this State, helped small-business owners start their own businesses and grow their businesses and hire people right here in Wisconsin.

As the leader of the Dane County Boys and Girls Club, Mary is helping the next generation of Wisconsinites getting the fair shot they deserve. Some of you may have heard this

story. A few years ago, Mary e-mailed the owners of a small jam and jelly maker in Madison just because she liked their jams and their jellies. And she offered to help them out. Today, their business has gone from 2 employees to 10 employees. She did that on her spare time. That's the kind of person Mary is, somebody who wants to help people help themselves, who wants to see people who are working hard succeed.

The point is, is that Mary Burke knows what it takes to create good, middle class jobs in Wisconsin. She's been doing it for decades. And that's what this election is all about. When you step into that voting booth, you've got a choice to make. And it's not just a choice between candidates or parties. It's a choice about two different visions for America. And it boils down to a simple question: Who's going to fight for you? Who's fighting for your future?

Audience members. Mary!

The President. Who's looking out for your kids?

Audience members. Mary!

The President. Who's going to make sure that there's strong job growth in Wisconsin?

Audience members. Mary!

The President. And let me say this: Republicans are patriots, they love their country just like we do. But they've got some bad ideas. That doesn't mean that we don't appreciate them as Americans. I've got family members who have got bad ideas—[laughter]—they're still part of the family, but you don't want to put them in charge, right?

Audience members. Right!

The President. So like a broken record, they just keep on offering the same worn-out, tired theory of the economy that has already shown itself to undermine the middle class. You give more tax breaks to folks at the top. You start cutting investments in things like education. You kind of loosen up regulations and rules on big banks and credit card companies and polluters and insurers. You make the safety net a little thinner for folks who fall on hard times.

[At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.]

We've tried these things the last decade, and we know they won't work. We know they don't work. So—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Hold on a second. Young lady, let me tell you something. Let me tell you something. Hold on a second.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. It's all right. It's all right.

The young lady is expressing her concern about immigration and the fact that we don't have a comprehensive immigration bill. The problem is, she should be protesting the Republicans who are blocking it in Congress. That's what she should be doing. That's what she should be doing. Because I'm for it. Because I'm for it. So—[applause].

But here's the point. The point is that Mary Burke and I have a different vision for what the future looks like. And it's a vision that's rooted in the conviction that in America, prosperity has never trickled down from the top. Prosperity grows from a rising, thriving middle class.

Prosperity happens when you give more chances to people to work their way into the middle class.

Look, you know, Michelle and I, we didn't grow up with a lot. I wasn't grown—I wasn't raised in a fancy house. Michelle's dad was a blue-collar worker. Her mom was a secretary. The reason that we had opportunity was because there was a country that said, we're going to help you go to a good school, we're going to invest in making sure you can afford to go to college, we're going to make sure that we grow an economy not from the top down, but from the middle out. And that's true for most people in America. Most of us grow up in a situation where we've got to get a little help along the way. And as long as you work hard and carry out your responsibilities, then we've got to make sure that every child in America has got a chance.

And that's what Mary believes in: an economy that grows for the many and not just the few, an economy where everybody in Wisconsin has a shot. Mary is running because she believes working people—she believes that working people are the backbone of Wisconsin. She doesn't think working people are the problem, she thinks working people are the solution. She's not running to cut taxes for those at the top, she's running to build economies—Wisconsin's economy from the middle out. And here's the good thing: She understands that ideas to create jobs, they shouldn't be judged as to whether they're Democrat or Republican, but whether or not they work.

She's a businesswoman; she's a practical person. She knows what it's like to build a business. She understands that you don't want too much regulation. She understands that you don't want a government that doesn't work to help businesses grow, but you also need to have a government and a Governor who is going to help encourage new businesses and that young entrepreneur to maybe be able to start something on her own.

We believe that in this country education isn't just the key to economic growth, it's the surest path to the middle class. Mary is not running to make even deeper cuts in education here in Wisconsin, she wants to invest in our neighborhood schools and bring down the cost of higher education and make college a reality for all young people.

Audience members. Mary! Mary! Mary!

The President. We believe that access to affordable health care isn't a privilege, it's a right. Mary is not running to block hard-working Americans from getting health insurance just because you've got some ideological idea. She's running to do what 27 Governors, including 9 Republicans, have already done: expand access to Medicaid because it's good for the citizens, it makes sense for the State budget. You don't have free people going to the emergency room. They're getting preventive care, they're not getting sick in the first place. That's good for everybody.

In this country, access to health insurance shouldn't be a Republican or a Democratic issue, it's an American issue. It matters to everybody. I don't know why you'd run on a platform of making sure some folks don't have health insurance. Why would you do that? I mean, that's a weird thing to want: "I'm going to make sure folks don't have health insurance in this State." That doesn't make any sense.

We believe that in America, nobody should work full time and ever have to raise their family in poverty. Mary Burke doesn't believe that the minimum wage "serves no purpose," as one Republican said. She knows the difference it can make to some hard-working mom who's working already and having to take care of her kids. And she's trying to make ends meet. That makes a difference to her.

She's not going to use the Governor's office to side with corporate interests that believe that the minimum wage is something to be cleared out. She's going to take the side of folks who are working hard every day, cleaning out bedpans and cleaning out office buildings and making other folks' beds and taking care of some of our seniors. She knows that they work hard just like everybody else. They shouldn't be raising their kids in poverty. She's running to give Wisconsin a raise. That's why you should vote for Mary Burke.

We believe that America is stronger when women are full and equal participants in the economy. In 2012, Republicans here in Wisconsin repealed a statewide fair pay law. Now think about that. Just like I don't understand why somebody would be against somebody having health insurance, I don't understand, why would you want to repeal a law to make sure women are treated fairly on the job? That's your platform? That's your agenda? Earlier this year—it don't make no sense. *[Laughter]*

Earlier this year, Republicans in Washington said no to a national fair pay law. One of the Republicans running for office in this State right now said, "You could argue that money is more important for men."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Women, do you agree with that?

Audience members. No!

The President. Mary Burke doesn't agree with that. We need to strengthen the middle class for the 21st century. That means we need leaders from the 21st century, who actually believe that women should get paid the same as men for doing the same work. Let's make sure they get paid fairly.

And while we're at it, let's make sure women can take time off to care for a loved one without losing their job. Let's make sure women control their own health care choices, not her boss, not her insurer, not some politician. Sometimes, it feels like these folks, they've been watching "Mad Men" too much. *[Laughter]* I mean, it's a good show, but I was, like, that was then, we do things differently now. And this is not just a women's issue, this is a family issue. I tell you, when Michelle was working, I wanted to make sure she was getting paid. *[Laughter]*

And by the way, I mean, I should point out, she is working really hard now as First Lady and doesn't get paid, but that's a whole other thing. *[Laughter]* But—because I didn't want her to think, like, what, I'm not working? *[Laughter]* Michelle works. I promise you. So—*[applause]*.

But, look, the bottom line is: When women succeed, America succeeds. Wisconsin, the biggest corporations don't need another champion. I mean, Mary Burke is a businesswoman. She recognizes the incredible role of free enterprise in building our economy, but she also knows that you need a champion. She knows that the wealthiest Americans, they're doing fine right now. They don't need another champion. You need a champion. Opportunity for the few isn't what Wisconsin is about; opportunity for all is what Wisconsin is about.

So that's why you have to vote. If you want something better, you've got to vote for it.

If you believe millionaires don't need more tax breaks, working families do, you've got to vote. If you believe we shouldn't be cutting our kids' future, but investing in our kids' future, you've got to vote. If you think we should make it easier, not harder, for young people to pay

off their college loans, you've got to vote. If you believe that hard-working Americans deserve an honest day's pay for an honest day's work, what do you have to do? You got to vote.

Four years ago, Democrats lost the Governor's race in Wisconsin by just 10 votes per ward. Ten votes. Hmm-mmm. This young lady said, "Hmm-mmm." [*Laughter*] Ten votes. Ten votes could be the difference between an economy that works for everybody or an economy that just works for the few. Ten votes could decide whether nearly 600,000 Wisconsin workers are denied a raise or whether they get the raise they deserve. Ten votes could decide whether 10,000—tens of thousands of Wisconsin families remain without health insurance or whether they finally get a chance to go see a doctor. Your vote will decide the course that Wisconsin takes.

So don't let anybody tell you your vote doesn't matter. It's just not true. It is an excuse. Don't let anybody stand in your way. Unless you're registering on election day, you can vote even if you don't have photo ID. Don't let anybody mislead you. And don't just stop at voting. I am asking you to get involved. I need you to go to burkeforwisconsin.com and volunteer. I'm going to repeat that: burkeforwisconsin.com. Volunteer in this last week. Make some phone calls for Mary. Knock on some doors for Mary. Grab everybody you know, get them to go out and vote for Mary.

And look, one of the biggest challenges that we have in this country—you don't read about it in the newspapers all the time—is just that folks feel cynical about their ability to affect things. But the problem is we give away our power all the time. We sit at home, and we complain, and we say this isn't how things should be. And we say, you know what, working folks aren't getting a fair shot. And we say that people are ignoring our concerns, and they're not helping when it comes to doing something about student loans. And why is everything so expensive? And how come workers aren't getting the kind of protections they need? But the thing is, if you just sit home and complain, then of course, nothing is going to change.

I can't change it on your—I can't change it on my own. No, no. Gwen Moore can't change things on her own. And once Mary is Governor, you're still going to have to get involved. You have power when you work together. And listen, Wisconsin, the hardest thing to change in politics is the status quo. Because everybody kind of thinks, well, that's just the way it is. It's even harder when it seems like folks in power care more about keeping power than they do about you. And so just understand, the folks on the other side, they're counting on you being cynical. They're figuring, you won't think you can make a difference. They figure, you won't organize. They figure, you won't vote. You will just go along with the status quo.

Audience members. No!

The President. You'll just go along the way so often we go along with situations that aren't working.

Audience members. No!

The President. Don't buy it. Don't be cynical. Be hopeful. Because America is making progress. Despite unyielding opposition, there are workers who have jobs now that didn't have it before. There are families who have health insurance who didn't have it before. There are students going to college who didn't have it before. There are troops coming home from Afghanistan and being with their families.

Cynicism didn't put anybody on the Moon. Cynicism has never ended a war. It has never cured a disease. It did not build a business. It did not feed a young mind. Cynicism is a choice. And hope is a better choice.

Hope is what gives young soldiers the courage to storm a beach. Hope is what gives young people the strength to march for women's rights and civil rights and voting rights and gay rights and immigrants' rights. Hope is the belief that there are better days, that we can build up a middle class and give back something to our communities and hand down something better for our kids.

Hope is what built America. Not cynicism. And I am telling you, Wisconsin, America's best days are still ahead. I believe it. Mary Burke believes it. Now you have to believe it. Go out there and vote. And go vote for Mary Burke.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. at North Division High School. In his remarks, he referred to Susan V. Happ, district attorney, Jefferson County, WI; and Gov. Scott K. Walker and State Sen. Glenn Grothman of Wisconsin. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

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Locations: Milwaukee, WI.

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Subjects: Civil rights : Wage equality; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Elections : Voter participation; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Labor issues : Minimum wage; Wisconsin : Democratic Party event; Wisconsin : Governor; Wisconsin : President's visits.

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