

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Austin, Texas
March 11, 2016

Thank you, guys! Thank you. Well, first of all, I'm going to be brief in the formal remarks so you can get some food—[*laughter*]—because I was starving.

The Rudys have been just extraordinary friends. And to see not only the two of them devote so much time and energy to our efforts over these years, but to see what incredible kids they've raised and now a couple of them are getting married. One of them is already married, and another one is about to get married. [*Laughter*] I'm sorry, was that not public? [*Laughter*] You've got to warn—if you put me in front of a mike, I'm just going to spit all your business out there. [*Laughter*] Don't worry about it, it's just the New York Times here.

It just reminds you that, in this process, we build communities; that it's not just tactics and strategy and votes. It's not just a mechanical process. You build relationships, and you build friendships and build trust. And the Rudys, I think, are great examples of that, and Amy, are great examples of that. And many of you in this room are.

So my first job is just to say thank you to all of you for the incredible efforts that you've made in the past and thank you to the city of Austin, which I truly love. When I go to every city, I say I love the city. [*Laughter*] But Austin, I really—I really love Austin, Texas. I really do. I really do.

And let me also just point out that that baby is super cute. [*Laughter*] Just another observation. [*Laughter*] Another insight from your President. That's a cute baby.

When I think back to the beginnings of those campaigns, obviously, the journey we've traveled has been unlikely, and yet I think we can take enormous pride of what we've accomplished. I was over earlier at a larger event, and I emphasized that although there's a lot more work to be done, if you had told us back in 2007, 2008 that we would get 4.9 percent unemployment rate, that we would cut the deficit by two-thirds, that we'd get 20 million people health insurance, that we'd have Wall Street reform in place that has made our financial system much more stable, that we would have gotten 90 percent of our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, that we would have gotten bin Laden, that we would have increased solar power by 30 percent and wind power three-fold and been able to reduce our carbon emission pace more than any other advanced nation on Earth, and get a climate change agreement with 200 countries and make sure that everybody in this Nation can marry who they love in every State in the Union, and get two outstanding women on our Supreme Court confirmed—well, the list goes on; it's a long list—we would have said that's change we can believe in.

I've said before, I keep a checklist in my desk from way back in 2007, 2008, and we're batting about 80 percent. And even in those areas where we have been blocked congressionally, we can show progress administratively in how our Government operates and what it's doing to advance the values that we care about.

And yet, despite these extraordinary accomplishments that you and I did together, despite the fact that I'm doing fine politically in terms of perceptions across the country, it's also undeniable that we live at a time of anxiety and cynicism and frustration, and we see that manifested in our politics. And so the question is, where is the mismatch? What's going on?

And some of it is, people felt the ground shift under their feet during the financial crisis, and they remember that. And so even if they're doing okay now, they're still feeling pretty insecure.

Some of it is that we have not fully reversed the trends that led me to want to run in the first place when it comes to income and wages going up. We were able to rescue the economy from crisis, but you're still seeing growing inequality. And there are a lot of factors for that, but some of it is that we haven't been able to move as aggressively as we'd like to make sure that collective bargaining is strong in this country, to make sure that minimum wages are higher than they should be, to make sure that we have more tools for equal pay for women doing the same job as men are doing.

We still are seeing, when it comes to women's reproductive health—despite what we did with the ACA and the prevention work that we did—constant efforts to just restrict in very concrete, tangible ways access to basic services that women need.

And so part of the challenge here is, is that as much as we've gotten done, there's just a lot left to do. And some of those big trends are ones that are scaring people. And some of it is the fact that people recognize what we've been able to accomplish, we accomplished despite, rather than with, the cooperation of a functioning Washington. And many people feel that, you know what, Obama has done a pretty good job managing what is a broken system, but it's still a broken system, and so what we need is to completely dismantle it, and we're willing to listen to whatever voices are out there about dismantling it.

And so it's understandable what's going on right now, and it can produce a troubling politics. But I'm here to tell you that in my travels during the last 7½ years, and it is as true today as it was when I first came to Austin back in 2007, the American people themselves—what they do, how they operate, how they treat each other—we're solid, we're in a good place. And it remains our job to make sure that the goodness and decency of the American people syncs up with our politics.

And it's precisely because of that conviction that, for me, my most important project—in addition to protecting the American people and going after ISIL and continuing to deal with some of the destabilizing activities that are going on in the Middle East and making sure that we finish what we started on our power plant rule and all those things—one of my most important jobs is just to make sure that the American people are participating and involved and engaged in this election process so that if in fact they come out, then the outcome will be fine. I'm absolutely convinced of that. I'm absolutely convinced that we will have a Democratic successor as President. I believe we will take back the United States Senate. I think we will make real progress with respect to the House. But it depends on people feeling as if that can happen and being engaged and working just as hard and just as full of hope as they did in 2008. And that's going to depend on me, but it's also going to depend on you. It's going to depend on each of us.

And so my main message to Democrats over the course of the next several months—I'm sure I'll be saying, "Write checks," because that's part of the process—but what I'm really going to be saying to people is keep your eyes on the prize here. Change doesn't happen overnight, and we never get 100 percent of change. And by the way, we shouldn't. Our system is not designed that way. This is a big country, and it's a messy country. And there are people who disagree with us in this room on a whole bunch of stuff, and many of those folks are perfectly decent people, even if sometimes they're following folks who are cynical and saying things that are harmful to our society.

So we shouldn't get 100 percent of what we want. But that shouldn't stop us from really feeling empowered by the changes we can actually bring about if we work hard, we stay focused. I'm absolutely convinced that if we do, then just as we can look back over the last 7½ years and look at the amazing progress we've made, we'll be able to look back 7 years from now and say minimum wage is higher and paid family leave and sick leave is in place and early childhood education we have gotten accomplished, and we've been able to make sure that women's reproductive health issues remain the decision of women and equal pay for equal work is in place, and we've been able to make sure that our criminal justice system is keeping us safe, but also fair and just and proportional and treats everybody the same.

It's right there. And it just requires us to believe that and then to work for it. And you guys are going to have to be a part of that. And it's hard in Texas, I know, because sometimes Austin feels like this little island. The waves are washing over you. [*Laughter*] And you're sending out messages in a bottle, hoping that somewhere out there they'll be received, and there are like-minded people out there somewhere who you can make common cause with. Well, they're there. They're there in Texas. You just got a bunch of laws that are keeping them from voting.

So I feel greatly encouraged right now. And I'm—people have been remarking, "You seem, like, really happy and like you're enjoying yourself." I am, because I've seen what's possible. I've seen what we've been able to do. And I think when people step back and get some perspective, they'll say we did good. And if we work hard, we can do some more good. So let's get to work.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:54 p.m. at the residence of Kirk and Amy Rudy. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Associate Justices Sonia M. Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraisers :: Austin, TX.

Locations: Austin, TX.

Names: Kagan, Elena; Rudy, Amy; Rudy, Kirk; Sotomayor, Sonia M.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Civil rights : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Civil rights : Wage equality; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Income inequality; Education : Early childhood education programs; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Elections : Voter participation; Energy : Carbon dioxide emissions, reduction; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Environment : Paris Agreement; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Women's health issues; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; Labor issues : Minimum wage; Labor issues : Paid family and sick leave; Labor issues : Unions :: Labor movement and organized labor; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Texas : Democratic Party events; Texas : President's visit.

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