

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2016*

**Remarks During a Conference Call With Grassroots Supporters and Organizing for Action Alumni**

*November 14, 2016*

*The President.* Hey, Jon Carson!

*Organizing for Action Advisory Board Chair and Former Executive Director Jon Carson.* There you are, President Obama.

*The President.* Are you stalling for me? [*Laughter*]

*Mr. Carson.* That's what I was doing. We're here now, so it's all yours.

*The President.* Has Plouffe made any sense?

*Organizing for America Adviser and Former White House Counselor David A. Plouffe.* None at all, sir. That's why we've been waiting for you. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* All right. Well, listen, everybody, I apologize, my press conference went a little bit long. Shockingly, people have a—lots of questions for me.

I wanted to get everybody on the phone, first and foremost, just to say thank you. I mean, I could not be prouder of everything that you helped us accomplish. There are people on this phone who joined up on this amazing journey when I was running for Senate. There are people who joined us on our first forays into Iowa, back in 2007. And all of you, in all your different ways, have contributed to what has been an amazing run over these last 8 years.

For those of you who didn't hear the press conference, basically, I just ticked off what we've accomplished in terms of saving the economy, cutting unemployment in half, lowest uninsured in history, incomes up, wages up, historic climate deal—all these things. And what I said was that the measure of what we worked so hard for is, during our period driving this bus, was the country going to end up in better place? And it indisputably has. When we turn over the keys—the country will know it because we will have the data and the metrics, the measuring sticks, to prove it—that by almost every measure, America is better off than it was.

Now, that doesn't mean that we're not all disappointed by what happened last week. I think it's fair to say that your President feels your pain on this one. It doesn't feel good. And in some ways, it feels worse because, for a lot of us, I think we didn't see it coming. Surprising losses are harder than losses you see. And I know it's also difficult in part because, when you look at public opinion around the current performance of my administration, it's higher than it's been since probably the first 3 months of the administration. And so there's that little mismatch, and that also makes it more difficult.

But I've always said, progress doesn't follow a straight line. It zigs and zags, and sometimes, it moves forward, and sometimes, it moves backwards or moves sideways. I am a firm believer that ultimately it moves in the direction of justice and more prosperity and more freedom and more inclusion. And the reason it happens is because of the people on this phone call and people like you and your idealism and your energy and your resilience over the course of American history.

So, as a consequence, I think it is fine for everybody to feel stressed, sad, discouraged for a while, but I'm giving you, like, a week and a half to get over it. And if you need the rest of this

week, that's fine. But by next week, and Thanksgiving—because you're going to be talking to your family and friends, and some of them may even have voted the wrong way, you're in danger of having, like, some big argument that spoils the whole family get-together—you're going to have to be in a more positive place. And what that means is staying engaged, staying involved, and figuring out how do we move forward not only to protect what we've accomplished, but also to see this as an opportunity, because a lot of conventional wisdom has been upended.

I was asked about this during the press conference. People are going to be asking more questions about how we can organize at a grassroots level. People are going to be asking more questions about how do we communicate our issues more effectively. People are going to be looking at how do you make sure that the work that's done isn't just in Washington or in New York or L.A., but in towns and small communities all across the country.

And the network that you represent, you're perfectly poised to do that. In other words, now is the time for some organizing. An election just finished, so it's not going to be straight political organizing, but it is going to be raising awareness; it's going to be the work you're doing in nonprofits and advocacy and community-building. And over time, what's going to happen is, is that you will reinvigorate and inform our politics in ways that we can't anticipate.

So don't mope. And don't get complacent. The majority of the American people believe in a diverse, tolerant, optimistic, dynamic, inclusive vision. And as somebody who knows a thing or two about organizing, I want you to remember never to underestimate yourselves, because you guys are the best organizers I know. So don't suddenly veer off into isolation. Keep on working. Stay connected.

I know David and others are going to convene folks at other times. So stay close to each other. Generate ideas. Take some time to reflect and let's brainstorm in terms of how you're going to work together to move forward. Understand that I'm going to be constrained in what I do with all of you until I am again a private citizen. But that's not so far off. It's basically 6, 8 weeks away. And I will have some time for vacation, but you're going to see me early next year, and we're going to be in a position where we can start cooking up all kinds of great stuff to do.

In the meantime, make sure that you stay involved locally. Find organizations that are speaking to your passions. Continue to be engaged with OFA around issues that—or just information and networking and ideas-sharing that can be done. And if you do those things, I promise you that next year Michelle and I are going to be right there with you and the clouds are going to start parting and the sun is going to come back out and we're going to be busy, involved in the amazing stuff that we've been doing all these years before.

And I've got all kinds of thoughts and ideas about it, but this isn't the best time to share them. The point is, I'm still fired up and I'm still ready to go. And I hope that all of you are, as well. And just in pure political terms, I've been reminding my staff that when I came into Washington in 2005 and was sworn in as a Senator, it was the same moment that George Bush was sworn back in as President of the United States for the second term, and Republican controlled the House and Republicans controlled the Senate. And Tom Daschle, who had been the Democratic majority leader, had lost his seat, and it looked very, very bleak. Two years later, Democrats were winning back the Congress, and 4 years later I was President.

That's pretty unlikely, but that's how stuff works when you've got amazing people all across the country who are willing to put their all into making this country better. What was

true then is true now. So like I said, you've got another few days to feel bad, and then we've got to get busy. All right?

Thank you, guys. Carson, Plouffe, I'll talk to you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:03 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Grassroots supporters and Organizing for Action alumni, conference call.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Bush, George W.; Carson, Jon; Daschle, Thomas A.; Obama, Michelle; Plouffe, David A.

*Subjects:* Economy, national : Improvement; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Environment : Climate change; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Organizing for Action.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201600778.