

Remarks at a Rally for Senator Patricia L. Murray in Seattle

October 21, 2010

The President. Hello, Huskies! Thank you! Woof, woof! Give it up for Patty Murray! I am thrilled to be back in Seattle. It is great to be back in the State of Washington.

We've got some great friends here that I want to make sure everybody acknowledges. The Governor, Chris Gregoire, is here. Representative Jim McDermott is in the house. Representative Norm Dicks is here. Representative Joe [Jay]^{*} Inslee is here. King County Executive Dow Constantine is here. And your great United States Senator, Patty Murray, is in the house.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back.

When this State sent Patty to the Senate, she wasn't one of those lifelong politicians who wanted the job for the fancy title or the nice office. She was the mom in tennis shoes who was just looking to help a few people and solve a few problems. All these years later, that's exactly what she has done. That's exactly what she's done. She's helped a lot of people. She's solved a lot of problems. And now she needs our help so she can keep on fighting for you in the United States Senate.

And, Washington, you know Patty Murray. You know what she's made of. You've seen her go to bat to keep Boeing jobs and aerospace jobs right here in Washington. You've seen her fight for clean energy jobs and new infrastructure jobs. You've seen her fight to make sure that this Nation keeps faith with our veterans because it is a sacred trust. This is a Senator who still flies across the country every weekend to come home. When we were in the Senate together, I used to think, poor Patty. [*Laughter*] I mean, I got my little hour-and-a-half flight to Chicago. And she had a lot longer way to go.

But she knew how important it was to come home and listen to the cares and concerns of her constituents. That's the kind of leader you need at a time like this, somebody who knows your lives.

So look, if you haven't already voted for Patty Murray, let me be clear. You need to go right after this rally, fill out that ballot, and mail it in—today. Not tomorrow, not the next day, but today.

Let's get this done. Let's get Patty Murray back into the United States Senate.

Look, we need you fired up. We need you fired up, Seattle, because in just a few days your decision in this election is going to set the direction of this State and of this country for years to come.

And there are a lot of folks out there in Washington, DC—not in Washington State, but in Washington, DC—who are saying, you know what, it can't be done, just like they said in 2008. You can't—what they're saying is that you can't say no to the special interests, that you can't overcome the cynicism in politics.

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. That you can't overcome the millions of dollars in negative ads.

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. That you can't elect a Black guy with a funny name, Barack Obama.

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. That's what they always say.

Audience members. Yes, we can! Yes, we can! Yes, we can!

The President. They're always telling us what we cannot do, and you just keep on coming back and saying, yes, we can.

Now, look, let's be honest. There's no doubt this is a difficult election. And it's because we have been through an incredibly difficult time as a nation. And it didn't just happen a year ago or 2 years ago. For most of the last decade, middle class families saw their incomes fall. Between 2001 and 2009, which corresponds to when the Republicans were in charge, middle class incomes of families fell. Job growth was actually more stagnant than any time since World War II. Jobs were disappearing overseas. In the meantime, the costs of everything from health care to college tuition were going up.

* White House correction.

There were too many parents who couldn't afford to send their kids to college, too many people who couldn't afford to go see a doctor when they got sick, too many Americans working two, three jobs just to make ends meet. And then all these problems culminated in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I was sworn into office, 750,000 the month I took the oath of office, 600,000 jobs lost the month after that, 600,000 jobs lost the month after that. We lost almost 8 million jobs before any of my economic policies were put into place.

Now, when I got to Washington, my hope was that both parties would put politics aside and that we would roll up our sleeves and meet this once-in-a-generation challenge. The hope was that we could start moving beyond the division and the bickering and the game-playing that had dominated Washington for so long, although—because although we are proud to be Democrats, we are prouder to be Americans. We are prouder to be Americans.

And let me tell you, there are a lot of Republicans in this country who felt the same way, but Republican leaders in Washington, they made a different calculation. They made a different decision because—here was their tactic, here was their theory. They realized, boy, we made a really big mess. [*Laughter*] And the economy is in such bad shape, we're going to be climbing out of such a deep hole, that we are better off standing on the sidelines because then maybe people will forget what a big mess we caused. And we'll just let Obama and Murray and the Democrats try to solve all these problems. And we're going to sit on the sidelines and carp and complain and obstruct and say no.

And their calculation was that because it was going to take a long time to dig ourselves out of this hole, longer than any of us would like, that all of you would get frustrated and would get angry. And they figured that if they just sat on the sidelines and opposed us every step of the way, that eventually—eventually, they could ride that anger and that frustration to success in this election. That was their calculation. That was their theory.

In other words, they were betting on amnesia. They were betting on the idea that you'd forget who caused this mess in the first place.

Well, let me tell you, Seattle, it's up to you to tell them you haven't forgotten.

It's up to you. It's up to you to remind everyone that this choice is an election between two different visions of America: a choice between falling backwards and moving forwards, a choice between an America that embraces opportunity for everybody and an America that's a cramped vision just for the few.

If they win this election, the chair of the Republican campaign committee has promised publicly, he said, we're going to pursue the exact same agenda as they did before I took office.

I mean, this is not a situation where the Republicans said, boy, we really screwed up, let's figure something new out to do. They want to pursue the same agenda: tax cuts mostly for millionaires and billionaires; cutting rules for special interests, whether it's the oil companies or the banks or the health insurance companies; cutting middle class families loose to fend for themselves. The same agenda that let Wall Street run wild. The same agenda that took record surpluses and turned them into record deficits. The same agenda that nearly destroyed our economy.

That's what they're promising—more of the same. It's not as if we didn't try it, Seattle. We tried it for 8 years. It did not work, and we can't afford to go back to that same agenda.

Let me just give you an example. They want to cut education by 20 percent. They want to use that money and then borrow more money from China and other countries to help pay for a \$700 billion tax break that only the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans will ever see. That's their main economic agenda. They want to roll back health reform so insurance companies can deny you coverage when you're sick, or drop your coverage. They want to roll back Wall Street reform so taxpayers are once again on the hook for Wall Street bailouts and credit card companies can hit you with hidden fees and penalties.

Patty Murray's opponent has the distinction of being the first candidate in the country to call

for repeal of Wall Street reform. Think about this. We almost had a financial meltdown that plunged America and the world into catastrophe, and he thinks we should go back to the old rules that got us into that problem.

He wants to eliminate the oversight that we desperately need. Look, this is the same theory these folks have been peddling for years. And it's up to you to say, we are not buying what you are selling.

We did it, we tried it before. It did not work. We are not going back. We're not going back. Yes, times are tough. But because of the steps we've taken, we're no longer facing the possibility of a second depression. The economy is growing again.

The private sector has created jobs for 9 months in a row now. Yes, we've still got a long way to go. Yes, we still have a lot of work to do. There are a lot of people hurting out there right now. There are some families that are just hanging on by a thread. That's what keeps me up at night. That's what keeps Patty up at night. That's what keeps us fighting.

But I also know this: The biggest mistake we could make is to go back to the very same policies that caused all this hurt in the first place. And I say this not because I want to reargue the past. It's because I don't want to relive the past.

Let me offer an analogy I've been using around the country. The Republicans took America's car and drove it into the ditch. [Laughter] And it was a really deep ditch. And it was really reckless driving. So Patty and I show up at the—we show up at the scene of the accident. The Republicans have climbed out of the car, abandoned the accident. Patty and I, we're putting on our boots, and we go down and into the ditch, and it's muddy down there, and it's hot, and it's dusty. But you know what, we know we've got to get the car out, so we just start pushing.

And Patty, even though she's small, she's tough, so she's pushing hard. She's pushing. And even though I'm skinny, I'm pretty tough, so I'm pushing. And sometimes our feet slip a little bit, and sometimes it's not budging, but we're just staying on it, and we're sweating. And every once in a while we look up, and the Re-

publicans are up there on the road, they're just waving. [Laughter] They're going around whispering to everybody: "They're not pushing hard enough. They're not pushing the right way."

And we say to them, "Well, why don't you come down here and help push?" "No, no, no, no." [Laughter] "But push harder, push harder."

So we just go ahead and push. And finally—finally—we get this car up on the road. Finally. The car is a little banged up. The car is banged up, it's got to go the body shop. We need to get a tuneup. But you know what, it's pointing in the right direction. It's ready to move.

And suddenly, we get this tap on our shoulders, and we look back. Who is it? It's the Republicans. And they say, "We want the keys back." [Laughter]

And you can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive. I want Patty Murray driving the car. The Republicans can ride with us, but they've got to be in the backseat—[laughter]—where they can't do too much damage.

Have you ever noticed when you want your car going forward, what do you do? You put it in "D." When you go backwards, you put it in "R." Don't go back in the ditch. Don't go back in the ditch. I don't want to have to push us out again.

Patty and I, we've got a different idea about what the future should look like, and it's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built. Patty and I, we grew up understanding the sacrifices our families made to allow us to have opportunity. We grew up watching working parents struggle, and then make it and live out their American Dream. We know that government doesn't have all the answers to our problems. We've seen how hard our parents, grandparents had to work. We understand that self-sufficiency is part of what made America great. We believe that government has to be lean and efficient.

But in the words of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln—who, by the way, would have difficulty winning the Republican nomination today—[laughter]—we also believe that government should do for the people what the people cannot do better individually for themselves. So we believe in a country that

rewards hard work and responsibility. We believe in individual initiative. But we also believe in a country that's investing in the future. We believe in a country that's investing in our young people. We believe in a country where we're looking out for one another. We believe in a country that supports our veterans when they come home. We believe in a country that says I am my brother's keeper, and I am my sister's keeper. That's the America I know. That's the America Patty knows. That's the choice in this election.

We see a future where the next century is driven by American innovation and American ingenuity. We don't want to keep giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas. We want to invest in companies that are investing in jobs right here in the United States of America, in small businesses, in American manufacturers, in American clean energy companies. We don't want solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars made in Europe and Asia. We want them made right here in the United States of America, with American workers. That's the choice in this election.

We see an America where every citizen has the skills and the training to compete with workers anywhere in the world. The other side might think it's a good idea to cut education by 20 percent, but you know what? China is not cutting education by 20 percent. South Korea is not cutting education by 20 percent. Germany is not cutting education by 20 percent. They're not playing for second place. And the United States of America doesn't play for second place. We play for first. We play for number one.

That's why tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies that used to go to big banks are now going where they should, to you, to students, to families. That's why we want to make our new college tax credit permanent, worth \$10,000 in tuition relief for every student, because we want to invest in you. That's what this election is about.

We see an America where the middle class is growing and where opportunity is shared by everyone. And the only limit to your success is how hard you're willing to try. That's why when we designed tax cuts, they were for middle class

families. That's why we'll fight the efforts of some in the other party who think it's still a good idea to privatize Social Security, because as long as I'm President, no one is going to take the retirement savings of a generation of Americans and turn it over to Wall Street. Not on my watch. Not on Patty's watch. That's the choice in this election. That's what we're fighting for.

We want to create jobs through investments in research and development. We want to rebuild our infrastructure so it's the best in the world. We want to have the number-one college graduation rates of anyplace in the world. We want a financial system that works for consumers. We want enforcement of clean energy legislation, but also clean air legislation and clean water legislation.

Look, right now the same special interests who would profit from the other side's agenda, they are fighting back hard. They were fighting us tooth and nail on everything we did over the last two years. And now they see their opening, they see their chance. So to win this election, they are plowing tens of millions of dollars into front groups that are running misleading negative ads all across America. You've seen them. You've seen them.

Just flooding the airwaves with negative ads. And they don't have the courage to stand up and disclose the identity of the donors. They could be insurance companies. They could be Wall Street banks. We don't know. We don't know who it is.

But understand, this kind of politics, that's not just a threat to Democrats. It's a threat to our democracy. And the only way to fight it, the only way to match their millions of dollars in negative ads is with the millions of voices who are ready to stand up and finish what we started in 2008. That means you. That's where you come in.

That's why you need to mail in your ballots, Seattle. That's why you've got to vote in this election. If everybody who voted in 2008 shows up in 2010, we will win this election. We will win this election. But you've got to come out and vote.

A lot of you got involved in 2008 because you believed that we were at a defining moment in

our history. And you believed that this was a time when the decisions we make would have an impact not just on us but on our children, our grandchildren, our future generations.

And you wanted to make sure that your voice was heard. The reason you knocked on doors and made phone calls and cast your vote, some of you for the very first time, was because you believed that your actions could make a difference and you'd play a role in bringing about historic change.

Now, we are in the midst not just of advocating for change, not just for calling for change, we are grinding it out. We are doing the hard, frustrating, inch-by-inch, day-by-day, week-by-week work of bringing about change.

And look, I understand that when you're watching it, you say to yourself, boy, this is hard. This isn't easy. This isn't happening as fast as I would like. And I understand how some of you might think back to election night or Inauguration night when Beyonce was singing and Bono. *[Laughter]* And you were saying, boy, that was exciting, that was fun, that was a big party. And now it just seems like we're working all the time and folks are arguing and everybody is mad. All these pundits are on TV. And this is just kind of discouraging.

And then maybe there's some of you who know it's hard to keep faith when a family member still hasn't found a job after months of trying or you see another foreclosure sign hanging on the house down the street. And of course, it doesn't help when you're seeing all these negative ads and people putting each other down.

But I want everybody to understand this. I want everybody to understand you can't let it get to you. Don't ever let anybody tell you that this fight is not worth it. Don't let them tell you that you're not making a difference.

Because of what you did, Seattle, because of what you did, there's a woman somewhere who no longer has to choose between losing her home and treating her cancer. Because of you, there are parents who can look their children in the eye and say, you are going to college. Because of you, there are small businesses that kept their doors open and folks who didn't lose their jobs. Because of you, there are teachers in

the classroom who are still teaching. Because of you, there are firefighters who are still fighting fires. Because of you there are 100,000 brave men and women who are back from a war in Iraq. That's because of you.

So don't let anybody tell you change isn't possible. Don't let them get you down. Because if our—think about the founding of this country, what we—think about it. None of us would be here if it weren't for that extraordinary leap of faith that had been taken. Thirteen Colonies deciding to start a revolution based on an idea that had never been tried before: a government of and by and for the people, a government based on the simple proposition that all men are created equal, that we're endowed with certain inalienable rights.

Think about it. If our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents had listened to the cynics 50 years ago or 100 years ago or 200 years ago, we wouldn't be here today. They would have said, don't even try a revolution. The British Empire is too powerful. Don't try to liberate the slaves. It's too hard. Don't try to get women the right to vote. Don't try to initiate workers' rights or civil rights. Don't try. We can't.

The only reason we are here today is because past generations, they didn't listen to the cynics. They were unafraid to push forward even in the face of difficulty, even in the face of uncertainty. That's why we've come so far, through war and depression. That's why we have civil rights and workers' rights and women's rights. That's why we will end "don't ask, don't tell." That is the spirit we need today.

The journey we began together was not about putting a President in the White House. It was about building a movement for change that endures. It's about realizing that in America, anything is possible, if we're willing to work for it, if we're willing to fight for it.

That's what Patty Murray believes. That's what I believe. And if that's what you believe, I need you to knock on doors and make phone calls and talk to your friends and talk to your neighbors. And if you do that, I promise you, not only will we win this election, but we will restore the dream for the next generation.

Oct. 21 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2010

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. at the University of Washington. In his remarks, he re-

ferred to Rep. Pete Sessions, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee; Republican senatorial candidate Dino Rossi; and musicians Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. “Bono” Hewson.

Statement on the Death of Paul S. Miller *October 21, 2010*

I was saddened to learn of the passing of one of my staffers and a leader in the disability rights movement, Paul Miller. In a world where persons with disabilities are still too often told, “You can’t,” Paul spent his life proving the opposite. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard Law School, Paul went on to become a law professor, disability law expert, one of the longest serving commissioners of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission,

an adviser to President Bill Clinton, and later, an invaluable adviser to me. But more important than any title or position was the work that drove him. He dedicated his life to a world more fair and more equal and an America where all are free to pursue their full measure of happiness, and all of us are better off for it.

My thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Jennifer, his daughters Naomi and Delia, and all whose lives Paul touched.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Palo Alto, California *October 21, 2010*

Please have a seat. I’m going to come to you, and I’m not going to bore you with a long speech because I’m going to be able to sit with each of you at your table and to have a terrific conversation.

My main message is to say thank you to Zachary and Marissa for opening up this wonderful home. I was especially thrilled to see the pumpkins—[laughter]—and the Halloween stuff out there because in the Obama household, Halloween is big. And in fact, for all the campaigning I’m going to be doing over the next 10 days, I will be home on Sunday night—[laughter]—when the girls get dressed up and do some trick-or-treating.

I see a lot of old friends here, people who have supported us for a very long time, and I see some new ones as well. Some of you I had a chance to meet around the same time I first met Marissa. I remember that first visit to Google very well. In fact, it made it into my second book. And I talked about how inspiring it was and how it spoke to the essence of America, the American idea that if we’re innovating, if people

have the tools to let their imaginations run, that there’s nothing we can’t do in this country.

And that’s I think the spirit that all of us want to see recaptured after a decade in which, frankly, that can-do spirit had been lost. Obviously, we’re going through a very difficult time right now, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, the worst recession since the Great Depression. But my task over the last 2 years hasn’t just been to stop the bleeding. My task has also been to try to figure out how do we address some of the structural problems in the economy that have prevented more Googles from being created, prevented more Hewlett-Packards from being created, prevented more engineers from being trained in our schools; how do we unleash this incredible energy and dynamism that we know has always driven America, decade after decade.

We’ve made a start on all these fronts. I think our education reform agenda has been as innovative and aggressive as anything that we’ve seen, and we’re now partnering with the private sector to figure out how do we get more math