

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Las Vegas, Nevada
October 22, 2010

The President. Hello, Vegas! It is good to be back in Vegas. It is good to be back in Nevada. Oh, I am fired up. Are you fired up?

There are a couple of folks that I want to make mention of. First of all, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley is in the house. An outstanding freshman Congresswoman, Dina Titus is here. Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford is in the house. Former Governor Bob Miller is here. My dear friend, my Senator from Illinois, Dick Durbin is here to help his partner Harry Reid.

And I want to say to all the folks from Orr school, thank you so much for your hospitality, and thanks to Principal George Leavens. Thank you.

I am happy to see all of you. And I have to say, for some reason, whenever I'm coming to Vegas, suddenly, a whole bunch of folks on my staff want to come with me. I don't know. [Laughter] Suddenly, there are no seats on Air Force One. It's all crowded. [Laughter] So I've already told them they've got to behave themselves a little bit while they're here.

But the main reason I'm here, the main reason I need you fired up, is because in just 11 days, you have the chance to set the direction of this State and this country, not just for the next 5 years, not just for the next 10 years, but for the next several decades.

And if I'm going to be able to help middle class families all across this country live out their dreams, then I want to have a partner in the United States Senate named Harry Reid.

You know, Harry's not the flashiest guy, let's face it. [Laughter] You know, Harry kind of speaks in a very soft voice. He doesn't move real quick. [Laughter] He doesn't get up and make big stemwinding speeches. But Harry Reid does the right thing.

Harry Reid has never forgotten what it's like to grow up in Searchlight, Nevada. [Applause] Got a Searchlight folk right here. He knows what it's like to be poor. He knows what it's like to work hard. He knows what it's like sometimes to hit some bumps in the road, to hit

some obstacles, to have to overcome some stuff, that things don't always work out perfectly.

But because of that, because he remembers where he came from, it means that he thinks every single day about how am I going to give the folks in Nevada a better shot at life.

And so I want everybody here to understand what's at stake.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. I appreciate everybody saying "Obama," but I want everybody to say "Harry! Harry! Harry!"

Audience members. Harry! Harry! Harry!

The President. That's right. I need partners like Harry. And I need partners like Dina Titus. And I need partners like Shelley Berkley. Look, but it all depends on you.

Just like you did in 2008, you can defy the conventional wisdom: the wisdom that said you can't overcome cynicism in politics; the wisdom that says the special interests always win; the wisdom that says somehow the folks with the big money who are running the most negative ads, somehow they're always going to be successful; the wisdom that says we can't tackle big challenges in America anymore.

In 11 days, you can say to them: "You may think, no, we can't. We think, yes, we can."

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

The President. Yes, we can. *Si, se puede.* There is no doubt that this is going to be a difficult election. And that's because we've been through an incredibly difficult time as a nation. And nobody's been hit harder than Nevada.

But keep in mind, things were tough even before the financial crisis hit. Between 2001 and 2009, average middle class families in America lost 5 percent of income, when the Republicans were in charge. We had the slowest job growth since World War II when the Republicans were in charge. You saw your health care costs go up. You saw the cost of a college education go up. Too many jobs being shipped overseas, too many folks working two, three jobs and still barely making ends meet. And all this

culminated in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

So we know the results of the Republican philosophy when it comes to the economy. It's no secret. Basically, their theory was you cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires, you cut regulations for Wall Street and other special interests, and then you cut middle class families loose to fend for themselves.

That was their theory. And what happened was, before I took office, we had already lost 4 million jobs all across this country. A whole bunch of them were right here in Nevada. The first month that I was sworn in we lost 750,000 jobs; month after that, 600,000; the month after that, 600,000. We lost almost 8 million jobs before my policies, Harry Reid's policies, were put into effect.

And so our hope was that because we were in crisis, that we could come together, both parties, put politics aside, and deal with this once-in-a-generation challenge. I wanted to move beyond the bickering and the game-playing and the partisanship that had dominated Washington for so long, because although we are proud to be Democrats, we are prouder to be Americans.

I know there are a whole bunch of Republicans out there who felt the same way. But the Republican leaders in Washington, they made a different decision. Here's the thing, they realized what a big mess they had made. They said, boy, we screwed up so bad, it is going to take a really long time to recover those 8 million jobs that were lost. It's going to take a long time before the housing market fully recovers. So our best bet, instead of trying to help Obama and Harry Reid to solve problems, we're going to stand on the sidelines, sit on our hands, and basically, just say no to everything.

Their theory was, people will forget that we were the ones who caused all this stuff, and we'll be able to blame them, and people will be so angry and frustrated that we'll be able to ride this anger all the way to the ballot box. That was their theory.

In other words, they are basically betting on all of you having amnesia. [Laughter] They're basically—they're banking on the fact that you

might forget who got us in this mess in the first place. So let me tell you, Las Vegas, you have not forgotten. I have not forgotten. We are not going to buy what they are selling. That is the choice we've got in this election.

We've got a choice between the policies that got us into this mess and the policies that are helping to get us out of this mess. It's a choice between the past and the future, between falling backwards and moving forward, a choice between hope and fear. I don't know about you, but I want to move forward.

You know, the chair of the Republican campaign committee was asked, what would you do if you win back the Congress? And he said, "We're going to do the exact same thing, pursue the exact same agenda as before we took office." Now, think about this. Their policies resulted in the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, and they want to go back to that exact same set of policies. Does that make any sense to you?

Audience members. No!

The President. I mean, it would be one thing if they had kind of gone away and gone off into the desert—you know, there's some desert here. They could have gone off into the desert. They could have meditated and thought about, "Boy, how did we screw up so bad?" And they felt bad about it, and then they came back and they had some new ideas and they wanted to cooperate with us.

But that's not what happened. They want to do the exact same things they did before. And it's not as if we didn't try them. We tried them for 8 years, and it didn't work. So why would we buy that snake oil now? We're not going to.

Look, this is—imagine that the economy is a car, and the Republicans drove this car into a ditch. And it was a really deep ditch. And somehow they were able to walk away from the accident, from the scene of the crime, but they left the car down in the ditch.

So me and Harry and Dina and Shelley, we put on our boots, and we went down into the ditch. We had to rappel down, it was so deep down there. And when we got down there, it was muddy and dirty, and it was hot. [Laughter] We're sweating; there are bugs everywhere. But we had to make sure we get that car out of the

ditch, so we start pushing. We're pushing, we're pushing, we're pushing.

And every once in a while we'd look up, and lo and behold, up on the hill there, there's the Republicans. They're just standing there, sipping on a Slurpee—[laughter]—fanning themselves.

And we'd say, "Why don't you come down and help?" And they'd say, "No," and then they'd kick some more dirt down into the ditch. [Laughter] But that's okay. We kept on pushing, we kept on pushing.

Finally, we get this car up on level ground. Finally, we get it out of the ditch. Now, the car is banged up. It's banged up, and it's got a bunch of dents. It's got to go to the body shop. It needs a tuneup. But it's pointed in the right direction. The engine is still turning.

And suddenly, as we're about to get in the car, we feel this tap on our shoulder, and we look back, and who is it? It's the Republicans. [Laughter] And they say, "Excuse me, we'd like the keys back." [Laughter]

And we got to tell them, "I'm sorry, you can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive, you don't know how to drive. If you want, you can ride with us, but you've got to ride in the backseat." [Laughter] We're putting middle class families in the front seat where they belong.

You ever notice when you want to go forward in your car, what do you do? You put it in "D." If you want to go backwards, you put it in "R." I don't want to go backwards. Let's go forward, let's go forward. I want to go forward.

Look, because of the steps that we've taken, we no longer face the possibility of a second depression. The economy is growing again. Private sector job growth has happened 9 months in a row. But look, everybody here in Nevada knows we've still got a long way to go. We've got a lot of work to do. A lot of folks are hurting out there. Families are hanging on by a thread. A lot of folks are seeing their homes lose a lot of value, a lot of foreclosures out here.

It keeps me up at night; it keeps Harry Reid up at night. That's what keeps us fighting, because we've got a different idea about what the future should hold, and it's an idea rooted in

our own lives, because neither Harry or I were born with a silver spoon in our mouths. Our families were working folk. And we understand how hard it is sometimes.

But we understand that government doesn't have all the answers to our problems. Government has got to be lean; it's got to be efficient. We believe in individual initiative, but we also believe, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, that government should do for the people what they cannot do better for themselves.

We believe in a country that rewards hard work and responsibility. We believe in an America that invests in its future and its people, in the education of our children, in the skills of our workers. We believe in an America where we look after one another, where I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. That's the America we believe in. That's the choice in this election.

If we give them the keys back, the other side is going to keep giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas. We want to give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in Nevada, companies creating jobs here in America, small businesses, American manufacturers, clean energy companies. We want solar panels built right here in the United States of America. We want wind turbines built right here in the United States of America. We want electric cars built here in the United States of America by American workers.

If the other side gets the keys, they say they want to give a \$700 billion tax cut to the top 2 percent, millionaires and billionaires. They don't have the money. The only way to pay for it is to borrow some money from China and then to cut education spending by 20 percent.

Now, think about this. Here we are in the 21st century where everybody knows that the country that educates their people the best is going to succeed the most. Do you think China is cutting education by 20 percent?

Audience members. No!

The President. Do you think South Korea or Germany or India are cutting education by 20 percent?

Audience members. No!

The President. Those countries, they're not playing for second place, and neither does the United States of America. We play for first place.

And that's why Harry Reid and Dina Titus and Shelley Berkley, that's why Democrats in Congress helped to take away tens of billions of dollars that were going in unwarranted subsidies to banks, and they shifted those to fund college scholarships for young people all across the country, millions of young people getting more help to go to college. That's what this election is about. That's the choice that we face.

When we give tax cuts, we want to give tax cuts to middle class families who need help. They deserve relief. We don't want the special interests to be back in the shotgun seat. They've already promised to roll back Wall Street reform. They've promised to roll back health insurance reform.

We refuse to let that happen, because I don't want your health care denied just when you need it most because insurance companies are playing games. I don't want you to have to pay for another Wall Street bailout. I don't want credit card companies to be able to jack up your interest rates whenever they feel like it without giving you notice.

That's the old way of doing business. We've got a new way of doing business. We're moving forward; we're not moving backwards. That's the choice in this election.

We believe in rebuilding our infrastructure. I just came into Las Vegas Airport. We're doing work right there, putting people back to work because of Harry Reid, because of Dina Titus, because of Shelley Berkley.

We need to make sure that we've got the best infrastructure in the world. We're not going to have better airports in other countries than here in the United States. We can't have better roads and bridges and broadband lines. We've always had the best infrastructure. We need to continue that. That's the choice in this election.

And by the way, another choice in this election is making sure that Social Security is there, not just for this generation, but for the next generation. We're not going to privatize Social Se-

curity. Not on my watch and not on Harry Reid's watch. That's a choice in this election.

Now, let me say this, let me say this. We've got some big problems because the same special interests that we've been battling for the last 2 years, they're fighting back hard. They want to roll back the clock. And all across America they are pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into a bunch of phony front groups running negative ads. Have you seen some negative ads out here?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. You don't even know who's sponsoring these ads. They have all these names like Americans for Prosperity, Mothers for Motherhood. [Laughter] Actually, I made that last one up, but—[laughter]—but they're spending without limit, keeping their contributions secret. They don't even have the guts to stand up for what they say they believe in. And we don't know who's funding them. Is it the oil industry? Is it the insurance companies? Is it speculators? They won't tell you. They won't say. They don't want you to know who's bankrolling all these negative ads.

This is not just a threat to Democrats, this is a threat to our democracy. And, Nevada, the only way to fight it, the only way to match their millions of dollars, is with the millions of voices. All those folks who fought for change in 2008, we've got to fight for change in 2010.

So this is where all of you come in. You have to vote, everybody. Now, I just want everybody to know we've got early voting here in Nevada. And if you go right across the way to Boulevard Mall, if you get in line before 8 o'clock, you can cast your ballot right now. Don't wait. Don't wait, don't wait. If everybody who showed up in 2008 shows up in 2010, we will win this election.

So let me just say this. You know, in 2008, a lot of you got involved, some for the very first time. Some of you knocked on doors, some of you made phone calls, some of you talked to your neighbors, talked to your friends, because you understood we were at a defining moment in our history. You believed that this was a chance for you to make some history, to help finally move America in a better direction. You

understood that what happened today was going to shape the lives of our children and our grandchildren. That's the reason you got involved. That's why you worked so hard, some of you for the very first time.

And I know sometimes over the last 2 years, as we've been grinding out change, doing battle, dealing with filibusters, dealing with obstruction, dealing with the "no, you can't" crowd, I know sometimes you might have gotten discouraged.

You think back to election night 2 years ago, you think back to the Inauguration, and Beyonce was singing and Bono, and you think, boy, that was so much fun. And then the work of bringing about actual change is so hard. And sometimes, you may get discouraged and lose heart.

And maybe, as you travel around Nevada, you see all the foreclosures. Somebody in your family still doesn't have a job, and you say, well, maybe what I did didn't really make a difference. But I'm here to tell you, Nevada, don't let anybody tell you that what you've done didn't matter.

Because of what you did, there's somebody in Nevada who's able to get their cancer treatments without mortgaging their house. Because of what you did, there's a small-business owner somewhere that kept their doors open in the depths of recession. Because of what you did, there's somebody who's going to work every day on that construction site. Because of what you did, there's a child somewhere that's getting health care. Because of what you did, there are 100,000 brave young men and women who have come back from Iraq. Because of what you did, America is a better place. But we've just begun. We're just in the first quarter. I can't have you tired now. I can't have you tired when we're just getting started.

Look, change has always been hard in this country. This country was founded when 13 Colonies came together in a revolution that no-

body believed could happen, except they believed. They founded this country on ideas that hadn't been tried before: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Nobody believed that the slaves could be free, except they believed. Folks didn't believe that women could win the right to vote, except women believed. Nobody believed that we could get workers' rights, except workers believed. There were a lot of folks who said we would never get civil rights. But we got civil rights because somebody out there believed.

Imagine if our parents, our grandparents, our great-grandparents had said, oh, this is too hard; oh, I'm feeling tired; oh, I'm feeling discouraged; oh, somebody is saying something mean about me. [*Laughter*] We would not be here today.

We got through war and depression. We have made this Union more perfect because somebody somewhere has been willing to stand up in the face of uncertainty, stand up in the face of difficulty. That is how change has come. And that's the spirit we have to restore in 2010.

And if all of you are going to go out and vote, all of you knock on doors, all of you are talking to your friends and neighbors, I promise you we will not just win this election, we just won't elect Harry Reid, but we are going to restore the American Dream, the Vegas dream, the Nevada dream, for families for generations to come.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. at William E. Orr Middle School. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Pete Sessions, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee; and musicians Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. "Bono" Hewson.

The President's Weekly Address

October 23, 2010

Over the past 2 years, we've won a number of battles to defend the interests of the middle class. One of the most important victories we achieved was the passage of Wall Street reform.

This was a bill designed to rein in the secret deals and reckless gambling that nearly brought down the financial system. It set new rules so that taxpayers would never again be on the hook for a bailout if a big financial company went under. And reform included the strongest consumer protections in history to put an end to a lot of the hidden fees, deceptive mortgages, and other abusive practices used to tilt the table against ordinary people in their financial dealings.

It was a tough fight. The special interests poured millions into a lobbying campaign to prevent us from reforming the system, a system that worked a lot better for them than for middle class families. Some in the financial industry were eager to protect a status quo that basically allowed them to play by their own rules. And these interests held common cause with Republican leaders in Washington who were looking to score a political victory in an election year.

But their efforts failed. And we succeeded in passing reform in the hopes of ensuring that we never again face a crisis like the one we've been through, a crisis that unleashed an economic downturn as deep as any since the Great Depression. Even today, we're still digging out of the damage it unleashed on the economy. Millions of people are still out of work. Millions of families are still hurting.

We're also seeing the reverberations of this crisis with the rise in foreclosures. And recently, we've seen problems in foreclosure proceedings, mistakes that have led to disruptions in the housing markets. This is only one more piece of evidence as to why Wall Street reform is so necessary. In fact, as part of reform, a new consumer watchdog is now standing up. It will have just one job: looking out for ordinary consumers in

the financial system. And this watchdog will have the authority to guard against unfair practices in mortgage transactions and foreclosures.

Yet despite the importance of this law and despite the terrible economic dislocation caused by the failures in our financial system under the old rules, top Republicans in Congress are now beating the drum to repeal all of these reforms and consumer protections. Recently, one of the Republican leaders in the Senate said that if Republicans take charge of Congress, repeal would be one of the first orders of business. And he joins the top Republican in the House who actually called for the law to be repealed even before it passed.

I think that would be a terrible mistake. Our economy depends on a financial system in which everyone competes on a level playing field and everyone is held to the same rules, whether you're a big bank, a small-business owner, or a family looking to buy a house or open a credit card. And as we saw, without sound oversight and commonsense protections for consumers, the whole economy is put in jeopardy. That doesn't serve Main Street. That doesn't serve Wall Street. That doesn't serve anyone. And that's why I think it's so important that we not take this country backward, that we don't go back to the broken system we had before. We've got to keep moving forward.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:10 p.m. on October 20 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on October 23. In the address, the President referred to Sen. John Cornyn, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee; and House Republican Leader John A. Boehner. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 23.