

again. He's grateful for the visits he's received from friends and supporters, including the Disabled American Veterans.

And Cory is only 27 years old. And he knows he's got a long and very hard road ahead. But he pushes on, and he's determined to get back to his fellow Rangers. And when someone at the hospital said, "Cory, you're going to walk out of here someday," he said, "No, I'm going to run out of here." [Laughter]

So to Staff Sergeant Cory Remsburg, to the Disabled American Veterans, I want to say to all of you: You are the very essence of America, the values that sustain us as a people, and the virtues our Nation needs most right now. And the resilience that, in the face of great loss, so many of you experienced, I know you, like Cory, know what it means to pick yourselves up and keep pushing on.

And that sense of purpose that tells us to carry on, not just when it's easy, but when it's hard, even when the odds seem overwhelming, that's what we're about. The confidence that our destiny is never written for us, it's written by us.

The faith, that fundamental American faith that there are always brighter days ahead and that we will not simply endure, but we will emerge from our tests and trials and tribulations stronger than before, that is your story. That is America's story. And I'm proud to stand with you as we write the next proud chapter in the life of the country we love.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Roberto Barrera, national commander, Raymond E. Dempsey, chairman of the board of directors, Wallace E. Tyson, vice-chairman of the board of directors, Arthur H. Wilson, national adjutant and secretary of the board of directors, and David W. Gorman, Washington headquarters executive director, Disabled American Veterans; and Judy Hezlep, national adjutant, Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Atlanta August 2, 2010

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, we have some just extraordinary leaders here today. I want to acknowledge a few of them. First of all, please give another round of applause to your outstanding young mayor, Kasim Reed; three wonderful Members of Congress who are fighting day in, day out on behalf of the people of Georgia, but also on behalf of people all across this country, Congressman Sanford Bishop, Congressman David Scott, and one of the genuine heroes of this country, Congressman John Lewis.

Our labor commissioner and U.S. Senate candidate Michael Thurmond's in the house. Attorney General Thurbert Baker I think is here. If not, give him a round of applause anyway. [Laughter] AG Commissioner Tommy Irvin, State party chair Jane Kidd, and the DNC southern finance chair Daniel Halpern is in the house.

So, Atlanta, it is wonderful to be here, wonderful to be among so many good friends. A lot of people here worked hard on behalf of my campaign. I am reminded of the story President Lincoln told about one of his supporters who came to the White House seeking some patronage, seeking a job. And apparently, in the outdoor reception area, he said: "Look, I want to see Lincoln personally because I'm responsible for him getting that job. Nobody did more than me. It's payback time." So Lincoln lets him into his office. He says, "Sir, I understand that you take responsibility for me having this job." Guy says, "That's right." And Lincoln says, "You're forgiven." [Laughter]

Look, we all know that the last few years have been extraordinarily challenging for the United States. Now, 18 months ago, I took office after nearly a decade of economic policies that gave us sluggish growth, falling incomes, and a record deficit and policies that culminated in the

worst financial crisis that we've seen since the Great Depression. In the last 6 months of 2008, 3 million Americans lost their jobs. The month I was sworn, January of 2009, 750,000 Americans lost their jobs; 600,000 were lost a month later. All told, 8 million jobs lost as a consequence of this crisis.

Now, we didn't get here by accident. We got here after 10 years of an economic agenda in Washington that was pretty straightforward: You cut taxes for millionaires, you cut rules for special interests, and you cut working folks loose to fend for themselves. That was the philosophy of the last administration and their friends in Congress. If you couldn't find a job or you couldn't go to college, tough luck, you're on your own. But if you're a Wall Street bank or an insurance company or an oil company, then you got to write your own ticket and play by your own rules. And we know how this turned out.

So when I took office, because of the help of some of the people in this room, we put forward a new economic plan, a plan that rewards hard work instead of greed, a plan that rewards responsibility instead of recklessness, a plan that's focused on making our middle class more secure and our country more competitive in the long run so that the jobs and industries of the future aren't all going to China and India, but are being created right here in the United States of America.

Instead of spending money on tax breaks for folks who don't need them and weren't even asking for them, we're making smart investments in innovation and clean energy and education that are going to benefit all of our people and our entire economy over the long run.

And instead of giving special interests free rein to do whatever they want, we're demanding new accountability from Wall Street to Washington so that big corporations have to play by the same rules that small businesses and entrepreneurs do.

Now, because the policies of the last decade got us in such a deep hole, it's going to take some time for us to dig ourselves out. We're certainly not there yet. But I want everybody to understand, after 18 months, I can say with confidence, we are on the right track.

When we were—[*applause*—]—instead of losing millions of jobs, we have created jobs for 6 straight months in the private sector. Instead of an economy that is contracting, we've got an economy that is expanding. So the last thing we would want to do is go back to what we were doing before.

And I want everybody in this room to understand, that is the choice in this election. The choice is whether we want to go forward or we want to go backwards to the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place.

Now, understand, it'd be one thing if the Republicans had seen the error of their ways. [*Laughter*] All right? I mean, if after the rejections of 2006 and 2008 and realizing, gosh, look at this big disaster that we caused and taking record surpluses into record deficits and causing all this hardship, we're going to rethink our approach and go out in the wilderness for a while, come back with some new ideas. [*Laughter*]

But that's not what happened. It's not like they've engaged in some heavy reflection. They have not come up with a single, solitary, new idea to address the challenges of the American people. They don't have a single idea that's different from George Bush's ideas, not one.

Instead, they're betting on amnesia. [*Laughter*] That's what they're counting on. They're counting on that you all forgot. They think that they can run the okeydoke on you. [*Laughter*] Bamboozle you. [*Laughter*]

I mean, think about it. These are the folks who were behind the steering wheel and drove the car into the ditch. So we've had to put on our galoshes, we went down there in the mud, we've been pushing, we've been shoving. They've been standing back, watching—[*laughter*—]—say: "You're not moving fast enough. You ain't doing it right." [*Laughter*] "Why are you doing it that way?" [*Laughter*] "You got some mud on the car." Right?

So we're—that's all right. We don't need help. We're just going to keep on pushing. We push, we push. Thing's slipping a little bit, but we stay with it. Every—finally—finally, we get this car out of the ditch, where we're just right there on the blacktop. We're about to start driving forward again. They say, "Hold on, we want

the keys back.” [Laughter] You can’t have the keys back. You don’t know how to drive. [Laughter] You don’t know how to drive.

And I do want to point out, when you get in your car, when you go forward, what do you do? You put it in “D.” [Laughter] When you want to go back, what do you do? [Laughter] You put it in “R.” [Laughter] You don’t want to go into reverse back in the ditch. We want to go forward. We got to put it in “D.” Can’t have the keys back. [Laughter]

The choice in this election is between policies that encourage job creation here in America or encourage jobs to go elsewhere. That’s why I’ve said, instead of giving tax breaks to corporations that want to ship jobs overseas, we want to give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in the United States of America. And by the way, we’ve already cut taxes for businesses eight times since I’ve been President—eight times. And we want to do more, because small-business owners are the lifeblood of this economy.

Right now, as we speak, there’s a bill in the Senate that would cut taxes for small businesses, would help them get the loans they need to hire again. Members of Congress who are here, they already voted on this. They already passed this bill. And by the way, this is a bill that’s based on Democratic and Republican ideas. It’s been praised by groups like the Chamber of Commerce—they never praise me—[laughter]—National Federation of Independent Businesses. It’s a bill that’s fully paid for, doesn’t add to our deficit.

So you would think—Republicans say they’re the probusiness party. Isn’t that what they say? You would think this is a bill that they would want to pass. And yet day after day, week after week, they keep on stalling this bill and stonewalling this bill and opposing this bill. Why? Pure politics.

They’re more interested in the next election than the next generation. And that’s why they can’t have the keys back, because we need somebody who’s driving with a vision to the future. That’s what we’ve been doing over these last 20 months.

We’re also jump-starting a homegrown clean energy industry, because I don’t want to see the solar panels and the wind turbines and the biodiesel created in other countries. I don’t want China and Germany and Brazil to get the jump on us in the industries of the future. I want to see all that stuff right here in the United States of America, with American workers. And the investments we’ve made so far are expected to create 800,000 jobs by 2012—800,000 jobs in an industry of the future.

We want to create the infrastructure for the future—not just roads and bridges, but also the broadband lines and the smart grid lines that will ensure we stay competitively on top for years to come, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs all across the country in the process. So that’s our plan to create jobs right here in America, not just short term, but long term.

But the fact is, most of the members of the other party voted no on each and every one of these initiatives: no on tax cuts to small businesses, no to clean energy jobs, no to the railroad and highway projects.

Now, I want to point out, that doesn’t stop them from showing up at the ribbon cuttings. [Laughter] John, you notice that? They’ll be voting no, no, this is Obama’s—no, we don’t believe in recovery, we don’t believe in all this. And then you show up at that ribbon cutting, and they’re all there right in the front—[laughter]—cheesing and grinning—[laughter]—sending out press releases. [Laughter]

So, a few weeks ago, the Republican leader of the House was asked, “What’s your jobs plan if your party takes control of Congress next year?” He said, well, you know, our number-one priority—he was asked, “What’s your jobs plan?” Your number-one priority is to repeal the health care bill.

Now, this is a bill that makes sure that insurance companies can’t deny you coverage if you’ve got a preexisting condition, makes sure that young people can stay on their parents’ insurance till they’re 26, provides a 35-percent tax credit to small businesses that are doing the right thing, giving their employees health care, makes sure that companies can’t drop you when you get sick.

Now, I have no idea why you would want to repeal that in the first place, but I sure don't understand how repealing it would create jobs—[laughter]—unless it's for some folks in the insurance company who are being hired to deny you your claims. But that can't be a real jobs plan.

Now, look, I may be wrong. Maybe they know something I don't or no other economist or expert understands. And if you think that's a good idea, then you should vote for them.

But I've got a different view. The health insurance reform we passed isn't just preventing insurance companies from denying you coverage; it's making the coverage that you've got more secure and is ultimately going to lower costs for all Americans. And one of the most important things we can do to reduce our budget deficit is to get control of health care costs.

These guys don't have a plan for that. They just have a plan to say no, because they're thinking about the next election instead of the next generation. And that's the choice that we're going to be making in this next election. The choice in this election is between policies that strengthen the hand of the special interests or strengthen America's middle class.

They want to repeal health care; we're not going to let it happen. We want to move forward. They pledged to repeal Wall Street reform. Here we've got the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression. Everybody knows, having looked at it, that the incentives on Wall Street were skewed and people were doing crazy things with other people's money, making huge, risky bets and then expecting taxpayers to bail them out if it didn't work out. So after all the hardship we've gone through to repair this economy, you'd think it would be common sense to say, let's have some basic rules of the road in place to ensure that a crisis like this doesn't happen again.

But what did the other party say? No. They want to go back to the status quo that got us into this same situation. The reforms we passed protect consumers and responsible bankers and responsible business owners. That's what the free market's supposed to be about: setting some basic rules for the road so that everybody can

compete, not on how to game the system, but how to provide good service and good products to customers.

Make sure that mortgage companies can't give you a mortgage that you don't understand; make sure that credit card companies can't jack up your rates without providing you some notification—commonsense stuff. But they want to repeal it because they're more interested in the next election than they are in the next generation. And that's the choice that we will face in this next election.

If the other party wants to keep on giving taxpayer subsidies to big banks, that's their prerogative. But that's not what America's about. That's not going to move us forward.

I'll give you another example. We had a law in place when I took office in which the Government was guaranteeing student loans, except they were going through financial middlemen who were taking out billions of dollars of profits issuing the loans. But the loans were guaranteed, so they weren't taking any risks. They were just making billions of dollars of money.

We said, well, that doesn't make sense at a time when young people are trying to get to college, so what we're going to do is we're going to cut out the middleman. We've added tens of billions of dollars to the student loans program. More than a million young people are going to get help that wouldn't otherwise get help because of the decision we've made. What side do you think they were on? The other party voted no.

We passed a law to prohibit pay discrimination. My attitude is, equal pay for equal work. Women should be paid just like men for doing the same job. They said no. They want to go backwards. We want to move forwards.

They want to extend the Bush tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires. Now, I believe in tax cuts for the right folks. I kept my campaign promise, cut taxes for 95 percent of working families. But I don't understand how do you get up here and talk about how you care so deeply about the deficit, and yet you want to perpetuate a tax cut that costs \$700 billion, with a "b"—\$700 billion—and would not provide the kind of economic growth or benefits for the vast major-

ity of Americans. That's the choice that we face in this election.

They voted to make sure that oil companies continue to get protected from some liabilities with respect to oil spills. How do you do that? We just spent all this time and energy trying to cap this well in the Gulf. You'd think it would make just common sense to ensure that oil companies are fully accountable. They voted no against that.

When we forced BP to put \$20 billion aside to make sure those fishermen and store owners and hotel owners were protected—[*ap-
plause*]

—and what happened? The guy who would be the chairman of the Energy Committee in the House apologized to BP.

Audience member. Sure did.

The President. Sure did—[*laughter*]

—apologized. Said we engaged in a shakedown to protect ordinary families from the devastation that had taken place.

So look, you go across the board, Atlanta, there's going to be a choice in this election. It's a choice between special interest policies that led us into this mess and policies that are finally leading us out, that are finally helping America grow again, policies that are making middle class Americans more secure and giving them greater opportunity.

Now, I know this Nation's been through incredibly difficult times. And I also know, by the way, that not all the steps we took have been popular. Folks in Washington, these pundits, sometimes they write—they're all surprised—"President Obama went ahead with some of these steps like health care reform and helping

the auto companies, and those weren't popular."

Well, I knew they weren't popular. I've got pollsters too. [*Laughter*] You don't think I've got polls that tell me what's popular and what's not? [*Laughter*] But for the last 20 months, my job has been to govern.

So when I went to Detroit last week and I look out and I see plants producing clean energy cars that otherwise would have been shut down, a million jobs that would have been lost, cars no longer made in America because the entire industry had collapsed, and I say, we made the right decision. And now Ford and Chrysler and GM are all making a profit. They've all hired 55,000 workers back. They are on the move. They're about to pay the taxpayers back for every investment that we made. Then I say to myself, I'm not here just to do what's popular, I'm here to do what's right.

And that's the kind of leadership you need and you deserve. That's the choice we face in this election. And, Democrats, if you work hard, as hard as you worked for me in 2008, we're going to keep going forward. We are not going backwards.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta hotel. In his remarks, he referred to State Labor Commissioner Michael L. Thurmond, State Attorney General Thurbert E. Baker, and State Agriculture Commissioner Tommy Irvin of Georgia; House Republican Leader John A. Boehner; and Rep. Joseph L. Barton.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Young African Leaders August 3, 2010

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, good afternoon, everybody.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. Welcome to the White House, and welcome to the United States of America. And that includes even our friends from Ghana, who beat us in the World Cup. [*Laughter*]

Where are you? There—over there? That's all right. It was close. We'll see you in 2014. [*Laughter*]

It's my great privilege to welcome all of you to this Young African Leaders Forum. You've joined us from nearly 50 countries. You reflect the extraordinary history and diversity of the continent. You've already distinguished yourselves as leaders