

So my main message to all of you is going to be, I need you to keep on working hard. I need you to keep on taking pride in your school. I need you guys to keep on listening to your teachers and working hard. If you do, I'm confident you're going to be successful. And you will continue to be role models for young peo-

ple who are coming up here in Miami-Dade, but also young people all across the country.

All right? So thank you, guys. I appreciate you. I love you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:39 p.m. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Miami Central High School in Miami

March 4, 2011

The President. Hello, Rockets! Thank you! Thank you, everybody. Everybody, have a seat. It is good to be here today. I'm excited! I am thrilled to be here, Rockets. *Bonsua.* It is good to see all of you.

I want to first of all thank somebody who I think is going to end up being one of the best Education Secretaries that we've ever had, Arne Duncan, for being here. We also have—your Congresswoman, Frederica Wilson, is here. Give her a big round of applause.

Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz is here. Give her a big round of applause. Your outstanding school superintendent, Alberto Carvalho, give him a big round of applause. And a very, very impressive principal, Renina Turner, give it up for Ms. Turner.

I gather we also have some members of the football team here. I understand you guys were State champs, is that right? They look pretty big. [*Laughter*] And some of them aren't smiling, you know—[*laughter*]—they've got their game face on.

We are also honored to be joined here today by another champion of education reform, somebody who championed reform when he was in office, somebody who is now championing reform as a private citizen, Jeb Bush. And we're grateful for him being here. Aside from being a former Governor of this great State, Jeb, of course, is best known as the brother of Marvin Bush. [*Laughter*] Apparently, the rest of the family also did some work back in Washington back in the day. [*Laughter*]

The truth is I've gotten to know Jeb because his family exemplifies public service. And we

are so grateful to him for the work that he's doing on behalf of education. So thank you, Jeb.

Now, I just had a chance to take a tour here at Miami Central—[*applause*]—and met your outstanding principal, Ms. Turner. I talked to some of the great students who are here. We went through a lab. They had robots; they had computers and vectors and this and that. And I was a little confused, but I nodded, pretending like I understood what was going on. [*Laughter*] And it's inspiring to think about where you were just a few years ago and then where you are today, right? You came together to turn this school around.

Audience members. Yes, we did.

The President. And I think the rest of us can learn something from that, because that's what we're going to need to do all across the country right now.

We are at a pivotal turning point. We just came through a tough recession that's taken a big toll on families here in Florida and all across the country. And to accelerate our recovery in the short term, we took some essential steps to spur hiring and economic growth, including tax cuts that are making Americans' paychecks bigger and letting businesses write off their investments—

[*At this point, the President coughed.*]

—excuse me. And I'm proud that Republicans and Democrats came together to get that done.

And you're already seeing those steps make a difference. This morning we learned that the unemployment rate fell to its lowest level in

nearly 2 years. Our economy added another 222,000 jobs in the private sector. That's the 12th straight month of private sector job growth. So our economy has now added 1.5 million private sector jobs over the last year. And that's progress.

But we need to keep building on that momentum. And in a world that's more competitive, more connected than ever before, that means answering some difficult questions: How do we attract new jobs? How do we attract new businesses? How do we attract new industries to our shores? How do we grow our economy and outcompete countries around the world? How do we make sure all of you—all of our students, whether they go to Miami Central or anywhere else—how do we make sure you have a chance at the American Dream?

And that's why I'm here today. That's what I want to talk to you about, because in today's economy, companies are making decisions about where to locate and who to hire based on a few key factors. They're looking for faster, more reliable transportation and communications networks, like high-speed railroads and high-speed Internet. They're looking for a commitment to innovation and investments in basic research so that companies can profit from new ideas and new discoveries. But most of all, the single most important thing companies are looking for are highly skilled, highly educated workers. That's what they're looking for. More than ever before, companies hire where the talent is.

Now, I want all the young people here to listen, because over the next 10 years, nearly half of all new jobs are going to require a level of education that goes beyond a high school degree. So first of all, you can't drop out. You can't even think about dropping out. [Applause] You can't even think about dropping out. But it's not going to be enough just to graduate from high school. You're going to need some additional education. And a good education equals a good job. If we want more good news on the jobs front, then we've got to make more investments in education. As a nation, making these investments—in education,

in innovation, in infrastructure—all of them are essential.

Now, what makes it tough is that we're in a difficult fiscal situation as well. For too long, the Government has been spending more than it takes in. So in order to make sure we can keep doing our part to invest in Miami Central, to invest in your schools, to invest in Pell grants, to invest in your education, then we're also going to have to get serious about cutting whatever spending we don't need.

So what I've done is I've called for a 5-year freeze on annual domestic spending, and that freeze would cut the deficit by more than \$400 billion over the next decade, and it will bring that kind of spending to a lower share of our economy than has been true for the last 50 years. To achieve those savings, we've proposed eliminating more than 200 Federal programs. We're freezing the salaries of hard-working civil servants for the next 2 years. We're finding ways to save billions of dollars—of tax dollars—by selling, for example, 14,000 Government properties that we don't need any more.

And that's just a start. If we're serious about tackling our long-run fiscal challenges, we're going to have to cut excessive spending wherever we find it: in defense spending, in spending on entitlements, spending through tax breaks and loopholes. And I'm going to be sitting down with Democrats and Republicans to figure out how we can reduce our deficits.

But I want everybody to understand, our job is not just to cut. Even as we find ways to cut spending, what we can't do is cut back on investments like education that will help us create jobs and grow our economy. We can't sacrifice your future.

Think about your family. Let's say something tough happens, you know, if somebody gets laid off in the family or you have a medical emergency. If you're a family that has to cut back, what do you do? First thing you do is you give up things you don't need. So you give up vacations. Maybe you eat out a little bit less. Maybe you don't buy as many new clothes. Maybe you don't buy that new car that you thought you needed. But the last thing you

give up on is saving for your child's college education. The last thing you give up on is making sure that your children have the books they need and the computers they need because you know that's going to be the key to his or her success in life over the long term.

Well, the same is true for our country. When we sacrifice our commitment to education, we're sacrificing our future. And we can't let that happen. Our kids deserve better. Our country deserves better.

And over the course of March, what we're calling "Education Month" around the White House, I'm going to be traveling the country, and Arne is going to be traveling the country, and we're going to be talking to parents and students and educators about what we need to do to achieve reform, promote responsibility, and deliver results when it comes to education.

And I decided to come here to Miami Central to kick off Education Month because you're doing what I challenged States to do shortly after I took office, and that's turning America's lowest performing schools around. This is something that hasn't received as much attention as it should. But it could hardly be more important to our country.

Right now there are about 2,000 high schools in America—about 12 percent of the total number of high schools in America—that produce nearly half of the young people who drop out of school. You've got 2,000 schools; about half the dropouts come out of those 2,000 schools. And we know these schools are often found in rural areas or in big cities like Miami. Many of these schools have lots of Haitian Americans and African Americans, Latino and other minority students.

And Miami Central used to be one of these schools. Used to. But it's important for us to remember where we've been so we know where we need to go. I mean, this used to be a place where the problems on the streets followed kids into the classrooms—it was hard for young people to learn; where the dream of college was out of reach for too many; where there was a culture of failure that brought everybody down.

Now, turning around these schools isn't easy. A lot of people used to argue, "Well, all they need is more money." But money is not alone going to do the job. We also have to reform how things are done. It isn't easy to turn around an expectation of failure and make that into an expectation of excellence. In fact, it's one of the hardest things you can do. And there is always plenty of naysayers out there who will say it's not even possible; who say that turning around a failing school means just throwing good money after bad; who say too many of these schools are beyond repair; who say we ought to give up on those schools and focus on places that have more breaks and have a little more going for them.

Here's what I say. I say I am not willing to give up on any child in America. I say I'm not willing to give up on any school in America. I do not accept failure here in America. I believe the status quo is unacceptable; it is time to change it. And it's time we came together—just like Jeb and I are doing today, coming from different parties, but we come together not as Democrats or Republicans, as Americans—to lift up all of our schools and to prepare students like you for a 21st-century economy, to give every child in America a chance to make the most of their God-given potential.

Now, the good news is we know what works. We can see it in schools and communities across the country every day. We see it in a place like Bruce Randolph School in Denver. This was rated one of the worst schools in Colorado 3 years ago, but last May graduated 97 percent of its seniors. All right? And by the way, most of them are the first in their family to go to college.

We can see it in Mastery Charter School in Philadelphia, where four times as many students are proficient in math, and violence is down 80 percent compared to just a few years ago.

And of course, we can see it right here at Miami Central. A little more than a decade ago, when the State exams started, Miami Central scored a D in each of its first 5 years. Then it scored an F in each of the 5 years after that. Halls were literally littered with garbage. One

of the buildings here was called the Fish Bowl because it was always flooded. [Laughter] In one survey, only a third of all students said they felt safe at school. Think about that: only a third.

Today, Mrs. Turner, all the outstanding teachers here, all the students here, you've put those days behind you. [Applause] You've put those days behind you. Look, I mean, I know that—I know you still face challenges. I know you still face challenges; things aren't perfect. But over the past 5 years, you started to excel academically. Performance has skyrocketed by more than 60 percent in math, about 40 percent in writing. Graduation rates went from 36 percent, now they're at 63 percent, and I expect them to be at 100 percent—[applause]—a hundred.

You are proving the naysayers wrong. You are proving that progress is possible. It's possible because of your principal; it's possible because of all the great teachers that are going above and beyond for their students, including the Teach for America corps members who are here today. We're proud of them. To all of the teachers here, I hope you will stay with the Miami Central family as long as you can, because this community has already benefited so much from your teaching and your mentorship and your dedication.

You know, I was reading the other day an article—this is just a couple days ago in the New York Times—about how teachers were just feeling beat up, just not feeling as if folks understood how much work went into teaching and how dedicated they were to the success of their students. And so I want to be very clear here: We are proud of what you guys do each and every day. [Applause] We are proud of what you do each and every day. We need to honor teachers.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. You know, countries that are successful right now academically, typically teachers are considered one of the top professions.

Now, let's face it, I mean, we also have to make sure there's accountability for our schools. And turning things around here meant

replacing a principal and replacing some teachers. And that's tough work. It shouldn't be undertaken lightly. But your school did it the right way, with a process that even had the support of teachers and their local unions, because you recognized that partnership among teachers and school administrators and the community, that's the path to reform. It isn't easy. But I want to thank the school board and the superintendent and the union for working together to do the right thing for your students. You guys deserve a lot of congratulations. We appreciate you.

Progress has also been possible thanks to math and science coaches and extra learning time in after-school and Saturday school and summer school. I didn't get as much applause about that. [Laughter] But it's good for you guys to get more learning and be in the classroom more. You still have time for the video games. [Laughter] You guys never catch a break; you don't even get snow days down here, do you? [Laughter]

And you've got a technology program here that's preparing kids for the manufacturing jobs of tomorrow. I saw some of the work that was doing—that they were doing in this lab. It was outstanding stuff. And it matched up with—when I go to factories all across America, you can't work on a factory floor today if you don't have training in computers and you have basic math skills and understand technology. Those are the jobs of tomorrow.

You've got an entrepreneurship program that's helping students start their own businesses. And you have mentors from the local business community. You've set up a Parent Academy to make sure parents are meaningfully engaged in their children's education because you can't expect the schools to do everything; parents have to step up too and set high expectations.

I say this wherever I go. When I hear people complaining about the schools, nothing we do at school will make a difference unless all of us parents step up at home and instill our kids with self-confidence, but also self-discipline and a work ethic that are—that's at the heart of success in school and in life. School is not

supposed to be easy. Nothing worthwhile is easy. [Applause] Nothing worthwhile is easy.

I mean, the football players understand that. I know training to be State champs can't be easy. But why is it sometimes we think—we expect people to be working out hard on the football field, and then suddenly, everybody is surprised when you've got to work out hard in the math lab. Same principle applies. You've got to work hard to achieve your goals.

So outstanding teachers and principals, a common mission, a culture of high expectations, that's what it takes to turn a school around. That's what accounts for progress here at Miami Central. And that's why we are going to support you with what we call school improvement grants. You're one of nearly a thousand schools across America that we're helping turn around by spurring reform from the bottom up—[applause]—the bottom up. And the approach that we're taking with school improvement grants and school turnarounds is the same approach that we're taking on all our education reform efforts. The idea is very simple. Instead of pouring money into a broken system, we launched a competition that we call Race to the Top. And it basically says to States: Prove that you are serious about reform.

We said to all 50 States, if you show the most innovative plans for improving teacher quality and student achievement, boosting low-performing schools, then we'll show you the money.

And for less than 1 percent of what we spend on education every year, Race to the Top has led 40 States to raise their standards for teaching and learning. And those standards weren't developed by bureaucrats in Washington; Republican and Democratic Governors across the country developed these reforms. That's the kind of bottom-up approach that we need to follow. We want to work with Congress this year to fix the current education law and make sure that it focuses on responsibility and reform and results.

And because we know the single most important factor in a student's success from the moment they step into school is the person standing in front of the classroom, we want to recruit and prepare a new generation of teach-

ers, including 100,000 new math and science teachers over the next decade. We've got to get them in the classroom.

With all of these steps, I am confident that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. That's our goal. [Applause] That's our goal. That's how we'll outeducate other countries. That's how we'll outcompete with other countries. That's how we'll win the future for the United States of America.

So I'm going to keep the pressure on everybody in Washington. I know Jeb and superintendent and everybody here, you're going to stay focused on students in the Sunshine State. And I know that Mrs. Turner, she's not going to let up until Miami Central goes from that F grade all the way up to an A grade. Mrs. Turner means business.

Mrs. Turner means business. You know, she has that nice pretty smile, and she's all quiet. [Laughter] But you can tell she's, like, "No, don't mess with me." [Laughter] That's right.

Of course, ultimately, Ms. Turner, she'd say for herself, she's not the only reason Miami Central has been making progress; she's not the only reason you're turning this school around. The most important reason is you, the students here at Miami Central. A few years ago, when it looked like the State might have to shut down Miami Central, the students took matters into their own hands. You took control of your own destiny. The—you said some things that are worth repeating. Here are some of the things that students said: "We're going to do more than pass the [State] test. We're going to kill it." Quote: "I don't want my school to close. We can't let that happen." "We really, really tried hard this year. We don't give up." "If we were going to get through this successfully, we've got to come together as a student body."

So that's what you guys did. You came together as a student body. You didn't give up. And that's why I'm going to be leaving here so full of hope. I'm full of hope about Miami Central's future; I'm full of hope about America's future, because I'm full of hope about your future.

And, Rockets, if you keep on reaching for success and show the same passion, the same

determination, the same hard work, the same devotion to excellence, I'm confident we're not only going to lift up our schools, we will produce the best educated people in the world, our economy will grow, our country will pros-

per, and a new and better day will come for the American people.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator C. William Nelson and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in Miami

March 4, 2011

Audience member. Fired up!

The President. Fired up! Hello, Miami!

Audience member. Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can. I am so pleased to be here in the Sunshine State. First of all, part of the reason I'm happy to be here is because I've got a great friend, you've got a great friend, one of the finest Senators in the United States Senate, Bill Nelson is here.

And although she comes from far away, you should know that she is working for working people and veterans and teachers and students all across the country: We are so proud of Patty Murray of the great State of Washington. Give Patty Murray a big round of applause.

And in addition, one of the newest Members of Congress, Frederica Wilson is here. Where's that hat? Where's that hat? There she is.

It is nice to be back in sunny Florida. I wish I could stay for the weekend.

Audience members. Stay! Stay! Stay!

The President. You think? You think?

Audience member. Yes, you can! [Laughter]

The President. You know I want to stay, but if Michelle found out that I stayed in Miami—[laughter]—and didn't bring her along, I'd be in trouble. So I've got to go home tonight. But I have the sneaking suspicion I'm going to be back down here one or two times over the next couple years.

Now, I realize this is a Democratic event. And there are going to be times when we're among family, we're among Democrats, where we want to talk about being Democrats. But today I want to talk to you a little bit about being an American. I want to talk about those things that bring us together, as opposed to the things that drive us apart.

And I just came from visiting the students and teachers at Miami Central High School, the Rockets. State champions in football. I saw some of the football team; they were huge. [Laughter] What are you all feeding these people down here? [Laughter] I mean, they were big.

But I was there with former Governor Jeb Bush.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, now. [Laughter] I know this is not a name you often hear at Florida Democratic fundraisers. [Laughter] But even though Governor Bush and I disagree on a range of issues, we agree on the importance of education to America and the need to reform our schools. And what we saw together at Miami Central was pretty inspiring. I mean, keep in mind, more than a decade ago this is a school that scored a D on State exams in its first 5 years, an F in its second 5 years. One of the buildings was called the Fish Bowl because it would always flood. And only a third of the students said they felt safe at school.

And for years, there's been a fight in Washington about how do you fix schools like this. And there are thousands of them across the country. And there are some folks in our party that said, "Well, all you need is just to put more money in there." And then there were others who said, "It's all about trying to blame the teachers, money didn't matter." And then there were others who just thought, "You know what, a situation like Miami Central is hopeless; we should just give up on those kids and focus on places where you've got a stronger foundation."