

infrastructure and making sure that we had a strong safety net for our seniors even as we were closing the deficit, during that entire week the dominant news story wasn't about these huge, monumental choices that we're going to have to make as a nation. It was about my birth certificate. And that was true on most of the news outlets that were represented here.

And so I just want to make a larger point here. We've got some enormous challenges out there. There are a lot of folks out there who are still looking for work. Everybody is still suffering under high gas prices. We're going to have to make a series of very difficult decisions about how we invest in our future, but also get a hold of our deficit and our debt, how do we do that in a balanced way.

And this is going to generate huge and serious debates, important debates. And there are going to be some fierce disagreements, and that's good. That's how democracy is supposed to work. And I am confident that the American people and America's political leaders can come together in a bipartisan way and solve these problems. We always have.

But we're not going to be able to do it if we are distracted. We're not going to be able to do it if we spend time vilifying each other. We're

not going to be able to do it if we just make stuff up and pretend that facts are not facts. We're not going to be able to solve our problems if we get distracted by sideshows and carnival barkers.

We live in a serious time right now, and we have the potential to deal with the issues that we confront in a way that will make our kids and our grandkids and our great-grandkids proud. And I have every confidence that America in the 21st century is going to be able to come out on top just like we always have. But we're going to have to get serious to do it.

I know that there's going to be a segment of people for which, no matter what we put out, this issue will not be put to rest. But I'm speaking to the vast majority of the American people, as well as to the press. We do not have time for this kind of silliness. We've got better stuff to do. I've got better stuff to do. We've got big problems to solve. And I'm confident we can solve them, but we're going to have to focus on them, not on this.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:48 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Statement on Tornado Destruction in Alabama and the Southeast *April 27, 2011*

Michelle and I extend our deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives because of the tornadoes that have swept through Alabama and the southeastern United States. Our hearts go out to all those who have been affected by this devastation, and we commend the heroic efforts of those who have been working tirelessly to respond to this disaster. I just spoke to Governor Bentley and told him

that I have ordered the Federal Government to move quickly in our response and informed him that I approved his request for emergency Federal assistance, including search and rescue assets. While we may not know the extent of the damage for days, we will continue to monitor these severe storms across the country and stand ready to continue to help the people of Alabama and all citizens affected by these storms.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City *April 27, 2011*

I'm going to use a mike just because we've got two rooms. Everybody, please have a seat. Sit down, sit down.

I'm among a lot of friends, and I, first of all, obviously want to thank Jon and Sharon for hosting us in this extraordinary venue. These

guys have been just great friends from the start. Some of you know that Jon was a big supporter of mine in my first U.S. Senate race, when nobody could pronounce my name. [Laughter] And I had a chance to meet Sharon then and could already see that—where that was going. [Laughter] So it is wonderful to see them together as newlyweds, and we are just thrilled to be with them.

I also want to thank Orin and Michael for the extraordinary work that you guys did. I know that you guys worked really hard as co-hosts to this event, and I'm very grateful. They have both been longtime supporters and longtime friends, and I really appreciate them. So give them a big round of applause.

So today was a fun day. [Laughter] I wasn't—nobody checked my ID at the door. [Laughter] But it was also a serious day because part of what happened this morning was me trying to remind the press and trying to remind both parties that what we do in politics is not a reality show. It's serious.

I get, as many of you know, 10 letters a night from citizens all across the country. And the letters you get, some of them are heartbreaking; almost all of them are inspiring. And the story these letters tell are of people who have done everything right, are looking after their families, are looking after their communities, are participating in Little League, are members of their church or their synagogues, and active participants, volunteer, and yet are worried. They're worried about the direction of our country. They're worried about their specific circumstances.

Sometimes, I get letters from children who are worried about their parents losing a job. And I get letters from parents describing what it's like to send 16 résumés out and not get a response. I hear from families who are worried about losing their homes. I worry about small businesses who have put their heart and soul and everything they own into something that was working and now suddenly, credit has been pulled back and they're not sure if they're going to make it.

And most of all, I think what you find are people who are worried about the future of the

American Dream. Now, everybody here, almost by definition, has lived out that American Dream. We have been extraordinarily blessed by a country that historically has provided more opportunity to more people than any other in history. Many of us are children of immigrants. Sharon was just describing what it was like for her parents to come here from other countries—in some cases, fleeing the Holocaust—and somehow being able to make a life for their families and then ultimately see their children and their grandchildren succeed in ways that they never dreamed before. And that's the story for most of us.

And the question is, will that same story be told by our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren? And more importantly, will it be told by the folks who do all the work here in New York City and all across the country, washing dishes and maintaining lawns and working at factories? Are they going to be able to tell that same story?

That's what prompted me to run for the United States Senate when Jon first supported me; that's what prompted me to run for President. I wanted to be the advocate for an America that continues to offer opportunity to everybody, regardless of race and creed and color.

And I didn't expect that not only I would have the extraordinary honor of taking this highest office, but also doing so at a time when we were facing the worst crisis since the Great Depression. Now, we've spent 2 years cleaning up after a big mess. And not all the decisions that we made were popular. I think most of the decisions we made were right. Because of the actions that we took swiftly upon coming into office, the financial system stabilized. And I think that if you asked anybody back in March of 2009 whether we were going to see almost all of the losses on Wall Street recover, the financial system working again at relatively modest costs to taxpayers, I think most of us would have taken that scenario.

We have an auto industry that for the first time in a very long time is turning a profit and has hired back workers instead of laying them off. We have been able to take an economy that was shrinking at about 6 percent per

quarter and is now growing, and we've added 2 million jobs over the last 13 months in the private sector alone.

So we've made extraordinary progress. And along the way, we've done a few other things, like make sure that families aren't going bankrupt because they get sick and making sure that equal pay for equal work is a reality and appointing a couple of women to the Supreme Court—because, Lord knows, we need more women on that Court—and ending policies like “don't ask, don't tell” that were prohibiting people who loved each other from being able to serve.

So we've made enormous progress, but those letters tell me that we haven't made enough. We've still got a lot of work to do. We've got a lot of work to do to continue to lower the unemployment rate and grow the economy. We've got a lot of work to do to make sure that we get control over a deficit and debt that is a serious threat to our long-term future. And we've got to do it in a way that ensures that we're making the investments that allow us to be competitive in the 21st century: investments in education, investments in infrastructure, investments in basic research and science, which have always been the hallmark of a dynamic American economy.

We've got a lot more work to do to fix an immigration system that's broken. And we have a lot more work to do to make sure that we've got an energy policy that works. So I am not satisfied with the progress we've made, but we're on the right track.

One other area that I'm not satisfied about is the fact that we haven't been able to create the kind of politics that, I think, we're going to need to meet all these challenges. Partly because of the stresses of the recession over the last couple of years, politics is as polarized as ever. And I think the hope that I have that we would start coming together in a serious way and have a serious debate about how we move the country forward has been resisted. I won't say that the Democrats have never been at fault in that, but I will say that my administration and, I think, Democrats in Congress are serious about trying to solve these problems

and not simply to score political points. And I think it can be done.

But part of what's going to have to happen is that serious politics will need to be rewarded. We're going to have, between now and 2012, a serious debate about the kind of America we believe in. And it is my intention to make sure that as hopeful as 2008 was, I want 2012 to be an election in which we're not just talking slogans, we don't just have pretty posters, but we are looking soberly at the choices we face. Because ultimately, I think if we had a serious debate, not only will Democrats win, not only will I win, but I think America will win.

I think the American people have good instincts. They're busy, they are preoccupied with family and work, and so sometimes, they're not always paying close attention to these debates. But there is a clarifying moment that is occurring now, symbolized by the debate between the House Republican budget and the budget that I presented in terms of how we deal with deficit and debt that, I think, will focus people's attention.

And we've got the potential, I think, to make some decisions that are going to have ramifications for the next 50 years. I'm optimistic we'll make the right decisions. And I'm optimistic that for the next 5½ years, I'm going to be able to do my part in leading the country in a good direction.

But I'm not going to be able to do it alone. I'm going to have to have the help of all of you. And as I said, in 2008, it was—I had a lot less gray hair—[laughter]—and it was exciting, partly because it was so unlikely that I could be elected. And now I'm the incumbent, and folks have various disappointments, and well, he hasn't gotten this done fast enough, and we're still waiting for that to happen.

And that's understandable. We're not going to have the same kind of campaign entirely that we had in 2008. But the animated spirit behind it, the desire to make sure that that American Dream is available for everybody and that we have—when we have tough decisions to make, we have shared sacrifice, no single group or person is bearing that burden, and that we're

also making sure that we've got shared opportunity and access—that animating spirit at the core of my campaign, the belief that there's a lot more that we have in common than what drives us apart, that hasn't changed. And my enthusiasm for this job and my optimism about America is not diminished.

So I hope that all of you guys understand that this is going to be a long, hard road. In some ways, it's going to be a little bit harder than the first time around. But I'm confident we're going to succeed. And I'm confident

America is going to succeed. And in part, all of you make me confident about that.

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. at the residence of Jon S. and Sharon M. Corzine. In his remarks, he referred to Orin S. Kramer, general partner, Boston Provident, LP; and Michael Kempner, president and chief executive officer, MMW Group. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 28. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City April 27, 2011

The President. Hello, hello, hello! Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you. My name is Barack Obama. I was born in Hawaii. [Laughter] I'm President of the United States, and I'm running for reelection. Nobody checked my ID on the way in. [Laughter] But just in case—[laughter].

We've got some wonderful guests here today. First of all, two of the finest Senators that you could ever hope to have, the senior Senator from the great State of New York, Chuck Schumer is in the house. And the far more attractive—[laughter]—junior Senator, Kirsten Gillibrand is here. One of my great friends, somebody who I always enjoyed being with when I was in the United States Senate, from the great State of New Jersey, Frank Lautenberg is in the house.

To all the Members of Congress who are here; to all the New York State and New York City elected officials who are here: Thank you for the extraordinary work that you do each and every day. We're very proud of you.

To the Knicks, Jets, Giants, Rangers: Thank you for bringing hope back to New York City. My Bulls are doing pretty good, though. [Laughter] I mean, I'm just saying. [Laughter] Did I hear a boo there? Come on. [Laughter]

So look, I do not have prepared remarks partly because I'm among friends. And what I do want to talk to you a little bit about is not just the campaign that's coming up, but where

we've been over the last 2½ years and where we need to go over the next 20.

When we ran in 2008, I think all of us had a sense that America was at a crossroads, that for the previous decade, what had happened to families all across America was they were working just as hard as they'd ever worked; they were fulfilling their responsibilities to their family, to their communities; volunteering in their synagogues, churches, places of worship; they remained committed to achieving the American Dream through hard work, and yet somehow it felt like that dream was slipping away.

During those 10 years, the income and wages of the average American actually went down when you factored in inflation. The economy was growing. A lot of us in this room were doing very well, but for a lot of folks, their life chances felt diminished. And when they looked out on the horizon, it looked like things weren't going to get better, they were going to get tougher.

And that was all before the worst recession since the Great Depression. By the time I was sworn in, we had already lost 4 million jobs in the previous 6 months. In the next 6 months, before our economic policies had a chance to take effect, we lost another 4 million. The financial system was on the brink of collapse. We were about to see the liquidation of the U.S. auto industry.