

me in a toast. And I want to do so with the words that Angela spoke 2 years ago when she became the first German leader to address our Congress since Chancellor Adenauer all those decades ago.

Her words spoke not only to the dreams of that young girl in the East, but to the dreams of all who still yearn for their rights and dignity today: To freedom, which “must be struggled for, and then defended anew, every day of our lives.”

Cheers. *Zum Wohl.*

[Chancellor Merkel then gave brief remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Joachim Sauer, husband of Chancellor Merkel; former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa; and former Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chancellor Merkel.

Remarks at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria, Virginia

June 8, 2011

Thank you so much, everybody. It is great to be back at NOVA. I come here often enough that I think I should be getting some credits. [Laughter] Plus I've got an in with Dr. Biden, and her husband owes me big time, so—[laughter].

It is wonderful to see everybody here. We've got some special guests. Our outstanding Labor Secretary, Hilda Solis, is here. Where's Hilda? Congressman Jim Moran is here, putting on his jacket. The mayor of Alexandria, Bill Euille, is here. The president of Northern Virginia Community College, Dr. Robert Temple, is here.

I just had a chance to see the labs where students are training for jobs working on advanced vehicles, led by a teacher who's here, Ernie Packer, who spent almost three decades at Ford Motor Company. Where's Ernie? Did we get him back here? There he is.

That's why my sleeves are rolled up. I was getting under the hood. [Laughter] You guys want me to work on your car—don't do it. [Laughter]

But I was so impressed not only with the skills that the young people were learning, but also with the enthusiasm and excitement of what they see as a potential future. All across America, there are students like the ones that I've met here at NOVA, folks who are gaining skills, they're learning a trade, they're working hard and putting in the hours to move up the profession that they've chosen or to take a chance on a new line of work. Among the stu-

dents I was meeting here, we saw some—looked like 18-, 19-year-olds, but we also saw a couple of folks who were midcareer or even had retired and now were looking to go back to work.

So these are men and women like David Korrelitz. David started at a car dealership as an apprentice. And he'll tell you, he was at the low end of the totem pole. Then he entered GM—the GM automotive program here at NOVA, started picking up new skills, led to better and more challenging work. He began to prove himself as a technician. And after he graduated, he kept moving up. So now David is hoping to work hard enough to earn a management position at the dealership where he was an apprentice just a few years ago.

And I want to quote David, because I think it captures what happens here at a place like NOVA. David said, whatever he ends up doing, the automotive training program here was “the spark [he] needed to get [his] career started.” The spark he needed to get his career started.

Lighting a spark. That's what community colleges can do. That's what learning a new skill or training in a new field can do. And that's the reason that I'm here today. We've got to light more sparks all across America, and that's going to make a difference in the futures of individuals who are looking for a better life, but it's also going to make a difference in America's future. So I've set a goal that by the end of this decade, we are going to once again lead the world in

producing college graduates. To achieve that, we're making college more affordable and we're investing in community colleges.

But the goal isn't just making sure that somebody's got a certificate or a diploma. The goal is to make sure your degree helps you to get a promotion or a raise or a job. And that's especially important right now. Obviously, we're slowly recovering from a very painful recession. But there are too many people out there who are still out of work, without a job that allows them to save a little money or to create the life they want for their families. That's unacceptable to me. It's unacceptable to all of you.

So we've got to do everything we can, everything in our power to strengthen and rebuild the middle class. We've got to be able to test new ideas, pull people together, and throw everything we've got at this challenge. So we're going to have to have all hands on deck.

And that's why last year, we brought together major companies and community colleges to launch a new campaign, led by business leaders from across the country, called Skills for America. And the idea was simple: If we could match up schools and businesses, we could create pipelines right from the classroom to the office or the factory floor. This would help workers find better jobs, and it would help companies find the highly educated and highly trained people that they need in order to prosper and to remain competitive.

So today we're announcing several new commitments by the private sector, colleges, and the National Association of Manufacturers to help make these partnerships a reality. Through these efforts, we're going to make it possible for 500,000 community college students—half a million community college students—to get industry-accepted credentials for manufacturing jobs that companies across America are looking to fill. Because the irony is, even though a lot of folks are looking for work, there are a lot of companies that are actually also looking for skilled workers. There's a mismatch that we can close, and this partnership is a great way to do it.

So if you're a company looking to hire, you'll know exactly what kind of training went into a specific degree. If you're considering attending a community college, you'll be able to know that the diploma you earn will be valuable when you hit the job market. And a lot of that's already happening here at NOVA. If you participate in the GM program here, like David did, you can count on being prepared to work on GM cars.

We're also taking some additional steps today: a new resource on the Internet so workers can sign on and see what jobs their skill sets allow them to access all across America. It's interesting, I was talking to Ernie, and he was saying how a lot of the young people who go through this program, they think initially that they can only get a job at a dealership. And then they realize that there are a whole range of possibilities out there. You might end up working for a company maintaining its fleet. You might end up working for NHTSA, making sure that automobile safety is practiced all across the country. So part of what this web site will do is give people a better idea of the scope of opportunities available for the skill sets that they're gaining.

A new push to make it easier for high school students to get a head start on their degrees at 3,500 participating schools, because part of our task is making sure that young people even in high school see a relevance between what they're learning and a potential career.

New mentoring programs and scholarships for folks who are thinking about careers in engineering, something that's going to be vital to our manufacturing success. And more business leaders, companies, colleges, and organizations are joining this campaign all the time.

What all these steps boil down to is this: Right now there are people across America with talents just waiting to be tapped, sparks waiting to be lit. Our job is to light them. And there's no time to lose when we've got folks looking for work, when we've got companies that need to stay competitive in this 21st-century economy, and when we know that we've got to rebuild a middle class, and a lot of that is going to have to do with how well we do

in manufacturing and how well we do in those jobs that are related to making products here in the United States of America.

The fact is we understand what it takes to build a stronger economy. We know it's going to require investing in research and technology that will lead to new ideas and new industries. We know it means building the infrastructure, the roads and bridges, and manufacturing the new products here in the United States of America that create good jobs. Above all, it requires training and educating our citizens to outcompete workers from other countries.

That's why today's announcement is so important. And that's why I also want to see Congress—so Jim, get working on this—[*laughter*—pass the “Workforce Investment Act” to build on this progress with new and innovative approaches to training and to really figure out what works. We've got a lot of programs out there. If a program does not work in training people for the jobs of the future and getting them a job, we should eliminate that program. If a program is working, we should put more money into that program. So we've got to be ruthless in evaluating what works and what doesn't in order for folks to actually obtain a job and industry to get the workers they need. That's how we're going to help more Americans climb into the middle class and stay there. That's how we're going to make our overall economy stronger and more competitive.

Let me just make this point. If we don't decide to do this—it's possible that we could choose not to do the things that I just talked about. We could choose not to make investments in clean energy or let tuition prices rise and force more Americans to give up on the American Dream. We could choose to walk away from our community college system. We could say to ourselves, you know what, given foreign competition and low wages overseas, manufacturing's out the door and there's not much we can do about it. We could decide, in solving our fiscal problems, that we can't afford to make any of these investments and those of us who've done very well don't have to pay any more taxes in order to fund these investments.

But I want to make clear: That's not our history. That's not who we are. I don't accept that future for the United States of America. I see a United States where this Nation is able to out-compete every country on Earth, where we continue to be the world's engine for innovation and discovery. I see a future where we train workers who make things here in the United States and continue a important and honorable tradition of folks working with their hands, creating value, not just shuffling paper. That's part of what has built the American Dream.

And if anybody doubts that future is possible, they should come to this school and talk to the young people who are getting trained and the folks who are doing the training. They ought to go to Detroit, where auto companies are coming back and hiring again after a lot of people declared that entire industry dead and buried. They ought to travel all across the country like I do and meet men and women who are starting businesses, testing new ideas, bringing new products to market, and helping this country come back stronger than before.

You know, we are in a tough fight. We've been in a tough fight over the last 2½ years to get past a crippling recession, but also to deal with the problems that happened before this recession, the fact that manufacturing had weakened, the middle class was treading water. I don't think the answer is for us to turn back. I think the answer is to stand up for what this country is capable of achieving and to place our bets on entrepreneurs and workers and to get behind some of the great work that's being done here at NOVA and in schools all across the country.

That's how we're going to win this fight. That's how we're going to win the future.

For all of those who are participating, including National Association of Manufacturers and the companies who have already begun to participate in this process, thank you. These young people are excited. They're ready to get trained. They're ready to go to work. America's ready to win the future.

Thank you very much everybody. God bless you. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. in the Engineering Building. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks Honoring the 2010 NCAA Football Champion Auburn University Tigers June 8, 2011

The President. Hello, everybody. Please have a seat, have a seat. Welcome to the White House. And congratulations to the Auburn Tigers. War Eagle! I notice you all brought some Alabama weather up here too.

I want to start by recognizing some very proud Members of Congress who are here today. Members of Congress delegation, where are you? Here you go, all the Alabama crew right here—Shelby, Sessions too. They are very proud. All they do is just talk about you all, Alabama and Auburn. I don't know which way they—

Audience member. Auburn—

The President. Okay. See? [*Laughter*]

Head Coach Gene Chizik. Auburn first.

The President. And I want to welcome back to the White House—this is a point of personal privilege—the biggest Auburn fan I've ever met: my former Press Secretary, Robert Gibbs, is in the house, along with my main man Ethan Gibbs—[*laughter*—]who has inherited the passion for Auburn that his dad had. Look at Gibbs, has his tie and everything. Come on. [*Laughter*]

As some of you may know, Gibbs was born in Auburn. His parents worked in the university library, so he and his brother grew up watching the Tigers play. So earlier this year when the team was making its run to the championship, Robert was insufferable. He had a little statue of Aubie on his desk. [*Laughter*] He had his son Ethan—he and Ethan would roll the trees in front of the yard after a big win. [*Laughter*] So this is a big day for him.

Now, this visit was originally scheduled to happen a couple of months ago. But 2 days before this team was supposed to be in Washington, the State of Alabama was hit by a series of devastating tornadoes.

So Michelle and I went down with many members of the congressional delegation to meet some of the folks who had lost loved ones, make sure everything possible was being done to help the community get back on its feet. And it was a heartbreaking visit. Coach and I were just talking about—you don't understand the devastation until you see it firsthand.

But what was also inspiring was the amount of strength and generosity that was shown by so many people in the midst of so much tragedy. And that includes the members of this program. Two days after the tornado, almost 70 Auburn coaches, players, and athletic department staff, led by Coach, traveled to Pleasant Grove and Cullman to help out with relief efforts.

And even though one of the toughest hit areas by the storm was the home of the Crimson Tide, this team knew what we all know in situations like this, which is we're all on the same team. We're all Americans first and foremost, and we've got an obligation to support each other in times of need.

So I've said before, I will say again, we will continue to stand with the victims of these disasters, whether they're in Tuscaloosa or in Joplin, Missouri, which I just visited a couple weeks ago. We're going to do this as long as it takes until families are able to rebuild.

Now, the reason, obviously, we're celebrating today is because of a happier moment for the people of Alabama and to congratulate the Tigers for winning their first national title since before I was born. [*Laughter*] And I'm getting quite a bit of gray hair. [*Laughter*] So that was a long wait for Tigers fans.

It wasn't always an easy road. This team played one of the toughest schedules in all of college football last year. In nine games, they came from behind to win, including after being