

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

June 30, 2011

The President. Hello, Philly! Thank you. Thank you, Philadelphia! Thank you. It is good to be back in Philly. Good to be back in the great State of Pennsylvania. Congratulations, Phillies fans. That is quite a rotation.

There are a couple of people I want to acknowledge. First of all, you just heard from somebody who I consider just a dear, dear friend. This is a guy who stood with me when nobody was sure whether I was going to win or not. And he didn't have to do it, but he was just a terrific, terrific supporter, a great friend. He is a great Senator. Please give it up for Bob Casey.

Two other outstanding members of your congressional delegation who have been with me and supportive of everything we've been trying to do—I could not be prouder of the work they do on behalf of their constituents—Congressman Brady and Congressman Fattah are here. Thank you.

Your outstanding mayor, Mayor Nutter, is in the house; and one of the great legislators in Congress, who also happens to be a pretty good political mind, and that is why we are so proud to have her as the chairwoman of the DNC, Debbie Wasserman Schultz. Please give her a big round of applause.

Now, I see a lot of new faces out here. And then I see a few faces I've known for a long time. Some of you who are here knew me before I had gray hair. [Laughter]

Audience member. You're looking good, though!

The President. Well, thank you. [Laughter] Malia and Sasha say that it makes me look distinguished. [Laughter] Michelle says it just makes me look old. [Laughter]

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, well, she—no, she loves me, but she just says it makes me look old. [Laughter]

Now, being here with all of you, I can't help but think back to the election 2½ years ago and that night in Grant Park. It was the culmina-

tion of an extraordinary campaign that drew on the hard work and the support of people all across America, men and women—and some children; I did very well with the 8-and-under demographic—[laughter]—men and women who believed that change was possible, who believed that we didn't have to accept politics as usual, who believed that we could have a country that once again lived up to its finest ideals and its highest aspirations. And it was a beautiful night. Everybody was feeling pretty good.

But what I said that night—some of you remember this—I said, this is not the end, this is just the beginning, that the road we were on was going to be difficult, that the climb was going to be steep. We didn't know how steep it was going to be. We didn't realize the magnitude of the recession we were facing and the financial crisis. We didn't realize we had already lost 4 million jobs by the time I was sworn in. But we knew it was going to be tough.

And that was okay, because I did not run for President to do easy things. I ran for President to do hard things. I ran for President because it was time to do big things—that we couldn't keep kicking the can down the road anymore, too much was at stake, and that we had to get started tackling the tough issues that families face each and every day. Even if it would take time—

[At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.]

The President. So I—listen—

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. I—thank you, guys. Now, let me tell you why I thought it was so important to run—even though Michelle, she wasn't so sure—[laughter]—and why you guys got involved. I just want everybody to remember: We ran because we believed in an economy that didn't just work for those at the top, but worked for everybody, where prosperity was shared,

from the machinist on the line to the manager on the floor to the CEO in the boardroom.

We ran because we believed our success isn't just determined by stock prices and corporate profits, but by whether ordinary folks can find a good job that pays for a middle class life, where they can pay the mortgage and take care of their kids and send their kids to college and save for retirement and maybe have a little left over to go to a movie and go to dinner once in a while.

We ran because for a decade, wages and incomes had flatlined, and costs kept on going up for everybody even though they didn't have any more income. That was before the economic crisis hit. And obviously, once the economic crisis did hit, we had to take a series of emergency steps to save this economy from collapse, not because we wanted to help banks or make sure that the auto companies' CEOs were making good bonuses, but we did it because we wanted to make sure that families who needed help could still take out a loan to buy a house or start a new business. We wanted to make sure that the millions of people who depended on the auto industry, that they would still have jobs.

And so some of those decisions were tough. And you remember, we got criticized a lot. But you take a look at what's happened. Some folks didn't want to—us getting involved in the auto industry, and I didn't expect to be the CEO of a car company when I ran for President. [Laughter] But as a consequence of what we did, we saved jobs. We saved American manufacturing. We cut taxes for middle class families. We ended subsidies to the banks for student loans to make college more affordable. We made sure—that's why I signed a bill to make sure there was equal pay for equal work, because I've got two daughters and I want to make sure they're treated just the same as the boys are. That's why we're promoting manufacturing and homegrown American energy, because that's what will lead to jobs that pay a decent salary. I want the wind turbines and the solar panels and the electric cars to be built right here in America.

That's why, with the help of these outstanding Members of Congress, we're standing up a new consumer bureau with just one responsibility: looking out for ordinary people in the financial system so folks aren't cheated. Whether you're getting a credit card or getting a mortgage, you need to know that you're getting a fair deal.

And that's why we passed health reform, so that nobody in the richest nation on Earth goes bankrupt when they get sick.

We also had a long campaign in 2008 because we believed it was time to end the war in Iraq. And that's what we're doing. We've removed a hundred thousand troops from Iraq. We've ended combat missions. We are on track to remove the rest of the troops, bring them home by the end of this year.

I ran for President because I believed we needed to refocus our efforts and our energy in Afghanistan and going after Al Qaida. And we are going after Al Qaida, and we've taken out their leadership. And because of our progress and the extraordinary sacrifices of our troops, we are fulfilling the commitment I made at the start to reduce our troops, starting this month, so that Afghans can start taking responsibility for their own security and we can start rebuilding right here at home. It's time to start rebuilding here at home, time for nation-building right here.

We live in a world where America is facing stiff competition for good jobs from rapidly growing nations like China and India and Brazil. For a long time, we were told the best way to win that competition is just to undermine consumer protections and undermine clean air laws and clean water laws and hand out tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires. That was the idea that held sway for close to a decade. And let's face it, it didn't work out very well.

In fact, if you look at our history, you'll see that philosophy has never worked out very well, where people are just asking, "What's in it for me?" America was built on the hard work and ingenuity of our people and our businesses. But we also set up a free system of public schools, and a generation was sent to college

on the GI bill. And we constructed roads and highways that spanned a continent. And through investments in research and technology, we sent a man to the Moon and we discovered lifesaving medicine and we launched the Information Age and created the Internet and created millions of jobs along the way. That's how you build a strong nation. That's how you build a strong middle class, by making the investments that are needed and always looking out over the horizon.

So we believe in business, and we believe in free markets. But we also believe in making sure that every kid in this country has a chance. And we believe that our seniors deserve to retire with dignity and respect and have some semblance of security. And we believe in making investments in science and technology. And we believe in having the best infrastructure in the world. And so the same things that worked for us in the past, that's what we need to be doing today.

There's an important debate in Washington right now about how to cut the deficit. And let me say it is absolutely critical that we get a handle on our finances. We've spent a lot of money that we don't have, and we've made a lot of commitments that are going to be hard to keep if we do nothing. And like families all across America, Government has to live within its means.

So I'm prepared to bring our deficit down by trillions of dollars. That's with a "t"—trillions. [*Laughter*] But I will not reduce our deficit by sacrificing our kids' education. I'm not going to reduce our deficit by eliminating medical research being done by our scientists. I won't sacrifice rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our railways and our airports. I want Philadelphia to have the best, not the worst. Not just roads and bridges and sewer mains and water systems; I want us to have the best broadband, the best electric grid.

I'm not going to sacrifice clean energy at a time when our dependence on foreign oil is causing so many Americans pain at the pump. That's sacrificing America's future.

And that's what I want to say to all of you, Philadelphia. There's more than one way to

mortgage our future. It would be irresponsible, we would be mortgaging our future, if we don't do anything about the deficit. But we will also be mortgaging our future and it will be irresponsible if, in the process of reducing our deficit, we sacrifice those very things that allow us to grow and create jobs and succeed and compete in the future.

What makes America great is not just the height of our skyscrapers or the might of our military or the size of our GDP. What makes us great is the character of our people. And we are rugged individualists. That's part of what makes us American: We like to make up our own minds, and we don't like other people to tell us what to do.

But what also makes us who we are is our faith in the future and our recognition that our future is shared. It's the belief I am my brother's keeper and my sister's keeper, that my life is richer and our country is stronger when everybody participates and everybody has a measure of security and everybody has got a fair shot at the American Dream. That's our vision for America. Not a vision of a small America, but a vision of a big America and a compassionate America and an optimistic America and a bold America. And that's what we're fighting for.

And the good news is, that America is possible, an America where we're living within our means, but we're still investing in the future. That's possible. Where everybody is making sacrifices, but nobody bears all the burden by themselves. The idea that no matter what we look like or who we are, no matter whether our ancestors came from Ellis Island or on a slave ship or across the Rio Grande, that we are all connected to one another and that we rise and fall together.

That's the idea at the heart of America. That's the idea at the heart of our last campaign. That's the idea at the heart of this campaign. That's why I'm going to need your help more than ever.

This campaign is at its early stages. I've got a day job. I've got other things to do. [*Laughter*] But while I'm working, there are going to be candidates parading around the country.

[*Laughter*] And they're going to do what they do, which is, they're going to attack. Here in Philadelphia, they're going to attack. They won't have a plan—[*laughter*—but they will attack. And I understand that; that's politics as we've come to know it.

But what I also understand is, is the American people are a lot less interested in us attacking each other; they're more interested in us attacking the country's problems. They're less interested in hearing us exchange insults about the past; they want us to exchange ideas about the future. That's the contest I'm looking forward to, because I know that's the contest that America needs. And by the way, that's the contest that we will win.

And, Philadelphia, I know there are some of you who are frustrated because we haven't gotten everything done that we said we were going to do in 2½ years. It's only been 2½ years. I got 5½ years more to go. And there's—look, there are times where I feel frustrated. But we knew this wasn't going to be easy. We knew a journey like this one, there were going to be setbacks, like there were setbacks during the first campaign. There are going to be times where we stumble, just like we stumbled sometimes during the first campaign.

But we also knew that at each and every juncture in our history when our future was on the line—

[*There was a disruption in the audience.*]

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. What we also knew was that whenever the country has been at a crossroads, we've always come together to keep the American Dream alive for the next generation. And now is the time for us to do it again. Now is the time to finish what we started and keep the dream alive.

And I just to want to remind everybody here, this campaign is not about me. It's about us. It's about students who are working their way through college, workers heading to factories to build American cars again, small-business owners testing new ideas, construction crews laying down roads, families who faced hardship and setbacks, but who haven't stopped believing in this country, and who believe that we can emerge from this challenge stronger than before.

That's the story of progress in America, the stubborn refusal to accept anything less than the best that this country can be. And with your help, if you're willing to keep fighting with me, if you're willing to knock on doors with me, if you are going to get as much energy going as you got in 2008, then together, we are going to write another chapter in that story and leave a new generation a brighter future.

God bless you, Philadelphia. God bless you, Pennsylvania. Yes, we can. May God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. at the Hyatt at the Bellevue hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael A. Nutter of Philadelphia.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Philadelphia June 30, 2011

Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. I think I'm going to use this instead. Is this working? There you go.

Well, what a spectacular evening, and thank you all for taking the time to be here. I want to first of all, obviously, thank Rhonda and David for not only hosting this incredible event, but also just being such great friends for so many years. Thank you very much, you guys. Really appreciate it.

To those who helped to organize this event, thank you all. To our outstanding DNC chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, we love her; to one of the finest mayors in the country, Michael Nutter. And to one of my dearest friends—I always tell this story: When we were campaigning during the primary back in 2008, and it was still pretty rough going, this guy stepped up, endorsed me despite the fact that we were losing here in Pennsylvania, didn't bat