

we're going to have problems. If we're not continuing to invest in basic research, we're going to have challenges. If we don't get our fiscal house in order in a way that is fair and equitable so that everybody feels like they have responsibilities to not only themselves and their family, but also to the country that's given them so much opportunity, we're going to have problems.

And so I am extraordinarily confident about America's long-term future. But we are going to have to make some decisions about how we move forward. And what's striking to me is, when we're out of Washington and I'm just talking to ordinary folks, I don't care whether they're Republicans or Democrats, people are just looking for common sense. The majority of people agree with the prescriptions I just offered. The majority of people by a wide margin think we should be rebuilding our infrastructure. The majority of folks by a wide margin think that we should be investing in education. The majority of people by a wide margin think we should be investing in science and technology. And the majority of people think by a wide margin that we should be maintaining programs like Social Security and Medicare to provide a basic safety net.

The majority of people by a significant margin think that the way we should close our deficit is a balance of cutting out those things that we don't need, but also making sure that we've got a Tax Code that's fair and everybody is paying their fair share.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in La Jolla, California September 26, 2011

The President. It's wonderful to see you all. Please have a seat. To Liz and Mason, thank you so much for the wonderful introduction. Along with the Phelps, I have to acknowledge my dear, dear friend Christine Forester, who has just been—I was just reminded by our staff this was actually the first fundraiser that I did in this home after I announced in Springfield, Illinois.

So the problem is not outside of Washington. The problem is, is that things have gotten so ideologically driven and everybody is so focused on the next election and putting party ahead of country that we're not able to solve our problems. And that's got to change. And that's why your voices are going to be so important.

The reason I do these kinds of events is I want you to hear from me directly. I want to hear from you directly, but I also want your voices heard in the Halls of Congress. I need everybody here to be speaking out on behalf of the things that you care about and the values that made this country great and to say to folks who you've elected, say to them, we expect you to act responsibly and not act in terms of short-term political interest. Act in terms of what's going to be good for all of us over the long term.

If that spirit, which all of you represent, starts asserting itself all across the country, then I'm absolutely confident the 21st century is going to be the American century just like the 20th century was.

So thank you very much everybody. God bless you.

Mr. Weiner. Thank you, everybody.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at the Computer History Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.; and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

So these are some early, early supporters, back when a lot of folks still could not pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And they have been there ever since, and I could not be more grateful to them. And I could not be more grateful to you. In fact, some of you were in that first fundraiser, weren't you?

Audience member. Yes!

The President. You will recall that I had no gray hair then. [Laughter] Do you remember that? Michelle says otherwise I've held up pretty well. [Laughter]

In addition to Liz and Mason and Christine, I just want to acknowledge we've got a couple of wonderful Members of Congress here. First of all, Jared Polis is here. Where is Jared? And I'm not sure if he's made it yet from the airport.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. Has he? Bob Filner is in the house. Where is Bob? There he is. Thank you.

Well, I want this mostly to be a conversation rather than a monologue, so I'm going to make some very brief remarks at the top, and then I just want to open it up for questions and conversation.

The last 2½ years have honestly been as tough for America as any 2½ years that we've seen in our lifetimes: the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, a withering recession that followed. And a lot of folks here in San Diego, here in California, and all across the country, are still struggling, still having a very tough time. And I see it every day. I get letters from people all across the country. I meet people at events, and they've lost their homes, or they've lost their jobs, or they are trying to figure out whether they have to defer retirement in order to make sure that their kids can go to college. And some of these stories are heartbreaking.

But what we've said from the start, what you committed to back in 2008, was a belief that there's nothing that can stop America when we are working together, when we're willing to share opportunity and share sacrifice, when we're willing to think beyond the short term to the kind of America that we're passing on to the next generation. We cannot be stopped. We've been through tougher times before, and we always emerged stronger and more unified.

And I believe that we are in one of those moments that are testing out character, that are testing our unity, but if we make good decisions, there is no reason why we won't emerge stronger from this moment as well.

Now, during the past 2½ years, obviously, we've had a lot to do. We had to yank the country out of a potential depression. We had to stabilize a world financial system. And along the way, what we've tried to do is to keep the commitments and the promises that we made back in 2007, 2008: so whether it was the first bill that I signed, the Lilly Ledbetter bill to make sure that women are getting paid the same for the same day's work; or making sure that we're expanding college opportunities by cutting out the middleman and putting an extra \$60 billion into the student loan and the Pell grant programs; or making sure that in a country as wealthy as ours nobody should go bankrupt because they get sick and passing health care reform so that 30 million Americans are going to be able to get health care and everybody is going to be treated properly by their insurance companies; or passing tough financial regulations to make sure we don't have the kind of meltdown we saw on Wall Street again and that consumers are protected; ending "don't ask, don't tell" so that anybody can serve your country regardless of who they love; bringing 100,000 troops back from Iraq and ending that war.

Over the last 2½ years, even as we've been grappling with this economy, even as we've been saving the auto industry and making sure that we've got an energy policy that makes sense, we've still have been trying to make sure that we're also dealing with some of the long-term problems that have been building up for decades. And we've got more work to do. We're not yet finished.

Obviously, the economy is first and foremost in everybody's minds. And a couple of weeks back, I put forward what we call the "American Jobs Act," that says at a time when because of all sorts of headwinds—Europe and high gas prices because of what happened in the Arab Spring—we've got to redouble our efforts to people back to work.

And so this "American Jobs Act" says, at a time when we have to rebuild our infrastructure to be competitive in the 21st century and we've got all these construction workers who are out of work, let's put them to work rebuild-

ing our roads and our bridges and our schools and laying our broadband lines and making sure that—[*applause*]. Let's put teachers back in the classroom at a time when we know that nothing is more important for lasting employment than an education. Let's give businesses more incentives to hire our veterans and long-term unemployed. And let's keep taxes low for small businesses, and let's make sure that taxes don't go up for middle class families at a time when they're still very strained and very stressed.

And we pay for it, because——

[*At this point, a phone rang.*]

The President. Who's that calling? [*Laughter*] That may be Boehner calling. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Hang up! [*Laughter*]

The President. Because even as we have to restart our economic engines—and the most important thing we can do for our deficit is growing the economy and putting folks back to work. But what is also true is for decades Washington was not living within its means. We were making a series of irresponsible decisions about how we spend money and how we raise revenue.

And so what I said was, not only will we put a jobs act that puts a couple million people back to work, and it's estimated it will raise our GDP by a couple of percent, but we can also pay for it in a responsible way, building off the work we did this summer, which is, we made some judicious cuts spread out over 10 years so it doesn't impact our recovery, but we've cut a trillion dollars from the budget. We're proposing that we can actually find an additional half a billion dollars in savings, making some modest modifications to Medicare and Medicaid to bend the cost curve, but not in a way that hurts beneficiaries. And once we've done that, we've also got to make sure that we've got a Tax Code that is fair and in which everybody does their fair share.

Now, the other side has already taken out the playbook and said, oh, that's class warfare.

What I've said is this is a very simple principle that everybody should understand: Warren Buffett's secretary shouldn't pay a lower [higher]^o tax rate than Warren Buffett. A teacher making \$50,000 a year or a firefighter making \$50,000 a year or \$60,000 shouldn't be paying a higher tax rate than somebody making \$50 million a year. And that basic principle of fairness, if applied to our Tax Code, could raise enough money that not only do we pay for our jobs bill, but we also stabilize our debt and deficits for the next decade. And as I said when I made the announcement, this is not politics, this is math. [*Laughter*]

Now, the challenge we face in the short term is trying to get Congress to act. So when you leave here today I want you out there advocating for us putting people back to work and paying for it in a responsible way. But more is at stake in 2012 than just the short term. What's also at stake is the long term. For all the good work that we've done over the last 2½ years, we still have a lot of work to do to make sure that this is an economy in which middle class folks, if they are working, they can make it and that people who aspire to be in the middle class are going to be able to succeed.

That means we have to build on the education reforms that we've already initiated to make college more affordable. We still have not done enough to have an energy policy that frees ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. We've done a lot. We've doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars, probably the biggest impact in environmental action over the last 30 years. But we're still wasting too much energy that we can't afford to waste in this new environment.

We still have to implement health care reform, and we've got a whole bunch of folks who would like to see it reversed, because it has been an ideological litmus test, not because it's not working. Already we've got a couple million young people who have health insurance who didn't have it before, and we haven't even fully implemented it yet, because part of our health care reform was allowing the young

^o White House correction.

people to stay on their parents' health insurance. And it has made a huge difference.

Internationally, we have to continue to bring our troops home from Afghanistan. We've got to make sure that we are leading not just with our military, but with diplomacy and with the power of our example. We still have to reform our immigration system in a sensible way so that young people who are studying here and want to start a business here, we're not training them and then just sending them back home to their home countries. We want them to stay here and start those businesses. We still have to make investments in basic research and science.

And so a lot is at stake in this election, even more than in 2008. Now, this is going to be a tough election because the economy is tough and people are frustrated. And so we've got to understand what's at stake. There are two contrasting visions of where America needs to go. And one vision says that we've got to pull and abandon our commitments to the aging and the vulnerable, and we can't afford to invest in education the way we historically have, and we can't afford to rebuild our infrastructure. We're destined to having a smaller vision of what we can do together. And the other is a big, ambitious, bold, optimistic vision of an America in which we are investing in the future, we're investing in our people. We're mak-

ing certain that we're making the tough decisions to be competitive in the 21st century, and we're doing it in a way that is fair, that everybody shares in opportunity and everybody shares in responsibility. That's what's at stake.

Now, I'm absolutely confident that we're going to win because I think that's—I think the vision that we're putting forward is the one that ultimately America believes in. But they've got to be convinced. They've got to be persuaded. And I can't do it alone. You guys are my ambassadors. You guys are my advocates and my shock troops out there. [*Laughter*] And so I hope you are ready. If you show the same enthusiasm that you showed a little over three years ago, then I'm absolutely confident that America's future is bright.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. at the residence of Elizabeth and Mason Phelps. In his remarks, he referred to Christine Forester, private member, President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities; Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Wangari Muta Maathai *September 26, 2011*

It is with great sadness that I learned of the passing of Professor Wangari Maathai. On behalf of all Americans, Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to Professor Maathai's family and the people of Kenya at this difficult time. The world mourns with you and celebrates the extraordinary life of this remarkable woman who devoted her life to peacefully protecting what she called "our common home and future."

The work of the Green Belt Movement stands as a testament to the power of grassroots organizing, proof that one person's simple idea—that a community should come together to plant trees—can make a difference, first in one village, then in one nation, and now

across Africa. Professor Maathai's tireless efforts earned her not only a Nobel Peace Prize and numerous prestigious awards, but the respect of millions who were inspired by her commitment to conservation, democracy, women's empowerment, the eradication of poverty, and civic engagement. Professor Maathai further advanced these objectives through her service in the Kenyan Government, the African Union, and the United Nations. As she told the world, "We must not tire, we must not give up, we must persist." Her legacy will stand as an example to all of us to persist in our pursuit of progress.