

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in West Hollywood, California
September 26, 2011

The President. Hello, L.A.! Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. It's good to be back in sunny California. It is wonderful to be with all of you.

I've got a few people I just want to introduce real quick. First of all, thank you, Jesse, for the wonderful introduction. I was telling him Michelle and the girls love them some "Modern Family." They love that show. In addition, we've got the outstanding Lieutenant Governor of California, Gavin Newsom, in the house. West Hollywood Mayor John Duran is here. We've got—we must have some Members of Congress here.

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. Well, there you go: Dennis—where? Hey, how are you? [Laughter] I want to thank—

Audience member. The Christian God is the one and only true and living God, the Creator of heaven and the universe. Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. You are an antichrist—

Audience members. Boo! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

[At this point, the disruptive audience member was escorted from the room.]

The President. Is that his jacket? Is that his jacket? Is that his jacket?

First of all, I agree Jesus Christ is the Lord. I believe in that. I do have a question though. I think the young man may have left his jacket. [Laughter] So make sure, make sure that he gets his jacket.

Audience member. That's mine.

The President. Oh, that's yours? Hold on, hold on, hold on. It's hers. [Laughter] And I think somebody's car keys are in there too. See, we're having all kinds of confusion here. Oh, goodness gracious. There you go. All right,

I wasn't sure. Don't leave your jacket around like that. [Laughter]

Audience member. We were waiting for you.

The President. Well, listen, all right, where was I? It is good to be back in L.A. Now, here's the reason I'm here—

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. That's one good reason. [Laughter] But the other reason is I think back to 2008, and that night in Grant Park, it—you would have thought it was L.A. I mean, it was November, but it was warm and it was gorgeous. And people were full of hope.

And I said to you then something I want to remind you of. I said, this is not the end, this is just the beginning. I said that we were going to have some steep hills to climb. We had a lot of work to do, because the challenges that we are facing are ones that had been building up for decades and culminated in 2007 and 2008 in the worst financial crisis that we've seen in our lifetimes.

Now, we didn't know how deep that recession was going to be. But we understood then that there was something different going on here: that for ordinary people all across America, for working families all across America, for the middle class all across America, we had grown up with the belief that if you worked hard, if you met your responsibilities, if you looked after your family, if you did a good job, if you were a responsible member of your community, then you could get ahead. That America was a place—that the idea of America was captured by this notion that if you tried hard here, you could always make it; that you were only bound by the size of your dreams, and that if you did the right thing, there was no reason why you couldn't afford to have a home and have health care that protected you in case you got sick; that you could send your kids to college so they can do even better than you did; that you would be able to retire with some dignity and some respect, maybe take a vacation once in a while.

And you know, for the last decade, it felt like that compact, that bond, that contract that we made with each other had been broken and that too many people were not being treated fairly, that the rules had changed, that the deck kept being stacked against ordinary Americans. And what made it worse was nobody in Washington seemed to care. Nobody in Washington seemed to be doing anything about it.

And this all culminated in the crisis of 2007 and 2008. And we knew that because this crisis had taken years to build up, it was going to take some years to fix. So the question we have to face now is not whether people are hurting. Everybody knows that America has gone through a very difficult time and there are folks all across California and all across the country that are still struggling: our friends, our neighbors, maybe some people in this audience.

I get letters every day from people all across the country who have lost their job, lost their homes, maybe they're having to defer retirement so they can keep their kid in college. And they're worried about the future. It's not just the short term they're worried about. They're worried about whether we can come together and make tough decisions to solve our problems so that we are setting a foundation for years to come, for the next generation, so that we can return to that notion that anybody here, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, you can make it if you try. That is what we've been fighting for.

So yes, we're going through tough times. But the question is, where are we going to go next? We can go back to the old, worn-out ideas that the other side has been talking about—

Audience members. No! Boo!

The President. —where you basically let corporations write their own rules and we dismantle environmental regulations and we dismantle labor regulations and we cut taxes for folks who don't need it and weren't even asking for it, and then we say to you, you know what, you're on your own, good luck, because you're not going to get any help. Nobody is going to give you a hand up. Nobody is going to help kids who have the talent and the will and the

drive to do well, but maybe just haven't had the opportunity yet.

That's one vision of America. But that's not the vision that we fought for in 2008. That's not the vision you believe in. It's not the vision I believe in. And I am confident that is not the vision that America believes in. And that's what this campaign is going to be all about.

What this election is about is whether everybody gets a fair shake and everybody does their fair share. And that's what I've been fighting for since I got to Washington.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. When—and by the way, we have not been getting any help from the other side. When we wanted to save the U.S. auto industry from collapse—and a million jobs might have been lost, iconic companies gone, our manufacturing base eroded—you had a whole bunch of other folks who said that it was going to be a waste of time and a waste of money.

Well, you know what we did? We did it anyway. We fixed it anyway, and we saved those jobs. And we made sure taxpayers got their money back. And today, the American auto industry is stronger than ever and turning a profit, and they're making fuel-efficient cars that can help save our environment. That's a fight that is worth—[*applause*]*—*that is a fight that is worth it.

When we wanted to pass Wall Street reform to make sure that we didn't go through the same kind of crisis that we went through in 2007, 2008, and make sure that consumers finally get some protection so you're not cheated when you apply for a mortgage and you're not having hidden fees in your credit cards, the lobbyists and the special interests, they rounded up millions of dollars to fight us. But you know what? We did it anyway because it was the right thing to do. And today, you don't have to suffer from hidden fees and unfair rate hikes, because we knew that we were on the right side of that fight.

Most Republicans voted against it, but we were able to cut \$60 billion—\$60 billion—that previously was going to banks as middlemen for the student loan program. And we said, why do we need a middleman? Let's take that

\$60 billion and let's give that to young people in the form of Pell grants and scholarships and student loans that are cheaper, so that they're not loaded up with debt and they've got opportunity. And as a consequence, right now, all across the country, there are millions of young people that are benefiting. And we could not have done it if you guys hadn't helped to put me into office. That's a fact.

First bill I signed, very simple principle. First bill I signed, it says, you know what, an equal day's pay for an equal day's work. Because I don't want my daughters treated any different than somebody else's sons. I want them to be treated equally in this country. And while we were at it, we appointed two brilliant Supreme Court Justices, who happen to be women, because we thought they'd do a pretty good job, and they have. [Laughter]

See, not only did we fight for a vision of an economy that was fair, but also a society that was fair. And that's the reason we fought so hard and finally were able to repeal "don't ask, don't tell." Because we don't think that you should not be able to serve the country you love just because of the person that you love.

And along the way, we happened to also pass health care reform so that nobody in America goes broke because they get sick. So insurance companies can't drop your coverage for no good reason, and going forward, they won't be able to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. Think about what that means for women: breast cancer, cervical cancer, no longer a prohibition on you getting insurance because of a preexisting condition. No longer can they charge you higher rates just because you're the one who has to go through childbirth.

And while it will take a couple of years for us to fully reform the health care system, right now almost 1 million young adults across the country have health insurance because they're able to stay on their parent's plan because of the health care reform bill that we passed. The Affordable Care Act is working, and it's working because you guys helped it to pass Congress.

Now, L.A., all of these were tough fights.

Audience member. Don't forget medical marijuana!

The President. Thank you for that. [Laughter]

Now, listen, we've still got a long way to go. We've got a lot of work to do to make sure that every American has a shot at success. And that's where I need your help. I've got some short-term stuff we've got to do, and we've got some longer term stuff we've got to do.

In the short term, a couple of weeks ago, I introduced the "American Jobs Act." Now, we all know that even though we may have averted a depression, for a lot of folks out there who have been looking for work for 3 months, for 6 months, for 9 months, it feels like a depression, and they need help.

And so what we said was, look, let us right now focus on putting Americans to work doing the work that America needs done. Let's make sure that construction workers who have been laid off, let's put them back to work rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our schools. America used to have the best infrastructure. That's what made us an economic superpower. And right now we've got millions of folks who are out of work and ready to get on the job, let's put them back to work right now rebuilding America. Pass the jobs bill. I need your help to tell Congress to pass this jobs bill right now.

Audience members. Pass the bill! Pass the bill! Pass the bill!

The President. And by the way, by the way, these are ideas that are traditionally Republican and Democratic ideas. Republicans used to love to build stuff. [Laughter] I don't know where suddenly they decide that's a Democratic idea. [Laughter]

I don't want the newest airports, the newest high-speed rail lines built in China and Singapore and Europe. Let's build them right here in America. [Applause] Let's build them right here in America.

But the jobs bill doesn't just talk about building stuff. Look, in South Korea right now they are hiring teachers in droves because they understand that if we're going to be successful in a 21st-century economy, then we've got to make sure our kids are trained. And yet here in

America, we're laying off teachers in droves right here in California. It doesn't make any sense. It's unfair to our kids. It is unfair to our future. And if we pass this jobs bill, we can put teachers back in the classroom where they belong. Pass this jobs bill!

Tell Congress to pass this bill so companies are getting tax credits for hiring our veterans. The idea that they suspend their careers, leave their families, are over there putting themselves in harm's way for our safety and security, and they've got to come back here and fight to get a job, it's wrong. It's got to change. And passing this bill will help change it. Pass this bill!

The "American Jobs Act" cuts taxes for virtually every worker in America. It cuts taxes for small businesses all across America. It gives an extra tax credit if small businesses hire a new worker or give a worker a raise. Congress and the Republicans are always talking about how much they love job creators. Do something for job creators. Pass this bill and give them the tax breaks that will help them grow their business and hire more workers.

Now, when you—as I said, these are ideas that in the past have been supported by Democrats and Republicans. So when you ask Republicans, well, why not pass it, they say, well, we think it's got to be paid for. Well, I agree. It's true. We've got a deficit. We've got debt. We've got to pay for it, which is why I put forward a very clear plan to pay for it. I said, look, we have already made cuts of a trillion dollars this summer, spread out over 10 years. We can get rid of programs that don't work. There is some waste in Government that we have identified and eliminated. We're proposing an additional half billion—half a trillion dollars in cuts, but we can't just cut our way out of this problem. We've got to have some revenue. And the question is, how do we do that?

Now, I've got a very simple principle, if we reform our Tax Code, we can make sure everybody pays their fair share. And the principle that we should be putting forward is Warren Buffett's secretary shouldn't pay a higher tax rate than Warren Buffett. And by the way, Warren Buffett agrees with me.

I've been incredibly blessed. I shouldn't be paying a lower effective rate than a teacher or a firefighter or a construction worker. And they sure shouldn't be paying a higher tax rate than somebody pulling in \$50 million a year. It's not fair, and it's not right. And it's got to change.

Now, let me be clear, nobody wants to punish success. Part of what makes America great is you have a great idea, you have this extraordinary talent, you start a business, you provide a service, and it works out, and you do well. That is good. That is exactly what America is all about. We want to promote that all across the country.

But remember, your success didn't come on your own. There was a teacher somewhere out there who helped to provide you the knowledge you needed to learn. We're in this together. And the question is, how do we make sure that we're going to be creating the same kind of America that allows the next generation to succeed. And so we've got to make some choices, and we've got to decide what are we willing to pay for and make sure that those of us who have benefited the most, that we're giving something back: a fair share for everybody.

That's not class warfare. Republicans are going around talking about, well, that's class warfare. You know what, if asking a billionaire to pay the same tax rate as a plumber is class warfare, then sign me up. [Applause] Sign me up. I'll wear that charge as a badge of honor.

The only warfare I've seen waged is against the middle class in this family and ordinary families. So this is about priorities. It's about choices. Are we going to keep tax breaks and loopholes for oil companies that are making record profits?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or are we going to put teachers back in the classroom?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are we going to ask millionaires and billionaires to pay a little bit more of their fair share in order to make sure that we're rebuilding America, which by the way, they benefit from and businesses benefit from and makes us more competitive? Are we going to

ask seniors who are barely getting by to pay thousands of dollars more in Medicare?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or are we going to ask a corporation that's made record profits and is getting tax breaks that some small business isn't getting, do your fair share?

So this is about who we are as a nation. This is about our values. This is about our priorities. And that's what this debate is about right now. That's what's at stake right now. This notion that the only way that we can restore prosperity is if we strip away all these regulations, and have dirtier air, and eliminate consumer safety laws, and let the banks do whatever they want, and somehow that's going to create jobs. We tried that, you remember? We tried that for 10 years. It didn't work.

So we've got a different vision about how we go forward, and it's a vision that's grounded in the history and the story of America. Yes, we're rugged individualists. Yes, we are self-reliant. We're not looking for a handout. We know we've got to work hard. We know we've got to instill in our kids a sense of responsibility and hard work and achievement. That's how the American Dream is built. But we also know that we've always been a nation that looks out for one another, a belief that we're all connected, that there are some things we can only do as a nation. That is not a Democratic or a Republican idea. It's the idea of Abraham Lincoln when he built the interstate—or the intercontinental railroad. It was the idea of Dwight Eisenhower when he helped to build the Interstate Highway System. When those two Republican Presidents invested in land-grant colleges or the space program, there are some things we can't do on our own. There are some things we do together.

And that's why this country gave millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, the opportunity to study on the GI bill. Because they understood, you know what, if they succeed, then everybody succeeds. If ordinary folks have an education, if they've got a shot, then everybody has got a shot. Businesses will do well. The wealthy will do well. People will

rise out of poverty. That's the story of America. That's what we're fighting for.

Los Angeles, we built this Nation together, this Nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all and responsibilities to each other. And we've got to meet our responsibilities now.

Some people in Congress may think that the only way to settle our differences is wait till the next election. I've got news for them. The next election is 14 months away, and a lot of folks out there can't wait. A lot of people out there can't wait. They're living paycheck to paycheck, day to day. They need help now. And that's why we need to pass this jobs bill now. And I'm going to need your help. *[Applause]* I'm going to need your help.

We need to work short term, and we're going to need to work long term. Because after we pass this jobs bill, we're still going to have work to do. We're still going to have to reform our education system. We're still going to have to make sure that we've got an immigration system in this country that is fair and, yes, secures our borders, but also makes sure that folks who are here aren't living in the shadows. We've still got to make sure that we have an energy policy that is smart for our pocketbooks and frees ourselves from dependence on foreign oil and make sure that we're doing something about climate change.

So we've got a lot more work to do, and I can't do it without you. I know that, over the last 2½ years, sometimes you've gotten tired. I know sometimes you've gotten discouraged. I know that. I know it's been tough. But——

Audience member. Thank you for my Social Security check!

The President. You're welcome. *[Laughter]* But look, here's the thing: I never promised you easy. If you wanted easy, you wouldn't have campaigned for Barack Hussein Obama. *[Laughter]* What I promised was that there was a vision of America out there that we believed in. What I promised was that if we worked hard, we could achieve that vision. What I promised was that I would wake up every single day fighting for you and thinking about you and thinking about how we can expand opportunity and make America more

competitive. And there were going to be setbacks, and there were going to be challenges. And there were going to be some folks who are fighting us every inch of the way. And trying to change how Washington works, given the bad habits it's gotten into, was going to be more than a notion. But what I said was if you're willing to stick with me, if you're willing to hang in there, then I was positive that we could achieve our dreams.

Because America has been through tougher times. We have been through tougher times, and we have always been able to get through them when we work together; when we remind ourselves that America and its idea is not a given, it's something that we have to fight for, we have to work for, we have to strive for. When we remember that, and when we turn to the person next to us and we say, you know what, that too is something that's not out of reach,

that if you and I are willing to work together, we can make it happen—that's what our campaign in 2008 was about. That's what the campaign in 2012 will be about.

And so if all of you are in, if all of you are willing to press on with me, I promise you, I promise you, we will remind the world why America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:19 p.m. at the House of Blues. In his remarks, he referred to actors Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Dennis D. Haysbert. The transcript was released by the Office of the President Secretary on September 27.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in West Hollywood September 26, 2011

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. So let me begin by thanking Jeffrey and the entire host committee for helping to organize this. It is a remarkable group. There are a lot of friends here who have been with us since the beginning. Jon remembers me when I had no gray hair.

Audience member. You don't have gray hair. [Laughter]

The President. Well, come on. A lot of people here have just been dear, dear friends. And so I'm grateful for everything that you've done. And Jeffrey has been remarkable over the last couple of years, helping us consistently move an agenda forward that creates a more just and fair and more competitive America. So I really appreciate that.

I want to spend most of my time actually in dialogue as opposed to monologue. So I'm just going to make some brief comments at the top, and then I just want to open it up for questions, comments, suggestions, complaints, whatever the case may be. But before I do, I just want to acknowledge that you've got an

outstanding public servant who is working every single day on behalf of Californians, to make sure that this State continues to be a hallmark of the future for America, and that's Governor Jerry Brown. And I'm noticing Jerry is smart because he's sitting next to Eva. [Laughter] Nice going. How did you get that seat? [Laughter]

We've gone through an unprecedented time in our history. We have not seen anything like this in our lifetimes: a financial crisis that is as bad as anything since the Great Depression, followed by a recession that is deep and lasting and has hurt a lot of people. And my first job when I came to office was to make sure that we didn't tip into a depression, to save the auto industry, to make sure that we stabilized a financial system that was teetering on the brink of meltdown.

But what got me involved in this Presidential business, the reason that all of you supported me back in 2008, wasn't just to solve the crisis. It was a recognition that for decades the American people felt as if the rules had somehow changed on them; that there was an idea