

Remarks at Central High School in Manchester, New Hampshire
November 22, 2011

The President. Hello, New Hampshire! It is good to be back. Hello, Little Green! It is good to be back in New Hampshire, although I have to say that I feel a little winter coming on around here. [*Laughter*] This is what happens when you fly north.

It is wonderful to be here. I had a chance to see backstage Principal Mailhot, and he reminded me of what I said to him 4 years ago, almost to the day, that I was here. It was snowing that day. We were—surprising enough, there was a snowstorm in New Hampshire. [*Laughter*] And we ended up having to leave a little bit early. And we weren't able to do everything that we wanted, talking to some of the students. And we were worried that folks were going to be disappointed, and I promised him that I would be back. I just want to point out, we're keeping our promise—we are back. We are back.

In addition to Principal Mailhot, I want to acknowledge the superintendent, Tom Brennan, who is here with his lovely wife Wendy. Please give them a big round of applause.

Happy Thanksgiving a little bit early, everybody. To the—I understand we got the senior class here at Central High.

Audience members. Seniors! Seniors! Seniors!

The President. All right. You guys are pretty excited about being seniors, aren't you? I want to thank also somebody who is doing outstanding work each and every day, was doing it up here as a wonderful Governor, is now one of your most outstanding Senators in the country—Jeanne Shaheen is in the house.

So before I came to school today, I had coffee—

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

Audience member. Mike check!

Audience members. Mike check!

Audience member. Mr. President—

Audience members. Mr. President—

Audience member. Over 4,000 legal protesters—

Audience members. Over 4,000 legal protesters—

Audience member. Have been arrested—

Audience members. Have been arrested.

Audience members. Fired up and ready to go! Fired up and ready to go! Fired up and ready to go!

The President. All right. No, no, no, it's okay.

[*The disruption in the audience continued.*]

The President. That's okay. All right, okay, guys.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Okay, it's okay. That's all right. Listen, the—I'm going to be talking about a whole range of things today, and I appreciate you guys making your point. Let me go ahead and make mine, all right? And I'll listen to you, you listen to me. All right?

Now, what I was saying was, I was having some coffee with some of your neighbors. And one of them was the Corkerys. You may know, as Mr. Corkery just said, that he's a math teacher here at Central High. And even though a visit from me tends to disrupt things a little bit—[*laughter*—he did want me to remind all his students you still have homework to do. [*Laughter*]

But as Chris said, he's also a colonel, recently retired after 26 years in the military; tours of duty in Iraq, in Kuwait, in Haiti. And I couldn't thank him enough for his service, because obviously, we know our servicemembers, our veterans, they're the ones who keep us safe, they're the ones who are preserving our freedom at enormous sacrifice to themselves and their families. And in fact, this holiday season is going to be a season of homecomings for folks all across America, because by the end of next month, all of our troops will be out of Iraq.

Now, over coffee, we were joined by Chris's wife of 16 years, Kathy, who owns part of a local business. And they've got two sons; they're trying to save for their sons' college education. And like millions of families all across the

country, they're doing the best that they can in some tough times.

And families like the Corkerys, families like yours, young people like the ones here today, including the ones who were just chanting at me, you're the reason I ran for office in the first place. Because it's folks like you who are why I spent so much time up here in the dead of winter 4 years ago. Because even then, we were going through a difficult decade for the middle class: more good jobs and manufacturing that was leaving our shores, more of our prosperity was built on risky financial deals and homes that weren't properly financed. And families watched their incomes fall and wages flatline, and the cost of everything from college to health care kept on going up. And then the financial crisis hit in the closing weeks of the campaign, and that made things even tougher.

Today, many Americans have spent months looking for work, and others are doing the best they can to get by. There are a lot of folks out there who are giving nights up—nights out, they just can't do that anymore because they've got to save on gas or make the mortgage. There are families who are putting off retirement to make sure their kids can go to college. And then there are young people who have gone to college, gotten a whole bunch of debt, and find themselves unable to find opportunity.

So a lot of the folks who have been down in New York and all across the country, in the Occupy movement, there is a profound sense of frustration about the fact that the essence of the American Dream—which is if you work hard, if you stick to it, that you can make it—feels like that's slipping away. And it's not the way things are supposed to be, not here, not in America.

This is a place where your hard work and your responsibility is supposed to pay off. It's supposed to be a big, compassionate country where everybody who works hard should have a chance to get ahead, not just the person who owns the factory, but the men and women who work on the factory floor.

This is a place that's always prospered most when we stay fundamental—we stay true to a fundamental idea, the idea that we're all in this

together. That's what we're fighting for. That's what is at stake right now.

So we've been weathering some hard years. We've been taking some tough punches. But one thing I know about folks in Manchester and folks in New Hampshire and folks all across the country is we're tough. We're fighting back. We are moving forward. And we are going to get this right so that every single American has opportunity in this country. We are not going to let—[*applause*]*—*we are not going to have an America in which only a sliver of folks have opportunity. We're going to have an America where everybody has opportunity. And that's going to take some time, because our economic problems weren't caused overnight and they won't be solved overnight.

It's going to take time to rebuild an economy where hard work is valued and responsibility is rewarded. It's going to take time to rebuild an economy that restores security for the middle class and renews opportunity for folks trying to reach the middle class. It's going to take time to rebuild an economy that's not based on outsourcing or tax loopholes or risky financial deals, but one that is built to last, where we invest in education and small business and manufacturing and making things that the rest of the world is willing to buy.

And we're going to get it done. We're going to get there. And right now we've got to do everything we can to put our friends and neighbors back to work and help families like the Corkerys get ahead and give the economy the jolt that it needs.

And that's why 2 months ago I sent Congress the "American Jobs Act." It's a jobs bill that will put more Americans to work, put more money back into the pockets of working Americans. It's full of the kinds of ideas that in the past have been supported by Democrats and Republicans. And it's paid for by asking our wealthiest citizens to pay their fair share. Independent economists said it would create nearly 2 million jobs, grow the economy by an extra 2 percent. That's not my opinion, that's not my team's opinion, that's the opinion of folks who evaluate these things for a living. But you know what, some folks in Washington

don't seem to get the message that people care right now about putting folks back to work and giving young people opportunity.

So when this bill came up for a vote, Republicans in the Senate got together and blocked it. They refused to even debate it. A hundred percent of Republicans opposed it, even though almost two-thirds of Americans supported the ideas in this bill: Democrats, Republicans, and Independents alike. Not one Republican in Washington was willing to say it was the right thing to do. Not one.

Now, what we've done is we've refused to quit. So I said I will do everything in my power to act on behalf of the American people, with or without Congress. So over the past several weeks, we've taken steps on our own to give working Americans a leg up in a tough economy.

We announced—on our own—a new policy that will help families refinance their mortgages and save thousands of dollars. A lot of the young people who are in New York and around the country, they're worrying about student loans. On our own, without Congress, we reformed the student loan process to make it easier for more young people to pay off their debt. By the way, that was building on top of legislation we passed a year ago that said instead of sending \$60 billion to banks to manage the student loan program, let's give it directly to students so that millions more young people can afford a college education.

We enacted several new initiatives to help our returning veterans find new jobs and get trained for those jobs. The kind of outstanding young men and women that Chris was talking about, who come home—I was up in Minnesota, met a young man who had been an emergency medic in Iraq, saving lives under the most severe circumstances. He came home, and he was having to take nursing classes all over again, even though for the last 2 years he had been saving lives in the field, didn't get any credit for it. So we're starting to make changes to say if you're qualified to save a life on the battlefield, you can save a life in an ambulance.

And yesterday I signed into law two new tax breaks for businesses that hire America's vets,

because nobody who fights for America overseas should have to fight for a job when they come home. Now, I proposed these tax breaks back in September as part of my jobs bill, and thanks to folks like Jeanne Shaheen—and some Republicans—we actually got this part of the bill passed. We finally got them to say yes to taking action that will create jobs and boost this economy.

But there is a lot more that we've got to do if we're going to get folks back to work and rebuild an economy that works for everybody. And next week, Congress is going to have another chance to do the right thing. Congress is going to have another chance to say yes to helping working families like the Corkerys.

You see, last year, both parties came together to cut payroll taxes for the typical household by \$1,000 this year. That's been showing up in your paychecks each week. You may not know it, but it's been showing up because of the action that we took. Which reminds me, by the way, the next time you hear one of these folks from the other side coming in talking about raising your taxes, you just remind them that ever since I've gotten into office, I've lowered your taxes, haven't raised them. That's worth reminding them. But this payroll tax is set to expire at the end of next month. End of next month, end of the year, this tax cut ends. And if we allow that to happen—if Congress refuses to act—then middle class families are going to get hit with a tax increase at the worst possible time. For the average family, your taxes will go up \$1,000 if Congress does not act by the end of the month.

Now, we can't let that happen, not right now. It would be bad for the economy. It would be bad for employment. That's why my jobs bill extends that tax cut. In fact, it does it one better: It expands the tax cut. Instead of a thousand-dollar-a-year tax cut next year, the average working family would get a tax cut of more than \$1,500. And that's \$1,500 that would have been taken out of your paycheck, would instead be going into your pocket. And that means you'd be spending in small businesses, and that would increase their business,

which means they would potentially hire more people.

The “American Jobs Act” would also cut payroll taxes in half for small-business owners. Say you have 50 employees making \$50,000 apiece. You’d get a tax cut of nearly \$80,000. That is real money that you can use to hire new workers or buy new equipment.

Now, the Republicans in the Senate voted no on my jobs bill and those tax cuts. But in the spirit of Thanksgiving—[laughter]—we are going to give them another chance. [Laughter] Absolutely. Next week, they’re going to get to take a simple vote.

If they vote no again, the typical family’s taxes will go up \$1,000 next year. If they vote yes, the typical working family will get a \$1,500 tax cut. All right? So I just wanted to be clear for everybody: “no,” your taxes go up; “yes,” you get a tax cut. Which way do you think Congress should vote?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Pretty simple. And we set up a straightforward tax calculator on whitehouse.gov—that’s our website—so you can see what each vote would mean for your bottom line.

Now, I know Republicans like to talk about we’re the party of tax cuts. A lot of them have sworn an oath—we’re never going to raise taxes on anybody for as long as we live—even though they have already voted against these middle class tax cuts once. But the question they’ll have to answer when they get back from Thanksgiving is this: Are they really willing to break their oath to never raise taxes and raise taxes on the middle class just to play politics?

I sure hope not. This isn’t about who wins or loses in Washington. This is about delivering a win for the American people. Now, a \$1,500 tax cut for middle class families, that isn’t a bandaid. That is a big deal for people. How many business owners could stand to see their customers taking \$1,000 less next year? That’s \$1,000 less that they can spend at a small business.

Now, how many of you could use an extra \$1,000, an extra \$1,500 in your pocket? It makes a big difference for families here in

New Hampshire and all across America. And keep in mind, we’re going to do it responsibly, because unlike several tax cuts that were instituted over the past several years, we’re going to make sure that it doesn’t add to our deficit. We’re asking the wealthiest Americans—the folks who got the biggest tax cuts over the past decade, the folks who made it through the recession better than most, folks who have seen their incomes go up much more quickly than anybody else over the last three decades, exponentially—we’re asking them to contribute a little bit more to get our economy working for everybody. We’re asking people like me to pay our fair share so middle class families can get a tax cut. And I believe that most Americans are willing to do their part.

The truth of the matter is, I can’t tell you how many well-to-do Americans that I meet say to me, look, I want to do more because I know that the only reason I’m doing well is because somewhere along the line, somebody gave me a good education; somewhere along the line, somebody gave me a college scholarship; somewhere along the line, somebody gave me a chance. And I want to do the same thing for the young people who are coming up now. That is what America is all about.

So Congress has a very simple choice next week: Do you want to cut taxes for the middle class and those who are trying to get into the middle class, or do you want to protect massive tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, many of whom want to actually help? Do you want to help working families get back on solid ground and grow this economy for all of us, or do you really want to vote to raise taxes on nearly 160 million Americans during the holidays? When push comes to shove, are you willing to fight as hard for working families as you are for the wealthiest Americans? What’s that—what’s it going to be? That’s the choice.

As I look around this room and I see these young people, but I also see their parents, I’m thinking, folks in Manchester, you guys work hard. You play by the rules. You’re meeting your responsibilities. And if you’re working hard and you’re meeting your responsibilities, at the very least, you should expect Congress to

do the same. They should be doing everything in their power to make our economy stronger, not weaker. They should be doing everything they can to protect the middle class from tax hikes, not hike your taxes.

And this is where you can help. Now, your Members of Congress, they work for you. You've got an outstanding Senator here. She's already on the program. But to everyone who's here or watching at home or online, if your Members of Congress aren't delivering, you've got to send them a message. Make sure they're listening.

Tell them, "Don't be a grinch." [Laughter] Don't vote to raise taxes on working Americans during the holidays. Put the country before party. Put money back in the pockets of working families. Do your job. Pass our jobs bill.

Now, the American people are with us on this. And it's time for the folks who are running around spending all their time talking about what's wrong with America to spend some time rolling up their sleeves to help us rebuild America and rebuild our middle class and give young people opportunity. There is nothing wrong with this country that we can't fix.

I was just traveling in Asia over the last week, and let me tell you, this is the fastest growing region in the world. But what was amazing was how everybody still looked to America. They did a poll in Asia. They said, what do you think about America compared to China? Eight out of nine countries in Asia, they said, America is the country that we look to.

They understand that this experiment in democracy—this belief that everybody can make

it if they try; this belief in a broad middle class that lifts everybody up, not just some—they know that that idea of America is more powerful than anything else.

But we've got to have folks in Washington who have that same belief, that same sense that when this economy is going well, it's going well because it's going well for everybody, and when it goes well for everybody, it's good for folks at the top as well as folks at the bottom. And it's certainly good for folks in the middle.

So those values that built this country, those values that all of you represent, that's what we're fighting for. That's what the "American Jobs Act" is all about, that's what the debates in Washington are all about. And we've got to constantly remind ourselves of who we are and what we believe in.

We are Americans, and our story has never been about doing things easy. It's been about rising to the moment when the moment is hard. It's about doing what's right. It's about making sure that everybody has a chance, not just a few.

So let's do the right thing. Let's meet the moment. Let's prove once again that the best days of the United States of America are still ahead of us.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Andrew and Nicholas Corkery, sons of Bedford, NH, residents Christopher and Kathy Corkery.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony November 23, 2011

Hello, everybody! Well, it is wonderful to see all of you here today. Happy Thanksgiving, and welcome to the White House.

Tomorrow is one of the best days of the year to be an American. It's a day to count our blessings, spend time with the ones we love, and enjoy some good food and some great company. But it's also one of the worst days of the year to be a turkey. [Laughter] They don't have it so good.

The rare exception, of course, are the two birds who've joined me today. Now, is Peace here or just Liberty? Just Liberty is here, but Peace is back here somewhere. Some of you may know that recently I've been taking a series of executive actions that don't require congressional approval. [Laughter] Well, here's another one. We can't wait to pardon these turkeys. [Laughter] Literally. Otherwise they'd end up next to the mashed potatoes and stuffing.