

have to be focused on making sure that every single day the American people understand not only where we want to take the country, but also that we're willing to fight for them; that this is not an abstract ideological argument, but this is a practical, concrete argument about whether or not they're going to be able to find a good job that pays a living wage, whether they're going to have health care that protects their families, whether or not, as consumers, they're going to be protected from being taken advantage of. They've got to feel that we are actively advocating on their behalf.

The last point I'd make is, is that—and I made this point at the State of the Union—as I travel around the world, and obviously, we've been extraordinarily active, not only ending the war in Iraq, but managing a responsible transition in Afghanistan, helping to usher in an Arab Spring that is still uncertain in terms of its outcome, what's striking to me is the degree to which for all of the challenges we've gone through over the last 3 years, the world still looks to us for leadership. They're still looking to America because for all our power, they also understand we are invested in a set of international rules and international norms and a set of universal values that, historically, superpowers have not paid a lot of attention to.

And so when we went to Asia, for example, what was striking was, yes, people understand that China is on the rise and economically their fates are going to be tied not only to us, but also to a rapidly growing China, but when it

comes to putting together an architecture out there that assures that small countries are protected, that everybody is abiding by the same sets of rules, that their natural resources are properly developed and not exploited, they're still looking to us.

And so part of the message I wanted to send last week at the State of the Union was, we've been through tougher times before, we've been through bigger challenges before, and we've always come out stronger, more united, and have remained a beacon of hope around the world because—I think it was Churchill who said that the Americans always end up doing the right thing after they've tried every other alternative. *[Laughter]* And that's true. We muddle our way through because of messy democracy, and it's in our nature to be contentious and have these big arguments, but ultimately, we choose the right path. And that's what the world is counting on right now as well.

I think we're going to get there, but—in fact, I know we're going to get there—but I'm going to need all of your help to get there as well.

So thanks for the support in the past, and I'm looking forward to you guys being in the foxhole with me this year. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. at the St. Regis Hotel.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Chevy Chase, Maryland

January 31, 2012

The President. First of all, I just want to thank Stewart and Sandra for setting up this extraordinary event. It is true that this is now the third time I've been here. It's been said by a friend of mine, Abner Mikva, former Member of Congress, that being friends with a politician is like perpetually having a student in college. *[Laughter]* But this is the last cam-

paign. I'm about to graduate. *[Laughter]* So those tuition checks will slowly diminish.

There was also suggestion that we might sing a duet together. And I have to tell you, though, you try to limit these appearances so that you leave them hungry for more. *[Laughter]* So we may not hear me singing for quite some time.

I'm going to be very brief on the front end because I want to spend most of my time in a conversation with you guys and make sure that we have time for questions.

There he is. [Laughter] She stole your thunder, man.

Audience member. I decided to show up. [Laughter]

The President. But look, we've gone through 3 of the toughest years that we've seen in our lifetimes. And a lot of folks are still hurting out there. But as I said at the State of the Union last week, we're beginning to see progress. We averted a great depression. The auto industry has come back, and GM is number one again. I just went to the auto show today to see some of the terrific cars that Detroit is churning out.

We've had 3 million jobs created over the last 22 months, and we had the highest job growth last year since 2005, the highest manufacturing job growth since the 1990s. There is a sense that although there's still a lot of uncertainties out there—Europe, the price of oil—that America is slowly repairing from this extraordinary economic and financial crisis.

And during the last 3 years, even as we singularly focused on making sure that we were able to right the ship, we were also able to accomplish a lot of goals that we had set for ourselves in 2008, whether it was passing health care reform so that already 2.5 million young people have insurance that wouldn't have it otherwise and senior citizens are seeing discounts on their prescription drugs, and we're now setting up exchanges all across the country so that never again would somebody with a preexisting condition find themselves barred from being able to get health insurance.

We were able to end "don't ask, don't tell" so that it doesn't matter who you love, you can serve the country that you love. We were able to take billions of dollars that were going to banks as middlemen for students' loans, and now it's being channeled directly to students so that millions of young people across the country find college a little bit more affordable.

We have made progress on a whole variety of fronts domestically. And obviously, internationally we kept one of the first promises I

made as President of the United States, and that was to end the war in Iraq in a responsible way. And we're now in the process of transitioning in Afghanistan.

But having said all that, we have so much more work to do, because what compelled me to run in the first place back in 2008 was a larger challenge. It had to do with what had happened to the American promise, the idea if you work hard, then you can find a job that supports a family and you can send your kids to college and you can retire with dignity and respect. That basic compact that said no matter who you are, no matter where you came from, you could make it if you try, that had been slipping away from too many people for too long.

And that was a set of challenges that were decades in the making. We never expected to solve those overnight, but what we understand is that the defining issue of our time is how we restore the basic promise of the American Dream.

And last week at the State of the Union, I laid out a blueprint for how we get there that involves rebuilding American manufacturing and replicating the success we've had in the auto industry across the board. It means revitalizing how we train our young people for the jobs of the 21st century, creating skills for American workers, not just through 4-year colleges, but also through 2-year colleges.

It means having an American energy policy that doesn't just look to the past, but also looks to the future: clean energy, solar, wind, biodiesel, and electric cars.

And it means the restoration of American values where we're certain that everybody is playing by the same set of rules, whether it comes to Wall Street and how they treat their customers, whether it comes to dealing with polluters and making sure that we still have clean air and clean water, but also when it comes to our Tax Code and ensuring that those investments we have to make in basic research and science and infrastructure—all the things that help make us an economic superpower—that we're able to pay for those without adding to the deficit. And that means that we have a tax system that's more equitable and we're

stripping out the loopholes and the special deals that have been carved out for so long.

That's our challenge. That's what we're fighting for. And the other side has a fundamentally different idea about how to move this country forward. It's a vision that got us into this mess in the first place, and we can't go back to it. And frankly, the American people are not buying this notion that what will cure our ills is more tax cuts for the wealthiest of Americans and a rolling back of regulations designed to protect American consumers and our children from pollution. People don't believe that that somehow is a recipe for success over the long term.

The challenge we have is people have gone through 3 years of really tough times. And so they don't experience the economy in some abstract way; they're experiencing it in terms of not being able to find a job or their house being underwater or their kids having to come back even after they've gotten a college education and tens of thousands of dollars in debt and still not being able to find a job. And given the difficulties that a lot of folks are still going through, it's not surprising that they're feeling doubtful. Even if we're moving in the right direction, their sense is, gosh, we sure hope—we sure wish that it went faster.

So this is going to be a tough race because of that economic reality, not because of the ideas of the other side. And our job over the next year is to make sure that, number one, we

make the case about what we've done, because we have an extraordinary record, a story to tell that resonates with the American people when they have the facts; and number two, to lift up the prospects, the possibility, of an America where once again people who are responsible and are doing the right thing are able to get ahead.

And I think we can accomplish those things, but I'm going to need your help. This is not going to be easy. This is going to be tough. And since 2008, as I often say, my hair is now grayer, and I've got a few more dings. *[Laughter]* Sometimes, I look at pictures of the campaign and I say, gosh, I was really young. *[Laughter]*

But you know, my determination, my passion for making sure that everybody has a chance in this country, the same sense of determination that I had in 2008, it's stronger now than it was then. I am absolutely convinced that we're on the right track and we just got to fight for it.

I'm going to need you to help, but if you do, then we're going to have 5 more years to be able to get everything done that needs to get done so that this country reflects the values that we all care so deeply about.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:43 p.m. at the residence of Stewart Bainum, Jr., and Sandra Bainum. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church, Virginia February 1, 2012

Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. It is great to be back in Falls Church. Thank you for having me.

Last week, in my State of the Union, I laid out my blueprint for an economy that's built to last. And I want to assure you I am not going to go over the whole thing again this morning. *[Laughter]* That was a long speech. I'm not going to repeat the whole thing. But I do want to talk about some of the issues that I discussed last week, because the blueprint we put forward was one that focuses on restoring what

have always been this country's greatest strengths: American manufacturing, American energy, skills and education for American workers so that we can compete with anybody around the world in this 21st-century economy, and most importantly, the American values of fairness and responsibility—fairness and responsibility.

Now, we know what happens, because we've just seen it—what happened when we stray from those values. We saw what happened over the past decade when we strayed from