

where there isn't agreement. But it was easy to identify points—first and foremost, economic growth—where we have common views, but we need to step up joint actions in order for our wishes to become a reality.

And finally, if I may conclude with a sentence in Italian, Mr. President.

[At this point, Prime Minister Monti spoke in Italian, and no translation was provided. He then continued in English as follows.]

Prime Minister Monti. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

President Obama. Thank you so much. And I apologize; I forgot my translation during my long speech. But rather than try to repeat it now, if anybody needs a translation, we've got the translator right here.

So thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Monti. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser February 9, 2012

Thank you. Thank you, Laura, for the wonderful introduction, the best introduction that a Cubs fan has ever given me. *[Laughter]* The rivalry is fierce in Chicago, but I'll make an exception here.

And I want to thank Karen and Nan for opening up their incredible home. To all of you, and to everybody who helped put this together, thank you so much. I am very grateful.

I'm going to be very brief at the top, because I want to—usually, in these things, I like to spend most of my time in a conversation. I do want to acknowledge that I have as good a Cabinet as I think any President in modern history has had. And one of the stars of that Cabinet is sitting right here, Kathleen Sebelius.

All of America has gone through an incredibly difficult, wrenching time these last 3 years. And it doesn't matter whether you are Black or White, whether you are northern or southern, rich or poor, gay or straight; I think all of us have been deeply concerned over these last 3 years to making sure that our economy recovers, that we're putting people back to work, that we stabilize the financial system. The amount of hardship and challenge that ordinary families have gone through over the last 3 years has been incredible. And there are still a lot of folks hurting out there.

The good news is that we're moving in the right direction. And when I came into office,

we were losing 750,000 jobs a month, and this past month we gained 250,000. That's a million-job swing. And for the last 23 months, we've now created 3.7 million jobs. And that's more than any time since 2000—or, yes, since 2005—the number of jobs that we created last year, and more manufacturing jobs than any time since the 1990s.

So we're making progress on that front now, but we've still got a long way to go. Today we announced a housing settlement, brought about by our Attorney General and States attorneys all across the country. And as a consequence, we're going to see billions of dollars in loan modifications and help to folks who are seeing their homes underwater. And that's going to have a huge impact.

In my State of the Union, we talked about the need for American manufacturing—companies coming back, insourcing, and recognizing how incredibly productive American workers are—and our need to continue to double down on investments in clean energy and making sure that our kids are getting trained so that they are competing with any workers in the world and are also effectively equipped to be great citizens and to understand the world around them.

And we talked about the fact that we've got to have the same set of values of fair play and responsibility for everybody, whether it's Wall

Street or Main Street. It means that we have a Consumer Finance Protection Board that is enforcing rules that make sure that nobody is getting abused by predatory lending or credit card scams. It means that we have regulations in place that protect our air and our water.

And it also means that we ensure that everybody in our society has a fair shot, is treated fairly. That's at the heart of the American Dream. For all the other stuff going on, one thing every American understands is you should be treated fairly, you should be judged on the merits. If you work hard, if you do a good job, if you're responsible in your community, if you're looking after you family, if you're caring for other people, then that's how you should be judged. Not by what you look like, not by how you worship, not by where you come from, not by who you love.

And so the work that we've done with respect to the LGBT community I think is just profoundly American and is at the heart of who we are. And that's why I could not be prouder of the track record that we've done, starting with the very beginning when we started to change, through Executive order, some of the Federal policies. Kathleen—the work that she did making sure that hospital visitation was applied equally to same-sex couples, just like with anybody else's loved ones. The changes we made at the State Department. The changes we made in terms of our own personnel policies, but also some very high-profile work like “don't ask, don't tell.”

And what's been striking over the course of these last 3 years is, because we've rooted this work in this concept of fairness, and we haven't gone out of our way to grab credit for it, we haven't gone out of our way to call other folks names if they didn't always agree with us on stuff, but we just kept plodding along, because of that, in some ways what's been remarkable is how readily the public recognizes this is the right thing to do.

Think about—just take “don't ask, don't tell” as an example. The perception was somehow that this would be this huge, ugly issue. But because we did it methodically, because we brought the Pentagon in, because we got some

very heroic support from people like Bob Gates and Mike Mullen, and they thought through institutionally how to do it effectively—since it happened, nothing's happened. [Laughter] Nothing's happened.

We still have the best military by far on Earth. There hasn't been any notion of erosion and unit cohesion. It turns out that people just want to know, are you a good soldier, are you a good sailor, are you a good airman, are you a good marine, good coastguardsman? That's what they're concerned about. Do you do your job? Do you do your job well?

It was striking—when I was in Hawaii, there is a Marine base close to where we stay. Probably the nicest piece of real estate I think the Marines have. [Laughter] It is very nice. And they have this great gym, and you go in there, you work out, and you always feel really inadequate because they're really in good shape, all these people. [Laughter] They're lifting 100-pound dumbbells and all this stuff. At least three times that I was at that gym, people came up, very quietly, to say, you know what, thank you for ending “don't ask, don't tell.”

Now, here's the thing. I didn't even know whether they were gay or lesbian. I didn't ask, because that wasn't the point. The point was these were outstanding marines who appreciated the fact that everybody was going to be treated fairly.

We're going to have more work to do on this issue, as is true on a lot of other issues. There's still areas where fairness is not the rule. And we're going to have to keep on pushing in the same way: persistently, politely, listening to folks who don't always agree with us, but sticking to our guns in terms of what our values are all about. What American values are all about.

And that's going to be true on the issues that are of importance to the LGBT community specifically, but it's also going to be true on a host of other issues where we're just going to have to make persistent steady progress. Whether it is having an energy policy that works for America, whether it is having an immigration policy that is rational so that we are actually both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, whether it's making sure that as

we get our fiscal house in order we do it in a balanced way where everybody is doing their fair share to help close this deficit. It's not just being done on the backs of people who don't have enough political clout on Capitol Hill, but it's broadly applied and everybody is doing their fair share.

On all these issues, my view is that if we go back to first principles and we ask ourselves, what does it mean for us as Americans to live in a society where everybody has a fair shot, everybody is doing their fair share, we're playing by a fair set of rules, everybody is engaging in fair play, then we're going to keep on making progress.

And that's where I think the American people are at. It doesn't mean this is going to be smooth. It doesn't mean that there aren't going

to be bumps in the road. It's not always good politics; sometimes, it's not. But over the long term, the trajectory of who we are as a nation, I believe that's our national character. We trend towards fairness and treating people well. And as long as we keep that in mind, I think we should be optimistic not just about the next election, but about the future of this country.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:09 p.m. at the residence of Karen Dixon and Nan Schaffer. In his remarks, he referred to Laura Ricketts, co-owner, Major League Baseball's Chicago Cubs; former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; and Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN (Ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Remarks on Preventive Health Care Insurance Coverage and an Exchange With Reporters *February 10, 2012*

Q. Here we go.

The President. Here we go.

Q. Here he is.

The President. Here I am.

Q. "Hello, everybody." You like that?

The President. That was pretty good.

Q. I've been working on that.

The President. Hello, everybody. *[Laughter]*

Q. "Hello, everybody." *[Laughter]*

The President. I was actually going to say good morning, but it—I guess it's afternoon by now.

As part of the health care reform law that I signed last year, all insurance plans are required to cover preventive care at no cost. That means free checkups, free mammograms, immunizations, and other basic services. We fought for this because it saves lives and it saves money for families, for businesses, for Government, for everybody. And that's because it's a lot cheaper to prevent an illness than to treat one.

We also accepted a recommendation from the experts at the Institute of Medicine that when it comes to women, preventive care

should include coverage of contraceptive services such as birth control. In addition to family planning, doctors often prescribe contraception as a way to reduce the risks of ovarian and other cancers and treat a variety of different ailments. And we know that the overall cost of health care is lower when women have access to contraceptive services.

Nearly 99 percent of all women have relied on contraception at some point in their lives—99 percent. And yet more than half of all women between the ages of 18 and 34 have struggled to afford it. So, for all these reasons, we decided to follow the judgment of the Nation's leading medical experts and make sure that free preventive care includes access to free contraceptive care.

Whether you're a teacher or a small-businesswoman or a nurse or a janitor, no woman's health should depend on who she is or where she works or how much money she makes. Every woman should be in control of the decisions that affect her own health—period. This basic principle is already the law in 28 States across the country.