

Jack's economic advice has been invaluable, and he has my complete trust, both because of his mastery of the numbers, but because of the values behind those numbers. Ever since he began his career in public as a top aide to Speaker Tip O'Neill, Jack has fought for an America where hard work and responsibility pay off, a place where everybody gets a fair shot, everybody does their fair share, and everybody plays by the same rules. And that belief is reflected in every decision that Jack makes.

Jack also has my confidence on matters outside the borders. Before he served at OMB for me, Jack spent 2 years running the extremely complex and challenging budget and operations process for Secretary Clinton at the State Department, where his portfolio also included managing the civilian operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. And over the last year, he has weighed in on many of the major foreign policy decisions that we've made.

So there is no question that I'm going to deeply miss having Bill by my side here at the

White House. But as he will soon find out, Chicago is only a phone call away, and I'm going to be using that phone number quite a bit. I plan to continue to seek Bill's advice and counsel on a whole range of issues in the months and years to come. And here in Washington, I have every confidence that Jack will make sure that we don't miss a beat and continue to do everything we can to strengthen our economy and the middle class and keep the American people safe.

So I want to thank, once again, Bill for his extraordinary service, but also his extraordinary friendship and loyalty to me. It's meant a lot. And I want to congratulate Jack on his new role. I know he is going to do an outstanding job, so thank you.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:02 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ruth Lew, wife of White House Chief of Staff Lew.

## Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser January 9, 2012

*The President.* Thank you. Happy New Year, everybody. It looks like Gaspard got you all fired up.

A few acknowledgements that I want to make: First of all, the OFA Virginia State director, Lise Clavel, is here, and we just want to thank our directors in the State because they do such hard work every day. Give them a big round of applause. The chair of our event this evening, Spencer Overton, thank you. One of my favorite singers, but more importantly, one of Michelle's favorite singers, Sara Bareilles—thank you for doing—and her band. We are grateful to them.

And I am grateful to you.

*Audience member.* We love you!

*The President.* I love you back. I do.

But I'm here not just to say I love you. [Laughter] I'm here because I need your help. And more importantly, I'm here because the country needs your help. There were a lot of

reasons that many of you got involved in our campaign, worked your hearts out back in 2008. And it wasn't because you thought it was going to be easy. It wasn't because you thought it was a sure thing. You decided to support a candidate named Barack Hussein Obama. You didn't need a poll to know that that might be an uphill struggle. [Laughter]

But what evolved during the course of that campaign, I think people more and more became aware of the fact that the campaign wasn't about me. It was about us. It was about our shared vision of America. It was about a vision of America that wasn't narrow, it wasn't cramped. It wasn't an idea that in America everybody goes out and fends for themselves and plays by their own rules and an America that's built on "what's in it for me." It was a vision of a big, bold, ambitious, compassionate, just America, where everybody who works hard has a chance to get ahead, not just those at the very

top, but everybody. And it was a vision that said we're greater together than we are on our own. It was a vision that says everybody deserves a fair shot and everybody needs to do their fair share and everybody has to play by the same set of rules, and that when that happens, we all advance together.

That's the vision that we shared. That's the change we believed in. You helped me believe in that change. It wasn't just me, it was you. And we knew it wasn't going to be easy. We knew the change we wanted wasn't going to come quickly.

I was just talking to a group, they were reminiscing about the 2008 campaign. I said, you guys are engaging in some selective memory here. *[Laughter]* First of all, 2008 wasn't easy at all. There were all kinds of setbacks and all kinds of miscues, and there were times where I screwed up. But just over 3 years later, because of what you did in 2008, because you had faith, because you had confidence in the possibilities of this country, we've begun to see what change looks like.

Think about it. Think about what's happened over the last 3 years.

Change is the first bill I signed into law, a bill that says an equal day's work should mean an equal day's pay, because our daughters should have the same opportunities as our sons.

Change is the decision we made to rescue an auto industry that was on the brink of collapse, even when some politicians said we should let them all go bankrupt. And 1 million jobs were saved, and the local businesses were picking up again. And now we've got the Big Three making money and rehiring workers, and fuel-efficient cars are rolling off the assembly line stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's what change is.

Change is the decision we made to stop waiting for Congress to do something about our oil addiction and go ahead and finally raise fuel efficiency standards on cars. And now, by the next decade, we are going to be driving cars that get 55 miles to a gallon. And that is going to help our environment. That will help

our economy. That's going to help consumers. That's because of you. That's what change is.

Change is the fight we won to stop handing \$60 billion of subsidies to banks to manage the student loan program and go ahead and give it directly to students, and as a consequence, millions of young people have greater access to college than ever before.

Change is the health care reform that we passed, after a century of trying, that will ensure that in America nobody goes bankrupt because they get sick. Already, 2.5 million young people have health insurance today because that law let them stay on their parent's plan. Seniors are already seeing discounts on their prescription drugs, preventive care available to everybody, folks with preexisting conditions in a position to finally get insurance instead of being left out in the cold. That's what change is, because of you. That's what we were fighting for: millions of Americans who can no longer be denied or dropped by their insurance companies when they need it most. That's what change is.

Change is the fact that for the first time in our history, you don't have to hide who you love in order to serve the country you love. Because "don't ask, don't tell" is history. It is over.

And change is keeping one of the first promises I made in 2008: ending the war in Iraq and bringing our troops home. The war is over, and our troops are home. And instead, we refocused our efforts on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11. And thanks to our brave men and women in uniform, Al Qaida is weaker than it's ever been and Usama bin Laden will never again walk the face of this Earth. That's what change is.

And now, a lot of these changes weren't easy. A lot of these changes weren't easy, and some of them were risky. They all came in the face of tough opposition, powerful lobbyists, special interests spending millions to keep things the way they were. And it's no secret I haven't always taken the politically popular course, certainly not with the crowd in Washington. But this progress has been possible nevertheless because of you, because you guys didn't stop believing. You stood up. You made

your voices heard. You were out there knocking on doors. You made phone calls. You kept up the fight for change long after the election was over.

And that should make you proud, but it should also make you hopeful. It shouldn't make you satisfied. It shouldn't make us complacent. We have so much more work to do. And everything we fought for during the last election is at stake in this election. The very core of what this country stands for is on the line, the basic promise that no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, this is a place where you could make it if you try. The notion that we're all in this together, that we look out for one another, that's at stake in this election. Don't take my word for it. Watch some of these debates that have been going on up in New Hampshire.

The crisis that struck in the months before I took office put more Americans out of work than any time since the Great Depression. But it was the culmination of a decade where the middle class had been losing ground. More good jobs and manufacturing left our shores. More of our prosperity was built on risky financial deals and homes that we couldn't afford. And we racked up greater debt, and incomes fell, and wages flatlined. And the cost of everything from college to groceries went through the roof.

Now, these problems didn't happen overnight. And the truth is they're not going to be solved overnight. It is going to take us a few more years to meet all the challenges that have been decades in the making. And the American people understand that. What the American people don't understand are leaders who refuse to take action. They're sick and tired of watching people who are supposed to represent them put party ahead of country and the next election ahead of the next generation. That's what they don't understand. That's what they don't understand.

You know, President Kennedy used to say after he took office what surprised him most about Washington was that things were just as bad as he had been saying they were. [*Laughter*] And I understand what he meant. [*Laugh-*

*ter*] When you've got the top Republican in the Senate saying his party's number-one priority is not to create jobs, not to fix the economy, but to beat me, that gives you a sense of the mentality here. Things aren't on the level. That's how you end up with Republicans in Congress voting against all kinds of proposals that they supported in the past. Tax cuts for workers and small businesses, rebuilding roads and bridges, putting cops and teachers back to work used to be bipartisan ideas.

Now, I've said I will continue to look for every opportunity during the course of this year to work with Congress to move this country forward and create jobs.

*Audience member.* We can't wait!

*The President.* But we can't wait. [*Laughter*] When Congress—whenever this Congress refuses to act, in a way that hurts our economy and puts our people at risk, I've got an obligation as President to do what we can without them. I've got an obligation to work on behalf of you and the American people. I'm not going to let Members of Congress put party ideology ahead of the people that they were elected to serve, not when there's this much at stake.

This is a make-or-break moment for this country, for the middle class in this country and folks who want to get into the middle class. So, for example, that's why last week I appointed Richard Cordray as America's consumer watchdog. Now, this is a man whose sole job is to look out for the best interests of American consumers, to protect families from the kinds of unfair or deceptive, abusive financial practices that helped to bring the economy to its knees. That shouldn't be controversial. Why would somebody be against that? [*Laughter*]

And yet, for almost half a year, Republicans in the Senate blocked his appointment. They wouldn't even vote on it, not because they said he wasn't qualified, because they couldn't say that. Former attorney general—you had Democrats and Republicans across the country, including his home State of Ohio, saying he was qualified. They just wanted to weaken Wall Street reforms. They thought, well, this might be too tough on these financial firms.

Now, does anybody here think that the reason we got into this financial mess was because we had too much oversight?

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* Too much accountability?

*Audience members.* No!

*The President.* We shouldn't be weakening these rules, we should be strengthening these rules. When it comes to American workers and American families, we should be looking to protect them more, not less. And that's what we've been doing, and that's what we're going to keep on doing.

That's also why I fought so hard last month to make sure that Congress didn't go home without preventing a tax increase on 160 million working Americans. And I'm glad. I'm glad Republicans finally came around and agreed to extend the payroll tax cut for working families into this year. But they've got to now extend it for the entire year. A lot of Republicans, they've sworn an oath: I will never raise taxes on anybody as long as I live. *[Laughter]* Well, don't make an exception for ordinary folks. It can't just apply to the wealthiest. Now is the time to prove you'll fight at least as hard for middle class folks and folks trying to get into the middle class as you do for the wealthiest Americans.

So we've got a clear choice this year. People are hurting out there. They're going through a tough time. Everybody understands that the economy is not where it needs to be. It's growing. We've had 22 consecutive months of job growth in the private sector. But everybody understands we still got more work to do. Of course, it's got to move faster. Of course, the economy still has a long way to go. Everybody understands that.

The question is what are we going to do about it. The debate we're going to have in this election is about where do we go from here. Because the Republicans in Congress and the candidates who are running for President, they've got a very specific idea of where they want to take this country. They say they want to reduce the deficit, but they're going to do it by gutting our investments in education and

research and technology and infrastructure, our roads and our bridges and our airports.

Look, I've already signed a trillion dollars' worth of spending cuts, but it's time to reduce the deficit by asking the wealthiest people in our society to pay their fair share. There's nothing wrong with that. People like me can afford it.

Republicans in Congress and on the campaign trail, they want to make Medicare a form of private insurance that seniors have to shop for with a voucher, but the voucher might not cover all the costs. I think we can lower the cost of Medicare with reforms that still guarantee the dignified retirement of seniors, because they've earned it.

Republicans in Congress and these candidates, they think that the best way for America to compete for new jobs and businesses is to follow other countries in a race to the bottom. They figure, well, China pays low wages, we should pay low wages. Let's roll back the minimum wage. Let's prevent folks from organizing for collective bargaining in this country. Since other countries allow corporations to pollute as much as they want, why not get rid of the protections that ensure our air is clean and our water is clean.

I don't think we should have any more regulation than the health and the safety of the American people require. I've already made reforms that will save businesses billions of dollars. We are creating a smart Government. We've issued fewer regulations than the Bush administration.

But I don't believe a race to the bottom is one that we should be trying to win. We should be trying to win the race to the top. We should be competing to make sure that we've got the best schools in the world and our workers have the best training and skills in the world and we've got a college education within reach of everybody who wants to go. That's the race we should be trying to win.

We should be in a race to give our businesses the best roads and airports and railroads and best Internet access. We should be in a race to support the best scientists and researchers who are trying to make the next breakthrough in

clean energy and medicine. And those should happen right here in the United States of America. That's the race we should be trying to win.

We should be in a race to make sure that the next generation of manufacturing—the new products, the new services—that they're not created in Asia, they're not created in Europe, they're created here. They're created in America, in Detroit and Pittsburgh and Cleveland, Baltimore, Virginia. I want—I don't want us to just be known for buying stuff from other places. I want us to be known for building stuff and selling stuff all around the world—Made in America. That's what I want us to win.

This competition for new jobs and new businesses and middle class security, that's a race we can win. But we can't win it if we just go back to the same things that got us into this mess in the first place. The same old tune: Hand out more tax cuts to folks who don't need them, and let companies play by their own rules, and hope that everything eventually trickles down to the rest of us. *[Laughter]*

That doesn't work. It's never worked. We tried it. It didn't work in the Great Depression. It's not what led to the incredible postwar boom of the fifties and sixties. It didn't work when we tried it between 2000 and 2008. It won't work now.

We can't go back to this brand of you're-on-your-own economics. We are not a country that was built on the idea of survival of the fittest. We were built on the idea that we survive as a nation. We thrive when we work together, all of us. Every race, every creed.

We believe we've got a stake in each other's success, that if we attract outstanding teachers into a profession, give her the pay she deserves, the support she deserves, she's going to teach the next Steve Jobs. And we'll all end up benefiting. If we provide a faster Internet out into some rural community, that owner is going to be selling goods around the world, and he's going to be able to hire more workers. And that's going to be good for all of us.

If we build that new bridge and it saves the shipping company some time and money,

workers and customers all over the country will do better. That's our idea.

And that idea has never been Democratic or Republican; that's an American idea. It was a Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, launched the transcontinental railroad, the National Academy of Sciences, the first land-grant colleges. It was a Republican, Teddy Roosevelt, who called for a progressive income tax. Republican Dwight Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System. There were Republicans who voted with FDR to give millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, a chance to go to college under the GI bill. This is an American idea.

And you know what, here's the good news. Here's the good news. That same common purpose, that still exists today. Maybe it doesn't exist here in Washington and maybe not on the Presidential debate stage up in New Hampshire. *[Laughter]* But out in America, it's there. It's there when you talk to folks on Main Streets, in barbershops, in town halls. Our political parties may be divided, but most Americans, they still understand that we are greater together. No matter where we come from, we rise or fall as one Nation and one people. And that's what's at stake right now. That's what this election is about.

I know this has been a tough 3 years. I know that the change we fought for in 2008, we have had to grind it out to make it happen. And after all that's been going on in Washington, all the nonsense that takes place here sometimes, it's tempting to believe, well, maybe it's not possible to do everything we wanted. But I want to remind everybody what I said in the last campaign: Real change, big change, is hard. It's always been hard. It takes more than a single term. It may take more than a single President. It takes you, ordinary citizens committed to fighting and pushing, inching this country forward bit by bit so we get closer to our highest ideals.

That's how this country was built. That's how we freed ourselves from an empire. That's how the greatest generation was able to overcome more than a decade of war and depression and end up building the largest middle

class in history. That's how young people beat back the billy clubs and the dogs and the fire hoses to make sure that race was no longer a barrier to what you can become in this country.

Change is hard, but it's possible. I've seen it. I've lived it. And if you want to end the cynicism and the game-playing and the point-scoring here in Washington, then this is the election to send a message that you refuse to back down, you will not give up. You intend to keep hoping. You intend to keep fighting for the change that we talked about, the change that we believe in.

I said in 2008—I warned you all, I said—I said I'm not a perfect man; I said I won't be a perfect President. But I promised you—I promised you this. I made a commitment to you, and I've kept this commitment. I will always tell you what I think. I always will tell you where I stand. And I wake up every single day thinking about you and fighting for you and

trying to figure out how can we make sure that everybody has access to the American Dream.

And if you stick with us, if you keep pushing, if we just keep on going through the setbacks, through the tough times, if you keep reaching for a vision of America that I know you still hold in your hearts, then change will continue to come. And this election may be harder than the last one, but I promise you we will finish what we started in 2008. We're going to keep on. We will press forward. We will remind the world once more why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

Let's get to work. Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:16 p.m. at the Capital Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Patrick H. Gaspard, executive director, Democratic National Committee; Lise Clavel, Virginia State director, Obama for America; and Richard A. Cordray, Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

## Remarks at the Environmental Protection Agency *January 10, 2012*

Thank you, EPA! Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. It is wonderful to see you. It is great to see you. Thank you, thank you.

Now, everybody can have a seat. I know Lisa is making you guys all stand up. [*Laughter*] But you can all relax.

It is wonderful to be here with all of you. Thank you so much for all the great work you do. I want to first acknowledge your outstanding Administrator, Lisa Jackson. She has done an extraordinary job leading this agency. But here's what I want all of you to know: Not only is she good on policy, not only is she tough and able to present the EPA's mission so effectively to the public, but she also has your back. She is an advocate on behalf of all the people who work so hard here at the EPA. And so you should know that your boss loves you, even if she doesn't always show it—I don't know. [*Laughter*]

The main reason I'm here is simple: I just want to say thank you. I want to say thank you

to each and every one of you, because the EPA touches on the lives of every single American every single day. You help make sure that the air we breathe, the water we drink, the foods we eat are safe. You protect the environment not just for our children, but their children. And you keep us moving towards energy independence.

And it is a vital mission. Over the past 3 years, because of your hard work, we've made historic progress on all these fronts. Just a few weeks ago, thanks to the hard work of so many of you, Lisa and I were able to announce new commonsense standards to better protect the air we breathe from mercury and other harmful air pollution. And that was a big deal. And part of the reason it was a big deal was because, for over 20 years, special interest groups had successfully delayed implementing these standards when it came to our Nation's power plants. And what we said was: Enough; it's time to get this done.