

that's my central goal and focus as President. That should be our central goal as a country: how we rebuild an economy where hard work pays off, responsibility is rewarded, a nation where those values continue for generations to come.

So thanks to all the people on this stage for being such a great example. For all the press who are here, I hope you get a chance to hear

their stories, because it's exciting, and it gives you a sense of why I'm incredibly optimistic about our prospects.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:51 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Timothy M. Bryan, chief executive officer and chairman, GalaxE.Solutions.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Chicago, Illinois January 11, 2012

The President. Hello, Chicago! Thank you! Thank you so much.

Audience member. Hello!

The President. Hello! Oh, it's good to be home. It is good to be home. No place like it.

It is great to see so many old friends. I don't mean in years, although you guys are getting older, some of you. I'll be honest with you, I wouldn't mind popping over to the United Center. I think the Bulls are playing tonight. They are off to a fine start. You might have heard the Dallas Mavericks came to the White House on Monday to celebrate their championship, and I told them, enjoy it, because the Bulls will be here next year. That's what I said.

I want to thank Jessica—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. [Laughter] I want to thank Jessica for sharing her extraordinary story. And Jessica is so representative of all the folks who did so much 4 years ago and are doing so much now. So give her a big round of applause. We are appreciative of her.

I want to thank Janelle Monae for her wonderful performance. Her whole crew is here. We had them at the state dinner, and the Korean President and his whole family, they were moving around and—[laughter]. You remember that? Oh, they loved it. So music is the universal language, and Janelle and her team are incredibly talented.

I want to thank my dear friend. He and I went to law school together; he decided to make something of his life. [Laughter] You see him on TV all the time. Hill Harper is in the house. Thank you, Hill.

One of the finest public servants and one of the finest Senators in the land, Dick Durbin is here. Thank you, Dick. Two of the finest Members of Congress in the land, and great friends, Danny Davis and Jan Schakowsky, and we've got Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, who is here as well.

Now, I also want to say a special word about a friend of ours, a man who's done extraordinary work for me and performed extraordinary service for our country over the past year, and that is Bill Daley, who—[applause]. Now, first of all, Bill and I, we got off the plane, and we said, is it really 45 degrees in January? [Laughter] So we were a little confused, thought we had landed in the wrong place. [Laughter] But when Bill first told me it was time for him to return to our hometown, I asked him to take a couple days to reconsider. But it is tough to resist the greatest city in the world. And as much as I will miss him in the White House, he's going to be an extraordinary asset to our campaign. He's going to be helping us win in 2012. So I just want to publicly say how much I appreciate him.

Now, I also want to say how much I appreciate you.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you.

Audience members. We love you!

The President. I love you too.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back, man. [Laughter] You know, I'm here not just because I need your help, but I'm also here because the country needs your help. There was

a reason why so many people like Jessica worked your hearts out in our 2008 campaign. And it wasn't because you thought it was going to be easy. When you support a guy named Barack Hussein Obama—[laughter]—for President of the United States, you've got to assume that the odds may not be in your favor. [Laughter] You didn't need a poll to know that it wasn't a sure thing.

But what you understood was that the campaign was not about me. It was about our common vision for America. It wasn't a cramped, narrow vision of an America where everybody is left to fend for themselves and the most powerful are able to play by their own rules. It was a vision of a big and compassionate and ambitious and bold America where everybody has a chance to get ahead: everybody, not just those who are advantaged. A vision that says we're greater together than we are on our own. A vision where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody does their fair share and there's a sense of fair play, that the rules apply to everybody.

That's the vision we shared. That's the change we believed in. And we knew it wouldn't come easy, and we knew it wouldn't come quickly. But I'm here to tell you that 3 years later, because of what you did in 2008, we've begun to see what change looks like.

Change—we've begun to see—and sometimes, because things are moving so fast and the media moves from thing to thing to thing, we don't take time to step back and ask ourselves what happened because of the work you did in 2008.

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

Change is the decision we made—that was unpopular at the time—to go in and help the auto industry retool, prevent its collapse, even when you had a lot of folks who said we should just let Detroit go bankrupt. And as a consequence, we saved 1 million jobs, and local businesses are picking up again, and fuel-efficient

cars are rolling off the assembly line stamped with three proud words—Made in America—and the automakers are back, and folks are working. That's because of you.

Change is the decision we made to stop waiting for Congress to do something about our oil addiction and go ahead and raise fuel efficiency standards on cars. And by the next decade, we'll be driving cars that get 55 miles to a gallon. That's what change is. Save us billions of barrels of oil and save consumers billions of dollars from their pocketbooks, and it means that we'll have a better chance of making sure that we leave the planet a little bit cleaner and a little bit better off for our kids.

And change is the fight we had, and the fight we won, to stop handing out \$60 billion in taxpayer subsidies to banks that issue student loans and give that money directly to students so that millions of more young people are able to get the kind of education that they need in this 21st-century economy. That's what change is.

And as Jessica pointed out, change is finally, after a century of talking about it, passing health care reform that ensures that in the United States of America nobody goes bankrupt because they get sick. And 2.5 million young people already have health insurance because they can stay on their parent's plan. And nobody is denied coverage or dropped by their insurance company 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. That's what change is. "Don't ask, don't tell" is over.

And change is keeping one of the first promises I made back in 2008, and that is ending the war in Iraq and bringing our troops home so we can focus our attention on rebuilding America.

Focus our attention on rebuilding America, but also focusing our efforts on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11. And thanks to the brave men and women in uniform, Al Qaida is weaker than it has ever been and Usama bin Laden will never walk this Earth again.

Now, these changes weren't easy. Some were risky. Almost all of them came in the face of fierce opposition, powerful lobbyists, special interests who spent millions trying to maintain the status quo. And not all the steps we took were politically popular at the time, certainly not politically popular with the crowd in Washington.

But you know, what kept me going is you. See, I remembered all the work you put in. I remembered your hopes and your dreams. And I knew that on every one of these fights, you guys were out there making your voices heard, knocking on doors, making phone calls, keeping up the fight for change long after the election was over.

And that should make you proud. It should make you hopeful. It shouldn't make you complacent. It shouldn't make you satisfied, because everything that we fought for is now at stake in this election. The very core of what this country stands for is on the line, the basic promise that no matter who you are, where you come from, this is a place where you can make it if you try. That's at stake in this election.

The crisis that struck in the months before I took office put more Americans out of work than at any time since the Great Depression. But it was also a culmination of a decade of neglect, a decade where the middle class fell further behind and more jobs in manufacturing left our shores. And suddenly, our prosperity was built on risky financial deals and homes that we couldn't afford. And we racked up greater debt. Even as incomes fell, wages flat-lined, the cost of everything from college and health care kept on going through the roof.

And those problems built up over a decade, in some cases more. They didn't happen overnight. We knew we couldn't solve them overnight. It's going to take more than a few years to meet the challenges that have been decades in the making. And the American people understand that.

What they don't understand are leaders who refuse to take action. What they're sick and tired of is watching people who are supposed to represent them put their party ahead of the

country, put the next election ahead of the next generation. That's what they don't understand.

President Kennedy used to say that after he took office, what surprised him most about Washington was it was just as bad as he had said it was. [*Laughter*]

I can relate to that. [*Laughter*] When you've got the top Republican saying his number-one priority isn't creating more jobs, isn't solving the health care problems, isn't making sure that we're competitive in the 21st century, but is to beat me, then you know things aren't on the level. That's how you end up with Republicans in Congress voting against all kinds of proposals that they—even proposals they supported in the past: tax cuts for workers, tax cuts for small businesses, rebuilding roads, bridges, putting cops and teachers back to work. Suddenly, they're opposed.

They'll fight with their last breath to protect tax cuts for the most fortunate of Americans, but they'll play political games with tax cuts for the middle class. I guess they thought it was a smart political strategy, but it's sure not a strategy to create jobs. It's not a strategy to strengthen the middle class or help people who are trying to get into the middle class to get there. It's not a strategy to help America succeed.

So we've got a clear choice this year. The question is not whether people are still hurting, the economy is still recovering. Of course, folks are still hurting. We've got a long way to go. The question is what are we going to do about it, where are we going to go, what direction does this country move towards.

The Republicans in Congress, the Presidential candidates who are running, they've got a very specific idea about where they want to take this country. I mean, they've said it. They said they want to reduce the deficit by gutting our investments in education and gutting our investments in research and technology, letting our infrastructure further deteriorate.

Now, my attitude is, I've already signed a trillion dollars' worth of spending cuts; I proposed even more. It's time, when we're talking about reducing the deficit, to also ask people like me to pay our fair share in taxes. We can

do that. We can have a system in which folks who have been incredibly blessed by this Nation do a little bit more so that the next generation is able to get on the ladder of success.

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

When I hear some of them talk about, oh, this is just an entitlement. These folks earned it. They worked hard. They paid into it.

This crowd, they think 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, since China pays really low wages, let's roll back the minimum wage here and bust unions; since some of these other countries allow corporations to pollute as much as they want, let's get rid of protections that help make sure our air is clean and our water is safe.

Audience member. Go EPA!

The President. Yes. You know—now, I don't think we should have any more regulations than what are necessary for our health and safety. And we've made reforms that will make sure that businesses save billions of dollars. We want government that is smart and efficient and lean. And by the way, we've issued fewer regulations than the Bush administration. They've been better regulations. *[Laughter]*

But I don't believe in a race to the bottom. I think we should be in a race to the top. We should be competing to make sure we've got the best schools. We should be competing to make sure we've got the most highly trained workers. We should make sure that a college education is within reach for everybody.

We should be in a race to make sure our businesses have the best access to the fastest Internet, the fastest railroads, the best airports. I want a race where we got—we continue to have the best scientists and researchers, making the next breakthroughs in medicine and clean energy. I want to make sure that happens

right here in America. That's the race we can win.

We should be in a race to make sure the next generation of manufacturing takes root not in Asia, not in Europe, but right here in Chicago, in Detroit, in Pittsburgh, in Cleveland, in Charlotte, in Nashville.

I don't want this Nation to be known for what we buy, what we consume. I want us to be known for building and selling products all around the world.

And you know it's possible. I had a meeting this morning with CEOs from—some of them very big companies like Intel, some of them small manufacturers. They're starting to bring jobs back to the United States. They've started to figure out that, yes, some of these countries may have lower wages, but when you factor in all the costs and quality and the productivity of American workers, that it actually makes sense to build plants here. And they're moving plants back from China and plants back from Mexico, because they know that businesses who succeed here will succeed anywhere.

But what they also said was we can only come here if we know that we've got the best workers. And that means the education system has to work. We can't come here if we don't think that the Internet and our roads and our transportation infrastructure is the best in the world.

The competition for new jobs, for businesses, for middle class security, that's a race I know we can win. But America is not going to win if we give in to those who think that we can only respond to our challenges with the same tired old tune, just hand out more tax cuts to folks who don't need them and weren't even asking for them, let companies do whatever they want, hope that prosperity somehow trickles down on everybody else's head.

It doesn't work. It didn't work when it was tried in the decade before the Great Depression. It's not what led to the incredible postwar boom in the fifties and the sixties. It didn't work when we tried it under the previous President, and it's not going to work now.

We cannot go back to this brand of you're-on-your-own economics. We believe that ev-

everybody has a stake in each other and that if we attract an outstanding teacher to the profession by giving her the pay and training and support that she needs, she'll go out and educate the next Steve Jobs. And suddenly, a whole new industry will blossom.

And we believe that if you provide rural—faster Internet to some little town out in rural America, that store owner now suddenly has a whole world marketplace. And if we build a new bridge that saves a shipping company time and money, then workers and customers all over the country are going to do better. And if we invest in basic science and research, that the next new thing will be invented.

And so instead of listening to Janelle on the iPod—who knows what the next thing is, but it will be because we have invested in the innovation that makes us the greatest nation on Earth.

Now, this has never been a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. This isn't a partisan idea. It was a Republican President from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln who launched the transcontinental railroad and the National Academy of Sciences and the first land-grant colleges. Teddy Roosevelt called for a progressive income tax; he was a Republican. Dwight Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System, invested in boosting our science and math and engineering education here in this country. It was with the help of Republicans that FDR helped millions of people—returning heroes, including my grandfather—get a chance to go college on the GI bill. This should not be a partisan idea.

And that same spirit of common purpose, it still exists today. It may not exist in Washington. But out in America, when you talk to people on main streets and in town halls, they'll tell you, we still believe in those values. Our political parties may be divided, but most Americans, they understand, no, we're in this together. We rise and fall together as one Nation, as one people.

That's what's at stake right now. That's what this election is about. So, Chicago, yes, it has been 3 tough years. There are times where the changes we want didn't come as fast as we

wanted. And after all the noise in Washington, I know it's tempting to believe sometimes that, gosh, maybe change isn't possible.

But remember what we said during the last campaign: Yes, we can.

We said real change and big change isn't easy. I warned you it was going to take time. I said it was going to take more than a year, maybe more than one term. Some of it's going to take more than one President. It takes ordinary citizens who keep fighting, keep pushing, keep inching this country closer and closer and closer to our ideals.

That's how the greatest generation overcame a decade of depression and ended up building the largest middle class in the history of the world. That's how young people beat back billy clubs and fire hoses and ensured that their kids could grow up in a country where you can be anything, including the President of the United States.

Change is hard, but it is possible. I've seen it. You've seen it. We have lived it. And if you want to end the cynicism and stop the game playing that passes for politics these days and you want to send a message about what is possible, then you can't back down. Not now.

We won't give up. Not now.

You've got to send a message. We are going to keep pushing and fighting for the change that we believe in.

I've said before, I am not a perfect man. I'm not a perfect President. But I've promised you this, and I've kept this promise: I will always tell you what I believe, I will always tell you where I stand. I will wake up every single day thinking about how I can make this country better, and I will spend every ounce of energy that I have fighting for you.

So, if you've still got that energy, if you're still fired up, if you are not weary, if you're ready to put on your walking shoes and get to work and knock on some doors and make some phone calls and talk to your friends and talk to your neighbors and push through all the obstacles and keep reaching for that vision that you hold in your hearts, I promise you change will come.

If you're willing to work even harder in this election than you did in that last election, I

promise you change will come. If you stick with me, we're going to finish what we started in 2008. We will remind this country and we will remind the world just why we are the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you, Chicago. I love you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:49 p.m. at the UIC Forum at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In his remarks, he referred to Glen Ellyn, IL, resident Jessica Hierbaum, who introduced the President; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; actor Hill Harper; and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Chicago January 11, 2012

Hello, everybody! Oh, it is good to be home. And it is—you are right, Stuart, I see so many familiar faces. But first of all, obviously, I've got to thank the Taylor family for their wonderful hospitality. To all the folks who helped make this evening possible, I appreciate you. I just see all my neighbors. Is somebody mowing the grass in front of my house? *[Laughter]* I'm going to go over there and check. *[Laughter]* Because I don't want you guys talking about me. "He's a good President, but nobody's mowing the lawn." *[Laughter]* "Bringing down property values." *[Laughter]*

A couple of people I want to acknowledge who are here. Oops, that's the wrong one. *[Laughter]* Hold on a second, because these folks—there we go. First of all, somebody who has been a great friend of mine, one of the finest public servants in the land, our senior Senator Dick Durbin is in the house. Dick is around here somewhere. Somebody who I knew before she got into politics as an extraordinary advocate for youth, continues to do great work—Heather Steans is here.

We've got Alderman Willie Cochran is here. Where's Alderman? He's over there. Hey, Willie. And then I've got another alderman who used to work for me—*[laughter]*—and in my first State senate campaign was basically my only staff person. *[Laughter]* And now he is a big shot, but I will always remember the fact that he was there back when nobody could pronounce my name—Will Burns is in the house. Where's Will? There he is. Will Burns. It's good to see you.

And then all of you are here. *[Laughter]* And I'm looking around, I see folks who first hired me for—as a summer associate. Between

Eden and Tom, they can take—and John—they can take responsibility for me meeting Michelle. If it had not been for them, it would not have happened.

I've got Allison and folks who stole me from Sidley, so you can blame them if—*[laughter]*—but I've got folks here who watched our kids grow up, who we played basketball together, we worked out together, we saw each other at various functions and events. And friends who, if it weren't for you, could have never gone on this extraordinary journey that I've gone on.

And it's interesting. Michelle and I, we're always reflecting on the nature of the work at the White House and—whoops. That's okay. You all right? Hope that didn't break. And we could not be more privileged to be able to serve the American people and couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity they've given us. And every day is just this remarkable adventure. But I will tell you, we're not shy about saying the one thing we miss is, we don't get to see our friends as much. And as I look around this room, it's a reminder that you guys do have our backs, have continued to have our backs, and we're grateful for you and couldn't be more appreciative of everything that you've done.

Now, I mentioned at a previous event, a friend of mine and a friend of some of yours, Ab Mikva, once said that having a friend who's a politician is like permanently having a child in college. *[Laughter]* And basically every few months a tuition check comes, and you keep on thinking, haven't they graduated yet? *[Laughter]* Golly. I'm still working—*[laughter]*—I want to remodel the kitchen and basement.

Here's the good news, is we're about to graduate. This is—this will be the last cam-