

or missing. We continue to be inspired by the Japanese people, who faced unimaginable loss with extraordinary fortitude. Their resilience and determination to rebuild stronger than before is an example for us all.

Since the first moments of the disaster, the United States mobilized to help our friends in Japan. At the peak of Operation Tomodachi—our single, largest bilateral military operation with Japan ever—the Department of Defense had 24,000 personnel, 190 aircraft, and 24 Navy ships supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. One year later, we remain committed to assist the people of Japan to rebuild. This effort, led by the Japanese Government, has benefited from the compassion of the American people, who in difficult economic times have given generously to help. Today, U.S. experts continue to support Japan's ongoing efforts to deal with the challenges associated with Fukushima, and the TOMODACHI public-private partnership is investing in the next generation to strengthen

cultural and economic ties. We are grateful for the contributions of Americans, civilian and military, who have joined with people from around the world to support Japan's recovery.

No one can forget the tragic images of disaster in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami or the heartbreak of friends who lost homes, belongings, and most importantly, loved ones. Even as it works to rebuild its devastated northeastern region, Japan has never wavered from its steadfast commitment to help other countries around the world. So, on this day when our thoughts and prayers are with the Japanese people in remembrance of the hardship faced 1 year ago, let us also celebrate the recovery underway in Japan and pay tribute to Japan's unflagging dedication to bettering the lives of others throughout the world. The friendship and alliance between our two nations is unshakeable and, going forward, the people of Japan will continue to have an enduring partner in the United States.

## Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Houston, Texas March 9, 2012

*The President.* Hello, Texas! Oh, it is good to be back in Houston. The weather wasn't quite cooperating. [Laughter] But we got here. And so did you.

We've got some wonderful folks here, but first of all, can everybody please give Debra Jones a big round of applause for the wonderful introduction.

We have in the house your outstanding mayor, Annise Parker. We've got Congressman Gene Green. We've got Congressman Al Green. He's the one who taught me how to sing. [Laughter] We've got Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. And we have all of you.

It is good to be in this facility. As a White Sox fan, I have a fond memories—

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* —of this facility. [Laughter] I want to thank Jim Crane for helping to make it available. And I want to thank all of you for being part of this thing here today.

*Audience member.* I love you!

*The President.* I love you back.

So I'm here today not just because I need your help. I'm here because the country needs your help. Now, there was a reason why so many of you worked your hearts out back in 2008. It wasn't because you thought it was going to be easy. After all, you decided to support a candidate named Barack Obama. You knew that wasn't going to be a sure thing. [Laughter]

You didn't join the campaign just because of me. You joined it because of your commitment to each other. You joined it because you had a common vision for America. Not a vision where everybody is left to fend for themselves; it was a vision where everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead, not just those at the very top, but everybody.

That's the vision that we shared. That's the change that we believed in. And we knew it wouldn't come easy. We knew it wouldn't come quickly. We knew problems had been building up for decades. But I tell you what, in

just 3 years, because of what you did, we've begun to see what change looks like.

Change is the first bill I signed into law that says women deserve an equal day's pay for an equal day's work. Our daughters should be treated just the same and have the same opportunities as our sons.

Change is the decision that we made that Debra alluded to, to rescue the American auto industry, save it from collapse, even when some politicians were saying let's let Detroit go bankrupt. With 1 million jobs on the line, I wasn't going to let that happen. And today, GM is back as the number-one automaker in the world, reporting the highest profits in its history. And with 200,000 new jobs created in the last 2½ years, the American auto industry is back. That's what change is. That happened because of you.

Change is the decision that we made to stop waiting for Congress to do something about our oil addiction and finally raise our fuel efficiency standards. And by the next decade, we will be driving American-made cars that are getting 55 miles a gallon, and that saves American families about \$8,000 at the pump. That's what change is. That happened because of you.

Change is the fight we won to stop handing over \$60 billion in taxpayer subsidies to banks in the student loan program, give that money directly to students. And as a consequence, millions of young people all across the country are getting help that they didn't have before. That happened because of your change.

*Audience members.* TSU loves you!

*The President.* We've got TSU in the house. Change is the fact that for the first time in history, you don't have to hide who you love in order to serve the country you love. "Don't ask, don't tell" is over.

And yes, change is health care reform that we passed after a century of trying. This is reform that makes sure that nobody in this country goes bankrupt just because they get sick. And already 2½ million young people have health insurance today that did not have it before because this law lets them stay on their parent's plan. Because of this law, preventive care is now covered. And yes, that includes

preventive care for women: checkups, mammograms, birth control.

We fought for this because the top doctors, the medical experts in the country said this kind of preventive care saves women's lives. We fought for it because we know it saves money. It's a lot cheaper to prevent an illness than to treat one. So, when you see politicians who are trying to take us back to the days when this care was more expensive and harder to get for women—and I know you're seeing some of that here in Texas—you just remember, we can't let them get away with it. We fought for this change. We're going to protect this change. It's the right thing to do.

And change is keeping another promise I made in 2008. For the first time in 9 years, we do not have any Americans who are fighting in Iraq. We refocused our efforts on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11. And thanks to our brave men and women in uniform—and there are a lot, a lot of servicemembers and a lot of veterans here in the great State of Texas—Al Qaida is weaker than it's ever been and Usama bin Laden will never again walk the face of this Earth.

None of this has been easy. We've got a lot more work to do. There's still too many Americans out there looking for work, still too many families struggling to pay the bills or make the mortgage. We're still recovering from the worst economic crisis of our generation or many generations. But over the past 2 years, businesses have added almost 4 million new jobs. Our manufacturers are creating jobs for the first time since the 1990s. Our economy steadily has been getting stronger. The recovery is accelerating. America is coming back. And the last thing we can afford to do is go back to the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place.

Of course, that's exactly what the other folks running for this office want us to do. They think you all have amnesia. [Laughter] They think you've forgotten how we got into this mess. They want to go back to the days when Wall Street played by its own rules. They want to go back to the days when insurance companies could deny you coverage or jack up your

premiums without any reason. They want to go back to spending trillions of dollars more on tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals—folks like me—even if it means adding to the deficit or gutting education or gutting investments in clean energy or gutting Medicare. They're philosophy is simple: We're better off when everybody is left to fend for themselves.

Let me tell you something: They are wrong. In the United States of America, we're always greater together than we are on our own. We're better off when we keep that basic American promise where if you work hard, you can do well enough to raise a family or own a home, start your own business, send your kids to college, put a little away for retirement, maybe someday own the Astros. That's the choice we face in this election.

Look, we want everybody to succeed. We want everybody to do well—not just a few, but everybody to have that chance. That's what America's about. No matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, if you are willing to work hard, if you are willing to roll up your sleeves, you can make it. That's the American way.

And this is not just another political debate; this is the defining issue of our times. This is a make-or-break moment for middle class families and everybody who's trying to get into the middle class. I mean, we can go back to an economy that's built on outsourcing and bad debt and phony financial profits, or we can fight for an economy that's built to last.

And that's what we've been talking about for the last 3 years: an economy built on American manufacturing and American energy and the skills that American workers need, the education that our kids deserve, and the values that always made this country great: hard work and fair play and shared responsibility, everybody, from top to bottom, everybody pitching in.

And you know what? That's actually what everybody wants to do. When you hear some of these political debates—poor people, they want to work hard, they want to find a job. Wealthy people, they believe in this country, they want to give back. But we've gotten into

this pattern where our politics divides us and pushes us apart.

We need to make sure that the next generation of manufacturing takes root not in Asia, not in Europe, but right here, in Detroit and Pittsburgh and Cleveland and Houston. We don't want to be a nation—nobody should want us to be a nation known for just buying and consuming things. We want to build things, make things, invent things, sell things all around the world, which is why we need to stop giving tax breaks to businesses that ship jobs overseas. Let's reward companies that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America.

We've got to make our schools the envy of the world, and that starts with the men and women in front of the classroom. You know, an interesting statistic: A great teacher can increase the lifetime incomes of a classroom by over \$250,000—just one teacher. So I don't want folks bashing teachers. I don't want folks defending the status quo. I want us to give the schools the resources they need to recruit and keep good teachers on the job, to reward the best ones.

Let's grant schools the flexibility to teach with creativity and passion, stop teaching to the test, replace teachers—train our teachers, and those who aren't helping our kids learn, we're going to have to replace.

And when kids do graduate, the most daunting challenge is affording the cost of college. Right now Americans owe more in tuition debt than credit card debt. So this Congress—and I know these Members of Congress agree with me here—we've got to stop the interest rates on student loans from doubling in July. And colleges and universities have to do their part. If they can't stop tuition from going up, then there should be some penalties, because taxpayers are willing to help young people, but ultimately, colleges and universities have got to do their part too. Higher education can't be a luxury; it's an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford.

An economy that's built to last is one that supports our scientists and our researchers that are trying to make the next breakthrough,

invent the next product, discover the next source of clean energy right here in the United States of America.

You know, the—Houston—this is an oil town. And that's good. We need oil. And we've got a high production of oil right now. When you hear folks saying, oh, Obama's not supporting oil production—we've got the highest production we've had in 8 years. We're opening up millions of acres to new production, got more rigs than the entire world combined right here in the United States.

But we don't need to subsidize oil companies when they're doing this well. So what I've said is, rather than continue a hundred years of taxpayer subsidies to an industry that's very, very profitable, let's double down on our investments in clean energy that's never been more promising. That will create jobs in Texas—solar power and wind power, biofuels. We want an all-of-the-above strategy. Yes, oil. Yes, gas. Yes, solar. Yes, wind.

*Audience member.* Yes, we can.

*The President.* Yes, we can. We can do it.

We've got to rebuild our infrastructure. I—you know, I'm biased; I want America to have the best stuff. I want us to have the best roads, the best airports, the fastest railroads, the quickest Internet access. So I've said, let's take the money that we're no longer spending in Iraq, let's use half of it to pay down our debt. Let's use the rest to do some nation-building right here in Houston, right here in Texas, right here in the United States of America.

And let's make sure our tax system has everybody doing their fair share. I've called for something called the Buffett rule: If you make more than a million dollars a year, you should not pay a lower tax rate than your secretary. And you know what, most folks who've done well, they agree. They understand. They understand that folks making \$250,000 a year or less—98 percent of American families—can't see their taxes going up.

*Audience member.* That's right.

*The President.* You agree with that. [*Laughter*] But folks like me, we can afford to do a little bit more if it means protecting our kids and making sure that we're investing in the future.

This isn't class warfare. This isn't about envy. This is just basic math. Because if somebody like me gets a tax break that I don't need, that I wasn't asking for, and that the country can't afford, then one of two things happens: Either it adds to our deficit, or it's going to take something away from somebody else. From a student, suddenly their college tuition gets more expensive; or a senior citizen who suddenly is paying higher on their prescription drugs; or a veteran who desperately needs help to recover from sacrificing on our behalf.

That's not right.

*Audience member.* It ain't right!

*The President.* Not only is it not right, it ain't right. [*Laughter*] That's not who we are as Americans.

You hear a lot of politicians during election years, they talk about values. Well, look, I agree, we should be talking about what are our values as Americans. Hard work, that's a value. Looking out for one another, that's a value. The idea that we're all in this together, as Debra said, that I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper, that's a value.

Everybody here, whatever success we have, it's because someone, somewhere, took responsibility not only for themselves, but also for their kids, for their neighborhood, for their church, for their community, for our country's future. Our American story has never been just about what we can do on our own. It's about what we can do together. We're not going to be able to compete around the world, win the race for new jobs and businesses and creating—recreating middle class security with the same old you-are-on-your-own economics. It doesn't work. It didn't work when it was tried right before the Great Depression. It didn't work when we tried it in the last decade. Why would we think it would work now? That's another example of amnesia some of these folks have. [*Laughter*]

We tried what they're peddling; it did not work. You understand that. Look, let me give you just some examples. You know that if we attract an outstanding teacher to the profession by giving her the pay and respect and support that she deserves, and that teacher then goes

on and educates the next Steve Jobs, we all benefit. If we provide faster Internet to some rural town in Texas, so suddenly that storeowner in that little town can start selling his goods all around the country and all around the world, we benefit. The economy benefits, America benefits. If we build a new bridge that saves a shipping company time and money, workers, customers, that business, everybody, we all do better.

This isn't a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. It was a Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, who launched the transcontinental railroad, the National Academy of Sciences, and the first land-grant colleges in the middle of a civil war. It was a Republican, Teddy Roosevelt, who called for a progressive income tax. Dwight Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System. Republicans helped FDR pass the law that gave millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, the chance to go to college on the GI bill.

This should not be a partisan idea. And you know what, that same spirit of common purpose that lies at the heart of America, it's still there. It might not be there in Washington, but out in America, it's there. It's there where you talk to people in Main Streets or town halls or VFW halls. It's there when you talk to the members of our Armed Forces. If you go into a church or a synagogue or a mosque, you'll find out people are supporting each other and believe in the notion of everyone pulling together.

Our politics may be divided, but most Americans understand that we're in this together. No matter who we are or what we look like, where we come from, what our names are, we rise and fall as one Nation and as one people. And that's what's at stake right now. That's what this election is all about.

I know it's been a tough few years. I know the change that we fought for hasn't always come as fast we'd like. And after all that's happened in Washington, sometimes it may be tempting to start feeling cynical again and think maybe change isn't possible. But I want you to remember what we used to say during the last campaign. We didn't promise easy. I—you never heard me say change was easy. Real change—big change—is hard. It takes time. It takes more than a single year, a single term. It will take more than a single President.

What it really requires is ordinary citizens, all across the country, committed to fighting and pushing and inching this country, step by step, closer to our common ideals, our highest ideals.

You know what else I said in 2008? I said I'm not a perfect man. I didn't promise I'd be a perfect President. But what I promised you was that I would always tell you what I thought, I'd always tell you where I stood, and I would wake up every single day fighting as hard as I could, fighting as hard as I know how, for you. And I've kept that promise. I have kept that promise, Texas.

So, if you're willing to keep working with me and marching with me and standing with me, pushing through the obstacles to reach for that vision that you hold in your hearts, change will come. If you're willing to work as hard in this election as you did in last election, change will come. We'll finish what we started in 2008.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:58 p.m. at Minute Maid Park. In his remarks, he referred to Houston, TX, resident Debra Jones; and James R. Crane, owner, Major League Baseball's Houston Astros.

## Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Houston *March 9, 2012*

Well, it is wonderful to see all of you here today. I just want to, first of all, obviously thank Tony and Dina. They have been great friends for a very long time. In fact, the first time I met

Tony, I was still in law school, and Tony was an alum, and he came back to law school, and he was a big cheese and important and—but he was willing to shake my hand and—