

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—

[laughter]—couldn't really pronounce my name—[laughter]. But he was very nice to me, and I will never forget that. And we've been great friends ever since. So I'm so grateful to him.

I want to acknowledge somebody who has also been a good friend for a long time and did a lot of work for this, Rodney Ellis—outstanding State senator. State Representative Garnet Coleman is in the house.

And so many of you—as we were looking around the room, folks here—there are folks who—first Houston event, second Houston event—[laughter]. I mean, I've just got—they're dispersed throughout the crowd. But we just have a lot of good friends here.

And I also want to acknowledge, by the way, Mayor White is here, and the—just want to thank him for the great work that he has done.

I want to spend most of my time just interacting and answering questions. So I'm going to keep my remarks at the top relatively brief.

We've obviously gone through 3 of the toughest years that any of us can recall: worst financial crisis, worst economic crisis in our lifetimes. And yet, 3 years later, we can look then and look now and say to ourselves that we have made progress. When I took office, we were losing 800,000 jobs a month. We found out last month that we created another 233,000 jobs, which gets us close to 4 million jobs created over the last 2 years, the strongest manufacturing growth since the 1990s.

We're obviously still in the midst of a lot of struggles for a lot of people, but the trend lines are good. And the reason is because so many of you believed in the same vision that I believe in: an America where if you work hard, if you take responsibility, if you're willing to apply yourself, you can make it if you try here, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter what your name. And that was the premise of our campaign back in 2008. Part of what I think allowed us to be successful against some very long odds was, at its core, our campaign reaffirmed our basic faith and confidence and optimism in America.

And it's that optimism that has carried me through these difficult 3 years, because every-

where I go I meet people who, despite hardship, despite losing a job, despite a plant closing in town, people are resilient, and they come back, and they're not willing to quit or say no. And that's what's really carried me through. And because of that enormous decency at the core of the American people, I'm confident that we're going to be able to keep moving over the next year, the next 5 years, the next 10 years, the next 20 years.

But our ability to bounce back and then thrive is also going to depend on some choices that we make right now. And as important as 2008 was, I think this election is even more important. Because very rarely are you going to see such a stark choice about how one party sees the country and where we need to go and how the other party sees the country and where we need to go.

I strongly believe that we're going to have to invest in American manufacturing. I was at a plant today in Virginia where they make the jet engines for Boeing. And we're starting to set up pilot programs around the country where we're connecting universities with manufacturers, community colleges with businesses, bringing scientists and engineers together, to make sure that we're innovating and making things and building things right here in America. I don't want a country where we're just consuming. I want a country where we're building and we're selling stuff.

And that requires the private sector taking the lead, but it also requires investments in research and science and education, making sure we've got the engineers that are needed for us to compete. And that's something that historically has been an important role of Government. But we've got a party that somehow believes that those investments are unimportant, despite the fact that's what made us into an economic superpower.

I believe that we've got to make sure that our K-12 education system works. And that's not just a function of money, it's a function of reform. And we've initiated bolder reforms on education than at any time in the last 20, 30 years. Forty-six States have revamped their education system so that we're holding schools

more accountable, we're asking them to make sure that they're thinking about students first, but we're also giving them the resources to train their teachers and succeed and to teach more creatively, not just teach to the test. That involves us making an investment. That involves us being involved.

Same thing when our kids get to college. There's actually more tuition debt now than there is credit card debt. And one of the things we're very proud of over the last 3 years is we revamped our student loan programs to free up \$60 billion to make college more accessible to young people all across the country.

The other—you don't hear much in the debates of the other party right now about education. In fact, I don't think it's been mentioned. And yet nothing is going to be more significant in whether or not we can compete in the 21st century. There's a stark choice there.

When it comes to energy—Texas is an energy State. And over the last several weeks, I've had to remind people we actually have higher production now in oil than at any time in the last 8 years. We are starting to tap into the natural gas resources of this country that could provide energy for 100 years. But we only have 3 percent of the world's oil reserves, which means that we're going to have to focus on efficiency. And when we double fuel efficiency standards on cars, that's not bad for the oil industry, but it does make sure that American businesses and American families are going to be able to keep on going even as demand goes up in China and India and Brazil and other places.

And we've got to invest in clean energy, solar and wind and biodiesel. It's not an either-or, it's a all-of-the-above strategy in order for us to free ourselves from dependence of the—on foreign oil and the winds of what happens in the Middle East. That's a choice.

We've got a choice that we're going to have to make about the deficit and how we solve that problem and bring down our debt. And the fact of the matter is, is that we've already made more discretionary cuts than had been proposed by the Bowles-Simpson commission. We have cut programs that aren't working to make sure that we're funding those that do.

We're revamping and reforming Government so it's more efficient. I'm prepared to make some significant reforms on entitlements to ensure that they're there for future generations.

But even after we've done all that, it's not going to work unless those of us in this room also agree that we've got to make sure that we're doing our fair share. Because the tax rate right now is the lowest it's been in 50 years, and we disproportionately benefit from that. So the idea of shared responsibility, which has been rejected by the other side, you know what, I think that's central to who we are. And if we're going to get a handle on this thing, it's just basic math. We can't just do one side of the equation, we've got to deal with both sides of the equation, both revenues and spending.

So, whether it's health care, whether it's the role of women, whether it's how serious we're going to take immigration reform and making sure we're a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, whether it's foreign policy and whether we have—whether we continue the course that we've set over the last 3 years, which says, we're going to go after those who would do us harm, but we also understand that our security doesn't just depend on our military, it depends on the respect we're held in the world and how we reach out diplomatically and whether we're helping other countries feed themselves and prosper—on each of these issues there is a stark choice.

And here's the good news: I am absolutely confident that our vision about where America needs to go is shared by the American people. Not 100 percent—this is a big, diverse, complicated country, and the democratic debate is always messy. But when you travel to town halls or VFW halls or churches or synagogues, or wherever you go around the country, what you'll find is a common belief that everybody should get a fair shot, everybody should do their fair share, everybody should play by the same set of rules, and that we're stronger together than we are when we're apart. And those basic principles, I think, are consistent with what we fought for in 2008. And they are the foundation for my campaign in 2012.

And so if you're with me in pursuing that vision, we've gotten a lot of stuff done over these last 3½ years, but I'd say I've got about 5 more years to finish the job.

So all right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:52 p.m. at the residence of Anthony R. Chase and Dina Also-

wayel. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor William H. White of Houston, TX; and Erskine B. Bowles and Alan K. Simpson, Co-chairs, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 10. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address

March 10, 2012

Hi, everybody. I'm speaking to you this week from a factory in Petersburg, Virginia, where they're bringing on more than a hundred new workers to build parts for the next generation of jet engines.

It's a story that's happening more frequently across our country. Our businesses just added 233,000 jobs last month, for a total of nearly 4 million new jobs over the last 2 years. More companies are choosing to bring jobs back and invest in America. Manufacturing is adding jobs for the first time since the 1990s, and we're building more things to sell to the rest of the world, stamped with three proud words: Made in America.

And it's not just that we're building stuff. We're building better stuff. The engine parts manufactured here in Petersburg will go into the next-generation planes that are lighter, faster, and more fuel efficient.

That last part is important. Because whether you're paying for a plane ticket or filling up your gas tank, technology that helps us get more miles to the gallon is one of the easiest ways to save money and reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

The recent spike in gas prices has been another painful reminder of why we have to invest in this technology. As usual, politicians have been rolling out their three-point plans for \$2 gas: drill, drill, and drill some more. Well, my response is: We have been drilling. Under my administration, oil production in America is at an 8-year high. We've quadrupled the number of operating oil rigs and opened up millions of acres for drilling.

But you and I both know that with only 2 percent of the world's oil reserves, we can't just drill our way to lower gas prices, not when we consume 20 percent of the world's oil. We need an all-of-the-above strategy that relies less on foreign oil and more on American-made energy: solar, wind, natural gas, biofuels, and more.

That's the strategy we're pursuing. It's why I went to a plant in North Carolina earlier this week, where they're making trucks that run on natural gas and hybrid trucks that go further on a single tank.

And it's why I've been focused on fuel-efficient cars since I took office. Over the last few years, the annual number of miles driven by Americans has stayed roughly the same, but the total amount of gas we use has been going down. In other words, we're getting more bang for our buck.

If we accelerate that trend, we can help drivers save a significant amount of money. That's why, after 30 years of inaction, we finally put in place new standards that will make sure our cars average nearly 55 miles per gallon by the middle of the next decade, nearly double what they get today. This wasn't easy: We had to bring together auto companies and unions and folks who don't ordinarily see eye to eye. But it was worth it.

Because these cars aren't some pie-in-the-sky solution that's years away. They're being built right now, by American workers, in factories right here in the U.S.A. Every year, our cars and trucks will be able to go further and use less fuel, and pretty soon, you'll be able to fill up every 2 weeks instead of every week,