

House Committee on Armed Services; and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chairman, and Howard L.

Berman, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Chicago, Illinois March 16, 2012

Hello, Chicago! Thank you! Thank you so much. It is good to be home! Good to be home. Thank you very much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you so much.

I have never seen the city look prettier, I have to say. And every time I come back, I am just overwhelmed with not only the beauty of this city, but I was explaining to folks as we were flying over—Dick Durbin flew in with me—what makes this place so special is not just that this is where my daughters were born, not just where I really started my political career, but I've got so many good friends, so many relationships. And as I look out across the room, seeing so many folks who put up with me—[laughter]—before I was President and helped me get there, it is just extraordinary.

So I miss you guys. I wish I could stay the weekend—[laughter]—especially this weekend, because we all know there is no better place to be on St. Patrick's Day than in Chicago.

Let me say just thank you to, first of all, one of the finest attorney generals in the country. She proved it again in helping us to get this settlement on the housing issue—Lisa Madigan is doing outstanding work. The senior Senator of the great State of Illinois and one of my dearest friends, Dick Durbin is in the house. The Governor of the great State of Illinois, Pat Quinn; you've got a new mayor here—[laughter]—I don't know how he's doing, but he seems to have a little bit of energy—Mr. Rahm Emanuel.

We got Representatives Bobby Rush and Jan Schakowsky in the house. County Board President and my former Alderwoman, Toni Preckwinkle. The trees were always trimmed. [Laughter] Snow was shoveled when Toni was in charge. And I want to thank Axelrod and Penny and Daley for the preprogram.

Now, you might have noticed that we have some guests in Illinois this week. Apparently, things haven't quite wrapped up on the other

side. [Laughter] So there is actually some interest in the primary that we have here on Tuesday.

And my message to all the candidates is, "Welcome to the Land of Lincoln"—[laughter]—because I'm thinking maybe some Lincoln will rub off on them while they are here. [Laughter]

Now, we remember Lincoln as the leader who saved our Union, but this is a President who, in the midst of the Civil War, launched the transcontinental railroad, understanding that in order for America to grow, we had to stitch ourselves together, to be connected, coast to coast.

He set up the first land-grant colleges in the midst of war, because this largely self-taught man understood that education could give people the chance to real their—realize their potential, and if we were able to give that kid on a farm the opportunity to learn, that that would be good for all of us, not just for that kid; created the National Academy of Sciences to promote the discovery and innovation that would lead to new jobs and entire new industries.

Lincoln, the first Republican President, knew that if we as a nation, through our Federal Government, didn't act to facilitate these things, then they likely wouldn't happen, and as a result, we'd all be worse off. He understood that we are a people that take great pride in our self-reliance and our independence but that we are also one Nation and one people and that we rise or fall together.

So I hope that while my counterparts on the other side enjoy the outstanding hospitality of the people of Illinois and spend some money here to promote our economy—[laughter]—I hope they also take a little bit of time to reflect on this great man, the first Republican President.

Of course, you may not feel confident that will happen. You may be watching some of this

avalanche of attack ads and think this is not appealing to the better angels of our nature, but hope springs eternal. [*Laughter*]

And that vision of Lincoln's—a vision of a big, bold, generous, dynamic, active, inclusive America—that's a vision that has driven this country for more than 200 years. That's the vision that helped create Chicago. That's why we don't make little plans here. And that's not a Democratic vision or a Republican vision. That is a quintessentially American vision.

And that's the vision that drove our campaign in 2008 and that so many of you worked your hearts out to see realized. It wasn't because you were willing to settle for an America where people are left to fend for themselves and everybody is playing by their own rules. What you believed in was an America where everyone who works hard has a chance to get ahead—everybody. It doesn't matter what you look like, where you come from, what your name is. Everybody has a chance.

That's the vision we shared. That's the change we believed in. That's why you got involved. You didn't get involved because the odds were that a guy named Barack Hussein Obama was going to be President. [*Laughter*]

And we knew it wasn't going to be easy or that it would come quickly. We knew it was going to be hard. But as you just saw in that video, just think about what happened over the last 3 years because of what you did in 2008. Because of your efforts, your commitment not to me, but to the country and to each other, we started to see what change looks like.

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

Change is the decision we made to rescue the American auto industry from collapse, even when some were saying, let's let Detroit go bankrupt. We had a million jobs on the line, the entire economy of the Midwest and the country at stake. So I wasn't about to let that happen. And because of your efforts, it didn't happen.

Today, GM is back on top as the world's number-one automaker, just reported the highest profits in 100 years. The factory here in Chicago is going gangbusters. With more than 200,000 new jobs created in the last 2½ years, the auto industry in America is back. That's change. That happened because of you.

Change is the decision we decided—we made to stop waiting for Congress to do something about our oil addiction and finally raise fuel efficiency standards on our cars and on our trucks, so that by the next decade we will be driving American-made cars that get 55 miles to the gallon, which will save the typical family \$8,000 at the pump over time and do some good for the environment in the bargain. That's what change is.

Change is us no longer handing out \$60 billion in taxpayer subsidies to banks who are managing student loans, and instead, giving that money directly to students who need it and families who want to see a better life for the next generation, so that millions of kids all across the country have benefited.

And change is the fact that in the first—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 over.

Change is health care reform that we passed after a century of trying, which means nobody will go bankrupt in this country just because they get sick. We got 2½ million young people who already have health insurance today because they can stay on their parent's plan, millions of seniors who are already seeing benefits in terms of more preventive care, lower drug prices.

And not only is preventive care now covered, it also means that families with children with preexisting conditions aren't going to have to worry that somehow their child is going to be left on their own or that they're going to have to mortgage their business or lose their home because of that illness. That's what change is.

Change is fulfilling the first promise I made in this campaign, that we would end the war in Iraq. We do not have troops in Iraq anymore

because of the extraordinary work of our men and women in uniform.

We've made sure that Wall Street is playing by the rules, stabilizing our economy. All this happened because of your efforts.

Now, the question is, what happens next? None of this has been easy. We've got a lot more work to do. There are still too many Americans out there who are struggling, whose homes are underwater, who are still looking for work. There are too many families right here in Chicago who can barely pay the bills, who are trying to figure out how they can scrap enough money together to let their kids go to college.

But, over the past 2 years, we've created close to 4 million new jobs. We've got the biggest growth in manufacturing since the 1990s. The economy is stronger. Our exports are on track to double. Businesses feel more confident. And so we've got an opportunity to build on all the work that we've done over the last 3 years, and the question is, are we going to be able to stay on track and move in the right direction?

Because the other side, they've got an entirely different idea. Their basic theory is that we go back to doing things the same way we were doing them before the crisis hit, promoting the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. And it's my belief that the last thing we can afford to do is go back to the same policies that got us into this mess. That's the last thing we can afford to do. But that's what they're talking about.

Look, they're not making any secret of it. You can watch these ads on TV. 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 coverage or jack up premiums without reason. They want to spend trillions of dollars more on tax breaks for the veriest wealthiest individuals, even if it means adding to the deficit or gutting things like energy or education or Medicare. We got a simple philosophy: We are better off when everybody's left on their own. Everybody writes their own rules.

They are wrong. In the United States of America, we have always been greater together

than we are on our own. We are better off when we keep to that basic American promise that you can—that if you work hard, you can do well enough to raise a family and own a home, send a kid to college, put a little away for retirement. We're better off when the laws are applied fairly to everybody, not just some. And that's the choice in this election.

This is not just another political debate. This is the defining issue of our time, because we are in a make-or-break moment, not only for the middle class in this country, but everybody who is fighting to get into the middle class. We can go back to an economy built on outsourcing and bad debt and phony financial profits, or we can fight for an economy that's built to last, an economy built on American manufacturing and American energy and skills and education for American workers and the values that made this country great and made this city great and made this State great: hard work and fair play and shared responsibility.

That's what's at stake. And so over the coming months we're going to have a great debate about whose vision will deliver for the American people. I think we need to make sure that the next generation of manufacturing takes root not in Asia, not in Europe, but in the factories of Detroit and Pittsburgh and Cleveland and Chicago. That's what I believe.

I don't want this Nation to be known just for buying and consuming things. I want us to be known for building and selling products all around the world. Which is why I've said let's stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas. Let's start rewarding companies that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America.

I think most Americans agree with us. We should be making our schools the envy of the world. And by the way, there is a Chicago export named Arne Duncan, who is doing unbelievable work at a national level. And he understands, as I understand, that we—it starts with the man or woman at the front of the classroom.

A good teacher can increase the lifetime earnings of a classroom by over \$250,000. So I don't want to hear Washington either defend

the status quo or spend all their time bashing teachers. What Arne and I have been talking about is giving schools the resources they need to hire good teachers and keep good teachers and train good teachers and reward the best ones and provide schools the flexibility to teach with creativity and passion and stop teaching to the test and replacing teachers who aren't helping our kids. That's what we expect: reform, resources, accountability. That's what I believe.

When kids do graduate, the biggest challenge they're facing right now is how to afford a college education. We've got more tuition debt now than credit card debt, which means this Congress has to pay attention, because in July, student interest—interest rates on student loans are scheduled to double if we don't do anything about it. We've got to focus on how are we making sure our kids can get good value, that they're making informed choices, and that they're getting some help.

And colleges and universities have to do their part. I've said to university presidents and college presidents, we want to work with you and help with you—help you. But we're not going to just keep on funding tuition rates that are skyrocketing. Higher education cannot 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 where we support scientists and researchers trying to make sure the next breakthrough in clean energy and biotechnology happens right here in the United States of America. We've restored science to its rightful place. On things like stem cell research, we said, let's follow the science, but we also have to make investments in science. We have to make investments in basic research. Lincoln understood that; you understand it.

Nowhere is that truer, by the way, in the—than in the area of energy. We've been subsidizing oil companies for a hundred years. Now's the time to stop subsidizing an oil industry that's rarely been more profitable, double down on a clean energy industry that's never been more promising: solar and wind and bio-fuels, homegrown, American energy. That's

what we believe. The other side has a different view.

We believe we need to give our businesses the best access to newer roads and airports, faster railroads and internet access. I'm biased; maybe it's because I'm a Chicagoan. I believe in having the best stuff. I don't—I'm a chauvinist in this way. I don't want to go to China and see a better airport in China than O'Hare. I don't want to ride on a road in Germany and see a better road than Lake Shore Drive.

It is time for us to take the money we are no longer spending at war and use half of that to pay down our debt and use the rest to do some nation-building here at home. Let's put people back to work.

And we need to make sure that we've got a tax system that reflects everybody doing their fair share. I was with Warren Buffett a couple of days ago, and he's quite pleased that I named a rule after him—[laughter]—the Buffett rule, which is common sense. It says, if you make more than a million dollars a year, you shouldn't pay a lower tax rate than your secretary. I—this is not—look, if you make \$250,000 a year or less, which is 98 percent of Americans, your taxes shouldn't go up. You're—a lot of folks in that category are struggling.

But for folks like me, we can do a little bit more. I know. You know it. This isn't class warfare. This isn't envy. It's basic math. Because if somebody like me and some of you are getting tax breaks we don't need, weren't even asking for, and the country can't afford, then either it's going to add to the deficits—which the other side claims is their top priority—or we've got to take something from somebody else.

That student who's trying to go to college, suddenly their interest rate goes higher. That senior who's trying to afford their prescription drugs, their costs go up. That veteran who desperately needs help right now, they get short-changed. That family that's trying to get by, they're forgotten. That's not right. That's not who we are.

You hear a lot of politicians talk about values in election years. And I'm sure some of the ads have been talking about that here in Illinois. Let me tell you about values. Hard work is a

value. Looking out for one another, that's a value. The idea we're all in this together, that I'm my brother's keeper and sister's keeper, that's a value. Caring for our own, that's a value. Making sure that seniors can retire with dignity and respect, that's a value. Making sure our veterans are cared for—and that costs money—that's a value.

You understand that. One of the great things about this town is we come from everywhere. You look—I guess you can't look in a phonebook anymore; they don't have phonebooks these days. [Laughter] But when you think about Chicago, part of what you think about is all the last names, right? The Emanuels, the Obamas, the Sanchezes, the Polaskis—we all come from someplace else. And the only reason that we can be in this magnificent ballroom is because somebody, somewhere, took responsibility. They took responsibility for their families, first and foremost: generations of immigrants making sure that they were leaving something behind for the next generation; our grandparents, our great-grandparents striking out, sometimes falling down, picking themselves back up.

But also, they took responsibility for our country's future. They understood the American story is never about just what we can do by ourselves. It's about what we can do together. And we will not win the race for new jobs and new businesses and middle class security with the same old you-are-on-your-own economics, because it hasn't worked in the past. It won't work now.

It didn't work in the decade before the Great Depression. It did not work when we tried it in the last decade. It's not like we haven't tried it. It does not work. And we've got a stake in each other's success. And we all understand that. If we attract an outstanding teacher to the profession, giving her the pay she deserves, the support she deserves, and she educates the next Steve Jobs, we all benefit.

We get faster Internet to rural Illinois, rural America, so that some store owner or entrepreneur there can suddenly have access to a worldwide marketplace, that's good for the entire economy. We build a new bridge that saves

a shipping company time and money—workers, consumers, we all do better.

This is not a Democratic or Republican idea. Lincoln understood it. It was a Republican President, Teddy Roosevelt, who called for a progressive income tax; Republican Dwight Eisenhower that built the Interstate Highway System. It was with the help of Republicans in Congress that FDR was able to give millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, the chance to go to college on the GI bill.

And here's the thing: That same spirit of common purpose, that desperate desire to pull the country together and focus on what needs to get done in a serious way, that spirit still exists today, maybe not in Washington, but exists here in Chicago. It exists out there in America. You go to Main Streets, you go to town halls, you go to VFW halls, you go to a church or a synagogue, it's there when you talk to members of our Armed Forces, when you talk to folks at a Little League game or at their places of worship.

Our politics may be divided. But most Americans understand we are greater together and that no matter who we are or where we come from, we rise or fall as one Nation and one people. And that's what's at stake. That's what's at stake in this election. That's what we're fighting for. As much as 2008 was exciting, and as much as all of us, I think, saw that night at Grant Park as the culmination of something, it was actually just the beginning of what we're fighting for. That's what 2012 is about.

And I know it's been a tough few years, and I know there are times where people have said, change just isn't coming fast enough. And I know that when you see what's going on in Washington sometimes it's tempting to believe that what we believed in, in 2008, was an illusion; maybe it's just not possible. It's easy to slip back into cynicism.

But remember what we said in the last campaign, that real change, big change would be hard. It takes time. It may take more than a single term. It may take more than a single President. What it really takes is ordinary citizens who are committed to continuing to fight

and to push and to keep inching this country closer to its ideals, its highest ideals.

And I said in 2008, I am not a perfect man and I will never be a perfect President. But I made a commitment then that I would always tell you what I believed, I would always tell you where I stood, and I would wake up every single day fighting as hard as I know how for you. And I've kept that promise to the American people.

So I'm a little grayer now. *[Laughter]* It's not as trendy to be involved in the Obama campaign as it was back then. *[Laughter]* Some of you have rolled up those "Hope" posters, and they're in a closet somewhere. *[Laughter]* But I am more determined and more confident that what drove us in 2008 is the right thing for America, than I've ever been before.

And if you're willing to keep pushing through the obstacles and reach for that vision

of America that we all believe in, I promise you change will continue to come. And if you work as hard as you did then now, I promise you we will finish what we started in 2008, and we will remind the world just why it is that America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. at the Palmer House Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former White House Senior Adviser David M. Axelrod; Penny S. Pritzker, chairman and founder, Pritzker Realty Group; former White House Chief of Staff William M. Daley; Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

Statement on Representative Gary L. Ackerman's Decision Not To Seek Re-election

March 16, 2012

For over 30 years, Gary Ackerman has represented the people of Queens and Long Island, first as a New York State senator and then as a Member of Congress. Gary's bipartisan efforts helped our Nation confront significant challenges at home and abroad. He was a leader in the fight to pass Wall Street reform and helped strengthen the bonds between the United States and our allies, particularly Israel. Always a champion of his fellow New Yorkers,

Gary was also successful in enacting a bill to create the "Heroes" postage stamp, which benefited the families of rescue workers killed or permanently disabled while responding to the 9/11 attacks. Gary's unique enthusiasm will be greatly missed in the halls of Congress, but I am confident he will continue to serve the people of New York for years to come. Michelle and I wish him and his family well in the future.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Regarding High-Performance Computer Export Controls

March 16, 2012

Dear _____:

In accordance with the provisions of section 1211(d) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998 (Public Law 105-85), I hereby notify you of my decision to establish a new level for the notification pro-

cedure for digital computers set forth in section 1211(a) of Public Law 105-85. The new level will be 3.0 Weighted TeraFLOPS. The attached report provides the rationale supporting this decision and fulfills the requirements of Public Law 105-85, sections 1211(d) and (e).