

roes, including my grandfather, the chance to go to college through the GI bill.

And that same spirit of common purpose, it still exists today. Maybe it doesn't exist in Washington.

Audience member. It exists in Vermont.

The President. But out here in Vermont and all across America, it's there. It's there when you talk to folks on Main Street. It's there when you go to a town hall. It's there when you talk to members of our Armed Forces. It's there when you talk to people in their places of worship.

Our politics may be divided. But most Americans still understand that no matter where you come from, no matter who you are, we rise or fall together as one Nation, as one people. And that's what's at stake right now. That's what this election's about.

So I know we've gone through some tough years. And I know that for all the things we've done, we've still got so much undone. We—and sometimes the change we fought for hasn't always come as fast as we wanted. And when you see what's been going on in Washington, I know it's tempting sometimes to get discouraged, to kind of think, well, maybe change just isn't possible. Maybe it was an illusion. But I want you guys to recall, I did say back in 2008, real change, big change, it's hard. It takes time. It takes more than a single term and more than a single President. What it takes is ordinary citizens who are committed to keep fighting and to keep pushing and inching us closer and closer and closer to our country's highest ideals.

And you know something else I used to say in 2008, I said, I'm not a perfect man—Mi-

chelle will tell you that—and I'll never be a perfect President. But I made a promise to you then that I would always tell you what I believed and 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 have kept that promise. I have kept that promise. I have kept that promise.

So if you're willing to keep pushing with me through all the obstacles, through all the naysayers; if you're willing to keep reaching for that vision of America that we all have talked about—that commitment you didn't just make to me or I made to you, but that we made to each other—I guarantee you change will come. If you're willing to work harder in this election than you did in the last one, I promise you change will come. If you're willing to knock on some doors and make some phone calls, I promise you change will come.

We will finish what we started in 2008. Fight with me, and press on with me, and we will remind the world once again just what America is all about.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. at the University of Vermont. In his remarks, he referred to Jeanne A. Morrissey, president, J.A. Morrissey, Inc., who introduced the President; musician Grace Potter; Carolyn Dwyer, member, Vermont Democratic Party Executive Committee; and St. Johnsbury, VT, resident Melissa Jenkins, who was killed on March 25, and her son Ty.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in South Portland, Maine March 30, 2012

The President. Hello, Maine! Thank you! Thank you very much. Thank you! Well, it is good to be in South Portland, Maine!

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you! Thank you! It is wonderful to be here.

First of all, can everybody please give Richard a big round of applause for that great introduction. A couple other people I want to acknowledge. First of all, your outstanding Congresswoman, Chellie Pingree, is here. One of the great statesmen of our time, Senator

George Mitchell, in the house. From nearby Portland, Mayor Michael Brennan is here. And the Maine Finance Committee and everybody who helped put this together—what a wonderful event. And whoever arranged for the great weather, good job. The last time I was in Maine it was snowing—[laughter]—not surprisingly, and I love snow, but this is good too. [Laughter]

Now, let me say this, Maine. I am here today not just because I need your help. I'm here because the country needs your help. A lot of you worked really hard in 2008 in our campaign. And the reason you worked so hard wasn't because you thought it was going to be a cakewalk. When you decide to support a Presidential candidate named Barack Hussein Obama—[laughter]—then you know that this is not a sure thing. [Laughter]

The reason you guys worked so hard wasn't just because of me. It was because you shared a vision about what America is all about. You shared a vision about who we are as a people. And that vision said that we don't just leave people to fend for themselves. We don't just let the powerful play by their own rules. It was a vision of America where we're all in it together. Where everybody who works hard has the chance to get ahead, no matter what they look like, no matter where they come from, not just those at the very top, but everybody—that that was the recipe for American success.

That was the vision that we shared. That was the change we believed in. We knew it wouldn't be easy. We knew it wouldn't be quick. But when you think back over the last 3 years, I want you to know that because of what you did in 2008, we've begun to see what change looks like. We've begun to see it. We've begun to see it.

Change is the first bill I signed into law, a law that says a woman deserves an equal day's pay for an equal day's work. That's the kind of change we believed in.

Change is the decision that we made to rescue the American auto industry. There were a million jobs at stake. There were those who said let Detroit go bankrupt. We didn't do it, and today GM is back on top as the world's

number-one automaker. And Detroit has never made better cars than it is today. With more than 200,000 new jobs over the last 2½ years, the American auto industry is back. And they're making better cars, and more fuel-efficient cars than ever before. That's what change is.

Change is the decision that we made to stop waiting for Congress to do something about our oil addiction and finally raise fuel efficiency standards on cars. And by the middle of the next decade, we're going to be driving American-made cars that get almost 55 miles a gallon, and that will save the typical family \$8,000 at the pump over time. That's what change is. That happened because of you.

Change is the fight that we won to have \$60 billion stop going to banks and instead go to lower interest rates for student loans and more help on Pell grants, so that our young people can get the college educations that they need to compete in the 21st century. That's what change is.

And yes, Maine, change is the health care reform that we passed after a century of trying, because we believe that in America, in this great country of ours, nobody should go bankrupt just because they get sick. And as a consequence of what you did, 2.5 million young people have health insurance now that didn't have it before because they're staying on their parents' plans. Millions of seniors are now paying less for prescription drugs. Insurance companies can't deny you coverage right at the time when you need it. People are getting preventive care that they weren't getting before. We're going to make sure the people with pre-existing conditions are finally able to get coverage. That's what change is. That happened because of what you guys did in 2008.

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 that you love. We ended "don't ask, don't tell." Ended it.

And change is keeping another promise I made in 2008. For the first time in 9 years, we don't have any Americans 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, Al Qaida is weaker than ever before and Usama bin Laden is no more. We've begun to transition in Afghanistan to put them into the lead. We are starting to bring our troops home. That's what change is. That happened because of you.

Now, Maine, nothing—none of this has been easy. And if you notice, we haven't gotten a lot of help from the other side. [Laughter] We've still got more work to do. I was listening to Richard tell his story, and he's absolutely right. That determination, that willingness to do whatever it takes, understanding that a job is not just a matter of money, it's also a matter of dignity and purpose and contributing to this country, that spirit of Richard's, that exists all across America.

But there are still a lot of folks who are still looking for work. We went through the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes. And although we're starting to make progress, we still have too many families that are having trouble making the bills, too many folks still out of work. We're still recovering from this incredible storm.

But here's the good news. Over the last 2 years, businesses have added nearly 4 million new jobs. Our manufacturers are creating jobs for the first time since the nineties. Our economy is getting stronger. The recovery is accelerating. And that means the last thing we can afford to do right now is to go back to the very same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. Right?

But of course, that's exactly what the other side—all those folks who are running for this office—that's exactly what they're proposing. They don't make any secret about it. They want to go back to the days when Wall Street played by its own rules. They want to roll back health care so that insurance companies can jack up your rates whenever they want. They want to continue to spend trillions of dollars more on tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals, even if it means adding to the deficit, even if it means gutting things like education and basic research and clean energy and Medicare, all those things that help this economy grow.

Their philosophy is simple: You're on your own. That's their view that the only way the economy can grow is if you're out of a job, tough luck, figure it out on your own. If you don't have health care, too bad, you're on your own. If you're a senior having trouble paying your prescription drugs, that's not our problem. If you're a young person coming out of poverty, pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, even if you don't have boots. [Laughter] That's their vision.

And by the way, you look at their budget that the Republicans in the House of Representatives just passed, it's no exaggeration. They would gut things that we've always believed were the core of making America great: education, basic research in science, caring for the most vulnerable.

They are wrong. They are wrong in their vision of America. In the United States of America, we are greater on our own—we are greater together than we are on our own. In the United States of America, we believe in the basic promise that if you work hard, you can do well enough to raise your family and own a home and send your kids to college and put a little away for retirement.

That's the choice in this election: different visions of America. This is not just about another political debate. This is the defining issue of our time at a make-or-break moment for the middle class in this country: Who's going to be fighting for you? That's what this is about.

We can go back—

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We can go back to what they're offering: an economy built on outsourcing and phony debt and phony financial profits. Or we can fight for an economy that works for everybody, an economy that's built to last, an economy built on American manufacturing and American science and American energy and American education that makes sure our kids have the skills they need. And the values that have always made this country great: hard work, everybody having a fair shot, everybody doing their fair share, everybody operating under the same set of rules, shared responsibility.

That's what we're fighting for. That's the kind of America we need to build.

I don't know about you, but I think we need to make sure the next generation of manufacturing, for example, takes root not in Asia, not in Europe. I want it to take place right here in Maine. I want it to take place in factories in Detroit and Pittsburgh and Cleveland. I don't want this Nation to be known just for buying and consuming things. I want it to be known for producing and inventing and selling stuff. That's how America was built. That's the kind of economy we've got to get back to.

And that's why it's time to stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas. Let's start rewarding companies that create jobs right here in America. Let's give them tax breaks.

I want to make our schools the envy of the world. And we start to do that, not only are we putting more money into education, but we're also insisting on reform. And that starts with the man or woman at the front of the classroom. A good teacher can increase the lifetime earnings of a classroom by \$250,000. A great teacher can inspire a kid who's trapped in poverty, trapped in their own circumstances, to shoot for something higher, to dream big.

So I don't want to hear folks in Washington just bashing teachers. I don't want them defending the status quo. Let's give schools the resources they need to hire good teachers and reward great teachers. Let's give schools the flexibility they need to teach with creativity and passion. We can stop teaching to the test. Replace teachers who aren't doing the job, but let's give them the power they need to inspire their students.

And when kids do graduate, right now they're having trouble financing their college educations. When Americans owe more in tuition debt than credit card debt, you know that's a problem. And that's why—coming up in July, by the way, if Congress doesn't do anything, the interest rates on student loans are going to go up, they're going to double.

That's a bad idea, which is why I've said, Congress, let's get moving. Now, they haven't done it yet. So you guys need to make sure that everybody understands how important this is.

And colleges and universities, they've got to do their part keeping tuition down. Because higher education can't be a luxury; it is an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford.

An economy built to last is one where we support scientists and research and science. Whether it's stem cell research or climate change, we want to make sure that the great medical breakthroughs happen here in the United States and that happens because we finance research. We want to make sure that the next breakthroughs in clean energy happen here in the United States. That happens because we support clean energy.

We have—we've subsidized oil companies for 100 years. And I think they're doing pretty good, last I checked. Every time you fill up a tank, they're doing just fine. So I think it's time to end 100 years of taxpayer giveaways to an industry that's never been more profitable. Let's double down on the clean energy industry that's never been more promising: solar power and wind power, biofuels.

And let's rebuild America. We're a nation of builders. You go to other countries, they've got newer airports, better rail lines. That's not who—America always had the best stuff. [Laughter] I want to make sure that our businesses have access to the newest roads and airports and the fastest railroads and Internet access for everybody. It's time for us to stop—look, let's take the money that we're no longer spending at war, use half of it to pay down our debt, use the other half to do some nation-building here at home. What do you think, Maine? I think it's time.

And when it comes to our deficit, when it comes to our fiscal situation, let's have a tax system that reflects everybody doing their fair share, doing their fair share. Some of you know I've proposed something called the Buffett rule. It's a pretty simple rule that Warren Buffett happens to endorse: If you make more than \$1 million a year—I don't mean that you have \$1 million, I mean every year, you're making more than \$1 million—you should not pay a tax rate that's lower than your secretary's,

which is what is happening for too many folks right now.

What I've said is, if you make \$250,000 a year or less, like 98 percent of American families, then your taxes don't need to go up. Folks are still struggling. But if you're doing really well, you can do a little bit more. And when I say this, look, this is not class warfare, it's not class envy. This is just basic math. [Laughter] Because if somebody like me gets a tax break that I don't need and the country can't afford, then one of two things is going to happen. Either it adds to our deficit, or it takes something away from somebody else: that veteran who needs services for his PTSD after he served our country; that student that's trying to afford getting their college degree; that senior who's already having a tough time paying for their prescription drugs.

Why would we set up a system where I don't do anything and somebody who's in a tougher position has to bear the entire burden? That's not right. That's not who we are.

You know, I hear some of these other folks, some of these politicians talking about values during an election year. Well, let me tell you about values. Hard work is a value. Personal responsibility is a value. Looking out for one another is a value. The idea that I'm my brother's keeper, my sister's keeper, that's a value.

You and me, all of us, we're here just because somebody, somewhere, at some point, felt a responsibility not just to themselves, not even just to their own families, but they felt a responsibility to our fellow citizens, to our country's future.

I think about my own background. Somebody had the foresight to say, let's help people finance their college educations, and that's why my mother, a single mom, was able to get her degree even after she had me.

I think about—when you listen to Michelle talk about growing up, her and her brother, her dad, a blue-collar worker, her mom stayed at home and then went to work as a secretary, neither of them had a college degree. But Michelle talks about how there were always like after-school programs and sports programs and activities for kids, because somebody thought,

you know what, let's make an investment in these kids so that they might have that ladder to opportunity, because that's how all of America grows.

Everybody here has a story like that. If it's not you, then it's your grandparents or your great-grandparents. We all have benefited because we didn't just think narrowly about the here and now and me; we thought about the future and us.

This is about what we can do together. We won't win the race for new jobs and new businesses and middle class security if we cling to this same old, worn-out, tired, you're-on-your-own economics that the other side is peddling. I mean, they act like we haven't tried it. We tried it. [Laughter] It was tried in the decades before the Great Depression. It didn't work then. It was tried in the last decade. It didn't work.

The idea that you would keep on doing the same thing over and over again, even though it's been proven not to work, that's a sign of madness. [Laughter] We've got to take this in a different direction.

And we know that from our own experience. Look, if we attract an outstanding young person to go into teaching because we're paying them well, we're giving them support, professional development, and they go on to teach the next Steve Jobs, that's good for all of us. If we provide faster Internet service to some rural part of Maine and there's some small business out there that suddenly has access to a worldwide market, that's good for the entire economy. If we build a new bridge that saves a shipping company time and money, well, workers and customers all over the country, they benefit.

And by the way, this has never been a Democratic or a Republican idea. The first Republican President, Lincoln, during—in the middle of a Civil War, he made investments in helping to forge the transcontinental railroad and started the American Academy of Sciences and land-grant colleges, because he wasn't just thinking about now, he was thinking about the greatness of this country in the future. Teddy Roosevelt called for a progressive income tax, a

Republican. Dwight Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System. There were Republicans who helped FDR in Congress give millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, the chance to go college on the GI bill.

So this is not a partisan idea. This is an American idea. And that same sense of common purpose exists today. It's alive and well. Maybe not in Washington—[laughter]—but here in Maine, all across America, on Main Streets and town halls, when you talk to our men and women in uniform, and you go to folks' places of worship, they understand this.

Our politics may be divided. But most Americans still understand that we've got a stake in each other. We're greater together. It doesn't matter what you look like, where you 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.

So I know it has been a tough few years. And for all the changes we've made, there are times where folks have gotten frustrated or discouraged, say things are so tough in Washington, so dysfunctional. Things just aren't happening as fast as they need to. And so it's understandable, it's tempting for some folks to just say, you know what, maybe the change we believed in is impossible. But I want to remind you, during the campaign I warned you this was going to be hard. Big change is hard. It takes time. It takes more than a year. It takes more than a

single term. It takes more than a single President.

What it really requires is a committed citizenry who are willing to keep fighting and pushing, inching this closer—inchin' this country closer and closer to its highest ideals.

Michelle will tell you I'm not a perfect man. [Laughter] And I said that I wouldn't be a perfect President. But I made a promise in 2008. I said I'd always tell you what I think, I'd always tell you where I stood. And I said that I'd wake up every single day, fighting as hard as I know how for you. And I have kept that promise. I've kept that promise. I have kept that promise.

And so if you're willing to keep pushing with me and keep fighting with me, keep reaching for that vision that we believed in, then I promise you we won't just win another election, but we will finish what we started in 2008. And this country will be better for it. And we will remind the world just why it is that the United States of 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 5:08 p.m. at Southern Maine Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Schwartz, engineer, Kestrel Aircraft Co.; and former Sen. George J. Mitchell.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Portland, Maine March 30, 2012

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, first of all, you want Karen and Bonnie having your back because you can tell that they're not going to take no for an answer. [Laughter] It is just a thrill to be here. I want to thank both of them. I also want to thank Bobby and Rob, because, like me, they don't shine quite as brightly as their spouses. [Laughter] But nevertheless, we are extremely fortunate to be improving our gene pool because of who we married.

A couple of other people I just want to acknowledge. First of all, your outstanding Members of Congress: Chellie Pingree is here; somebody who always is fighting for working people, Mike Michaud is here. One of the true statesmen in the history of American politics, George Mitchell is here. Your former Governor, John Baldacci is here. And one of the best SBA Administrators of all time, Karen Mills is in the house.

Now, I will confess that part of the reason I came here was Michelle just had too good a time. [Laughter] She came up here, and she