

youngest guest ask the four questions, and of course, look forward to a good bowl of matzo ball soup.

Michelle and I are proud to celebrate with friends here at home and around the world, including those in the State of Israel.

So, on behalf of the entire Obama family, *Chag Sameach*.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 4:05 p.m. on March 29 in the Library at the White House.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser April 5, 2012

The President. Hello, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, nice job, everybody. [Laughter] What an extraordinary event. It is wonderful to be here with so many old friends and new friends as well.

A couple of people I just want to say a special thank you to: first of all, somebody who is a class act and cares about working families, has been working so hard for so many years, first in the House, now our junior Senator from the great State of Maryland, Ben Cardin. Thank you. I also want to acknowledge somebody who is going to be critical to what's happening this year because he is going to be our host for the Democratic National Convention, the mayor of the great city of Charlotte, Anthony Foxx is in the house.

Now, it is good to see all of you.

Audience member. Good to see you!

The President. Well, thank you. [Laughter]

Obviously, I have, every once in a while, a little bit of time to reflect in between a few responsibilities as President—[laughter]—and coaching Sasha's basketball team—[laughter]—and making sure I'm doing what I'm told by my wife. And so I think back to the last 3 years. And I think back to all the work we did in 2008 and all the people who were involved in this remarkable journey that we've been on. And I'm reminded that, let's face it, back in 2008, the reason why you guys got involved and supported me was not because it was a sure thing. [Laughter] I was not the odds-on favorite. [Laughter] Whenever you support somebody named Barack Hussein Obama to run for President of the United States—[laughter]—you're betting on the underdog.

But the reason that so many of you put your heart and soul into the campaign, the reason that I decided to run, despite having a pretty young family and asking enormous sacrifices from them, was because we shared a vision about what America should be. We shared commitments to each other about who we are as a people and what we want to leave behind for our children and our grandchildren.

And that's what the campaign was about. It was about bringing about change not for change's sake, but bringing about change because there were certain values that we cared deeply about and we didn't see those values reflected in the policies of our Government. And we worried about the future.

Now, this was all before we knew that we were entering into the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis that any of us have seen in our lifetimes. We didn't understand that we would be losing 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I took office and another 4 million just in the few months after I took office, 800,000 jobs the month I was sworn in. We didn't realize the magnitude of the collapse of the housing industry and the possibility that we might dip into a great depression.

But we did understand that for too long, for too many people, the basic American compact, the basic idea that if you work hard, if you're responsible, if you're looking after your family, that you should be able to find a job that pays a living wage, and you should be able to have health insurance so that you don't worry about going bankrupt if somebody in your family gets sick, that you should be able to send your kids to college and aspire to higher heights than you ever achieved, that you should be able to retire with some dignity and respect. We understood

that that basic compact for too many people felt like it was slipping away.

And so the vision we shared was an American where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules. That's what we were fighting for that basic American promise.

And as we reflect back over the last 3 years, as tough a 3 years as this country has seen in a very long time, we understand that we've still got a lot of work to do. We're not there yet. But we can take some pride—you can take some pride—in knowing that because of the actions you took in 2008, we've brought about a lot of the change that we believed in.

Think about it. Change is the first legislation that I signed into law, the Lilly Ledbetter Act that has a very simple principle: Women should get paid an equal day's pay for an equal day's work, and our daughters should be treated just like our sons when it comes to the workplace. That's what change is. That happened because of you.

Because of you, we were able to save an auto industry and a million jobs that go with it, even when there were a whole bunch of people that were arguing that we should let Detroit go bankrupt. I wasn't about to let that happen. You weren't about to let that happen. And now GM is once again the number-one automaker in the world, seeing record profits. We've seen hundreds of thousands of folks hired back and the economies that are impacted by the auto industry strengthened all across the Midwest. That happened because of you.

And not only did we save the auto industry, but they're now making better cars. *[Laughter]* And along with it, we decided we weren't going to wait for Congress: We went ahead and doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars so that by the middle of the next decade every auto is going to be getting 55 miles per gallon, and that's going to save the average family \$8,000 in their costs at the pump, not to mention all the carbon that's being taken out of the atmosphere so that we can potentially preserve this precious planet of ours. That happened because of you.

Because of you, you don't have to worry about who you love to serve the country you love, because we ended "don't ask, don't tell," as we committed to. That's what change is. Because of you we took \$60 billion that were going to banks in the student loan program, we said, why don't we give that money directly to students. And so there are millions of young people who are getting more Pell grants or qualify for the first time and are able to finance college. That happened because of you.

Because of you, right now 2.5 million young people have health insurance that didn't have it before, and millions of seniors have seen lower prescription drug prices—because of you. And we are going to insure another 30 million people in this country, and we are making sure if you've got health insurance, that they can't drop you when you get sick, the strongest patient protection bill that we've ever seen when it comes to health care. That all happened because of you. That's what change is.

And change is keeping the promise—one of the promises I made in 2008. We ended the war in Iraq. And we refocused our attention on those who actually attacked us on 9/11. And Al Qaida is on its last legs, weaker than it's ever been. And Usama bin Laden is no longer around. And we are transitioning out of Afghanistan. And we've raised America's respect all around the world. That happened because of you.

So all this shouldn't make us complacent. We should not be satisfied. We didn't simply work that hard in 2008 just to clean up the mess that had been left. We got involved and engaged because we understood there were challenges that had been building up over decades that had to be attended to. And we've still got more work to do. The job is not done.

There are still way too many people all across this country that are desperately looking for work. I get letters from them every day, people who are well educated, people who don't have the education they need, but they want to work, and they are sending out *résumés*, they are pounding the pavement, and

they are knocking on doors, and they're worried about their future.

There are folks who have a job, but are having trouble paying the bills, and maybe they've seen the value of their home drop by \$10,000, \$20,000, \$100,000, and they don't know if they're ever going to be able to recover what they thought was their life savings.

We've got people who had decided they've got to forgo retirement, just completely change their plans, just so they can make sure that their children or their grandchildren can still afford college. And we've got young people who have gone to college and racked up a whole bunch of debt and aren't sure whether they can find a job that allows them to pay it off. There are still too many folks for whom that American promise is not yet a reality: good people, responsible people, patriotic people.

Now, understanding that we haven't finished the job yet should invigorate us. It should inspire us to work that much harder. But if that's not sufficient, then it's important to understand that the last thing that we can afford to do is go back to the same economic policies that got us into this mess in the first place, the same economic policies that have betrayed that American promise for too long. And that's exactly what the other side is proposing.

I gave a speech on Tuesday about the congressional budget that's been proposed by the Republicans in the House of Representatives, a budget that Governor Romney, who is the frontrunner in the Republican side, has embraced, said the budget was "marvelous," he said. *[Laughter]* And when you go through this budget, the vision that it portrays is of an America where everybody is fending for themselves, a few are doing very well at the top, and everybody else is struggling to get by.

And the Government is shrunk to the point where things that we take for granted as a society—as an advanced, responsible society—are gutted: education, science and research, early childhood education, caring for our environment, looking after our veterans, keeping up with our infrastructure, rebuilding our roads and our bridges so that they're safe, food safety laws, our capacity to enforce basic consumer

protections. All of this is shrunk to the point of near invisibility.

And the rationale they provide is, well, the biggest crisis we face is the deficit, so we need to do something about it; we've got to make tough choices. They're absolutely right about that. Unfortunately, the vision that they're presenting adds to the deficit problem because they say they're going to cut more taxes for the wealthiest Americans after we have seen the tax rates for wealthy Americans go to below anyplace that they've been since I've been alive.

The contrast between visions in this election could not be more stark, because I believe that America is stronger when we're looking for one another. I believe in the free market. I believe that the private sector is the true generator of job growth. I believe that there are times where government doesn't have the answers, but like most previous Presidents, Democrat and Republican, I understand that we have a role in making sure that not just the powerful do well, but that everybody has got a shot.

I believe we have to make an investment in education because I know from my own life and from Michelle's life that we would not be where we were unless somebody had made an investment in us.

I believe in investing in basic research and science because I understand that all these extraordinary companies that are these enormous wealth generators, many of them would have never been there—Google, Facebook would not exist—had it not been for investments that we made as a country in basic science and research. I understand that makes us all better off.

I believe that it is part of our solemn responsibility to future generations that we look after this planet, that we make sure our air is clean and our water is clean, that we're not poisoning our kids.

I believe our economy does better—one of the things that has made our economy work so well is its transparency and its rule of law, and that consumers are protected, and we have some confidence, if we go into the store and we buy a product, that it's going to be safe.

We've set standards that allowed us not only to create a national market, but help to create an international market. We set the standard. That worked for us. That was good for business. It didn't weaken us.

I believe that in a society as wealthy as ours, we should have a commitment to our seniors and to the disabled. That's not a sign of weakness. That's not socialism. The idea that you want to care for people in our communities so our seniors don't have to plunge into poverty, that they have some modicum of security if they need health care, that a family that has been stricken by an illness doesn't have to worry if they're going to lose their home, that makes us stronger.

I believe in making sure that workers are able to work in a safe environment, that they get paid a decent wage, because I understand the same thing Henry Ford understood when he said, you know what, I want to make sure that my workers can afford to buy my cars. That broad-based prosperity, bottom-up economic growth is what sustains us. That's what I believe, and that's what you believe. And that's what animated our campaign in 2008.

So we are going to have a big, important debate in this country, and I cannot wait, because we have tried what they are selling. It's not like we didn't try it. We have tried what they're peddling, and it did not work. *[Laughter]* And we have been spending the last 3 years cleaning after some of that mess. And I don't want to have to do it again.

So we're going to keep on in a direction that has created 4 million jobs in the last 2 years. And we're going to keep on in a direction that has seen manufacturing in America coming back. And we're going to stay on the course that is helping us to double our exports so that we're not just known as a society that buys and consumes, but a society that creates and innovates and sells all around the world.

And we're going to continue to double down on education reform so that every young American knows that they can get the skills they need to succeed in this society. And we're going to produce American-made energy. And we're going to take an all-of-the-above strategy.

And we actually are seeing the highest oil production in this country in 8 years. Our imports have diminished below 50 percent, the lowest they've been in 13 years. So we're producing more oil. We're producing more gas. But we're also going to produce more clean energy: more wind and more solar and more bio-fuels. It's the smart thing to do. It's good for business. It's good for our environment. And I'm not going to cede those industries to other countries.

And we're going to continue on a course in foreign policy that maintains the strongest military on Earth, but also understands that we've got to have as powerful a diplomatic strategy, as powerful an economic strategy that we are exporting our values and upholding core ideas about how women are treated and how the young are treated and how minorities are treated, because that's part of what makes us special. That's part of what makes us exceptional.

So this is going to be a big debate. And it's going to be a fun debate—*[laughter]*—because it's always good to have the truth on your side. But it's not going to be easy. It's not going to be easy. We're going to have to work hard. There are a lot of folks out there still struggling. And there are a lot of folks who, understandably, seeing what goes on in Washington, sometimes lose heart, and they get cynical. Maybe some of you do sometimes.

You say to yourself, you know what, it just doesn't seem like things are on the level. It doesn't seem like people are thinking about me or my community. And they see the amounts of money that are being spent and the special interests that dominate and the lobbyists that always have access, and they say to themselves, maybe I don't count. They get discouraged. And that makes this tougher in some ways.

Back in 2008, being an Obama supporter, that was fresh and new, and I didn't have any gray hair. *[Laughter]* And this time, we're all a little older. We're a little wiser. Here is the thing I want to communicate to you though. That spirit that we're all in this together, that spirit that Abraham Lincoln understood and Teddy Roosevelt understood and Dwight Eisenhower understood—it wasn't just FDR

and Johnson and Kennedy, because it's not a Democratic or a Republican idea, it's an American idea—that spirit may not always be evident in Washington, but it's still out there in the country.

You still see it in town halls. You still see it in churches or synagogues. You still see it in our amazing men and women in uniform. They still understand that we're stronger together than we can ever be on our own. They still understand an America in which everybody has a fair shot, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter what your last name.

And so if we're energized, if we're determined, that core sense of decency and possibility and hope, it's still out there. But we have to make sure that we are determined. I used to say in 2008 that this wasn't going to be easy, I'm not a perfect man, I'm not going to be a perfect President. But I used to tell people, I'd always tell you what I thought, I'll always tell you where I stood, and I wake up every morning thinking about how I could work as hard as I could to make sure that every American had a

chance, every American felt that sense of possibility that I've lived out in my own life.

And I've kept that promise. I have kept that promise. And my hope is that you are willing to continue on this journey with me, that you're willing to work just as hard or harder than you did in 2008. Not just writing a check. I need you to get on the phone. I need you to knock on doors. I need some of you to do what you did last time: travel to other States and talk to your friends and your neighbors and your co-workers and fight back against the cynicism and answer the lies that may come up.

I am as determined—I am more determined than I was in 2008. I hope you are too. Because if you are, we will finish what we started, and we'll remind ourselves just why it is that this is the greatest country on Earth.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:28 p.m. at the Mandarin Oriental hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts.

Remarks at the White House Forum on Women and the Economy *April 6, 2012*

Thank you. Everybody, sit down, sit down. I was going to head over here earlier and they said, no, no, this place is full of women, and they're still settling down. [*Laughter*] I said, what do you mean settling down? What are they doing over there? Just creating havoc.

Welcome to the White House, everybody. It is a pleasure to be surrounded by so many talented, accomplished women. It makes me feel right at home. Although usually, I've got my wingman Bo with me. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank everybody who's made this forum on women and the economy possible. I thank Mika for helping moderate today and proving that, on your show every morning, that women really are the better half. [*Laughter*] Joe is not denying it. [*Laughter*] He's not denying it.

I want to thank the members of my Cabinet and administration who are participating today. And I want to thank all of you who've come today lending your time and your energy to the critical cause of broadening opportunity for America's women

Right now no issue is more important than restoring economic security for all our families in the wake of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression. And that begins with making sure everyone who wants a job has one. So we welcome today's news that our businesses created another 121,000 jobs last month and the unemployment rate ticked down. Our economy has now created more than 4 million private sector jobs over the past 2 years and more than 600,000 in the past 3 months alone. But it's clear to every American