

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Columbus, Ohio May 5, 2012

The President. Hello, Ohio! It is good to be back in Ohio! Right before I came out, somebody happened to give me a buckeye for good luck.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back! Now, before I begin, I want to say thank you to a few people who are joining us here today. Your mayor, Michael Coleman, is here. Former Governor Ted Strickland is here. Senator Sherrod Brown is in the house. An American hero, John Glenn is with us.

And I want to thank so many of our neighborhood team leaders for being here today. You guys will be the backbone of this campaign. And I want the rest of you to join a team or become a leader yourself, because we are going to win this thing the old-fashioned way: door by door, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood.

Ohio, 4 years ago, you and I began a journey together. I didn't run, and you didn't work your hearts out, just to win an election. We came together to reclaim the basic bargain that built the largest middle class and the most prosperous nation on Earth.

We came together because we believe that in America, your success shouldn't be determined by the circumstances of your birth. If you're willing to work hard, you should be able to find a good job. If you're willing to meet your responsibilities, you should be able to own a home, maybe start a business, give your children the chance to do even better, no matter who you are or where you come from or what you look like or what your last name is.

We believe the free market is one of the greatest forces for progress in human history, that businesses are the engine of growth, that risk takers and innovators should be rewarded. But we also believe that at its best, the free market has never been a license to take whatever you want, however you can get it, that alongside our entrepreneurial spirit and our rugged individualism, America only prospers

when we meet our obligations to one another and to future generations.

We came together in 2008 because our country had strayed from these basic values. A record surplus was squandered on tax cuts for people who didn't need them and weren't even asking for them. Two wars were being waged on a credit card. Wall Street speculators reaped huge profits by making bets with other people's money. Manufacturing left our shores. A shrinking number of Americans did fantastically well, while most people struggled with falling incomes, rising costs, the slowest job growth in half a century.

It was a house of cards that collapsed in the most destructive crisis since the Great Depression. In the last 6 months of 2008, even as we were campaigning, nearly 3 million of our neighbors lost their jobs. Over 800,000 more were lost in the month I took office alone.

It was tough. But I tell you what, Ohio, the American people are tougher. All across this country, people like you dug in. Some of you retrained. Some of you went back to school. Small-business owners cut back on expenses, but did everything they could to keep their employees. Yes, there were setbacks. Yes, there were disappointments. But we didn't quit. We don't quit. Together, we're fighting our way back.

When some wanted to let Detroit go bankrupt, we made a bet on American workers, on the ingenuity of American companies. And today, our auto industry is back on top of the world. Manufacturers started investing again, adding jobs for the first time since the 1990s. Businesses got back to the basics, exports surged. And over 4 million jobs were created in the last 2 years, more than 1 million of those in the last 6 months alone. Are we satisfied?

Audience members. No!

The President. Of course not. Too many of our friends and family are still out there looking for work. The housing market is still weak, deficits are still too high, States are still laying off teachers, first-responders. This crisis took years

to develop, and the economy is still facing headwinds. And it will take sustained, persistent effort—yours and mine—for America to fully recover. That's the truth. We all know it.

But we are making progress. And now we face a choice. Now we face a choice, Ohio.

Audience member. We love you, Barack Obama!

Audience members. Aww!

The President. [Laughter] Thank you. Now we face a choice. For the last few years, the Republicans who run this Congress have insisted that we go right back to the policies that created this mess. But to borrow a line from our friend Bill Clinton, now their agenda is on steroids. This time, they want even bigger tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. This time, they want even deeper cuts to things like education and Medicare and research and technology.

This time, they want to give banks and insurance companies even more power to do as they please. And now, after a long and spirited primary, Republicans in Congress have found a nominee for President who has promised to rubber stamp this agenda if he gets the chance.

Ohio, I tell you what: We cannot give him that chance. Not now. Not with so much at stake. This is not just another election. This is a make-or-break moment for the middle class, and we've been through too much to turn back now.

We have come too far to abandon the change we fought for these past few years. We have to move forward to the future we imagined in 2008, where everyone gets a fair shot and everyone does their fair share and everyone plays by the same rules. That's the choice in this election, and that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

Governor Romney is a patriotic American who has raised a wonderful family, and he has much to be proud of. He's run a large financial firm, and he's run a State. But I think he has drawn the wrong lessons from those experiences. He sincerely believes that if CEOs and wealthy investors like him make money, the rest of us will automatically prosper as well.

When a woman in Iowa shared the story of her financial struggles, he responded with economic theory. He told her, "Our productivity equals our income." Well, let me tell you something. The problem with our economy isn't that the American people aren't productive enough; you've been working harder than ever. The challenge we face right now—the challenge we've faced for over a decade—is that harder work hasn't led to higher incomes. It's that bigger profits haven't led to better jobs.

Governor Romney doesn't seem to get that. He doesn't seem to understand that maximizing profits by whatever means necessary—whether through layoffs or outsourcing or tax avoidance or union-busting—might not always be good for the average American or for the American economy.

Why else would he want to spend trillions more on tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans? Why else would he propose cutting his own taxes while raising them on 18 million working families? Why else would he want to slash the investments that have always helped the economy grow, but at the same time, stop regulating the reckless behavior on Wall Street that helped the economy crash?

Somehow, he and his friends in Congress think that the same bad ideas will lead to a different result. Or they're just hoping you won't remember what happened the last time we tried it their way.

Well, Ohio, I'm here to say that we were there, we remember, and we are not going back. We are moving this country forward.

Look, we want businesses to succeed. We want entrepreneurs and investors rewarded when they take risks, when they create jobs and grow our economy. But the true measure of our prosperity is more than just a running tally of every balance sheet and quarterly profit report. I don't care how many ways you try to explain it: Corporations aren't people. People are people.

We measure prosperity not just by our total GDP, not just by how many billionaires we produce, but how well the typical family is

doing, whether they can go as far as their dreams and hard work will take them.

And we understand that in this country, people succeed when they have a chance to get a decent education and learn new skills, and by the way, so do the businesses that hire them or the companies that they start.

We know that our economy grows when we support research into medical breakthroughs and new technologies that lead to the next Internet app or lifesaving drug.

We know that our country is stronger when we can count on affordable health insurance and Medicare and Social Security, when we protect our kids from toxic dumping and mercury pollution, when there are rules to make sure we aren't taken advantage of by credit card companies and mortgage lenders and financial institutions. And we know these rules aren't just good for seniors or kids or consumers; they're good for business too. They're part of what makes the market work.

Look, we don't expect government to solve all our problems, and it shouldn't try. I learned from my mom that no education policy can take the place of a parent's love and affection. As a young man, I worked with a group of Catholic churches who taught me that no poverty program can make as much of a difference as the kindness and commitment of a caring soul. Not every regulation is smart. Not every tax dollar is spent wisely. Not every person can be helped who refuses to help themselves.

But that's not an excuse to tell the vast majority of responsible, hard-working Americans, "You're on your own," that unless you're lucky enough to have parents who can lend you money, you may not be able to go to college; that even if you pay your premiums every month, you're out of luck if an insurance company decides to drop your coverage when you need it most.

That's not how we built America. That's not who we are. We built this country together. [Applause] We built this country together.

We built railroads and highways, the Hoover Dam, the Golden Gate Bridge together. We sent my grandfather's generation to college on the GI bill together. We instituted a minimum

wage and worker safety laws together. Together, we touched the surface of the Moon, unlocked the mystery of the atom, connected the world through our own science and imagination. We did these things together, not because they benefited any particular individual or group, but because they made us all richer. Because they gave us all opportunity. Because they moved us forward together, as one people, as one Nation.

That's the true lesson of our past, Ohio. That's the right vision for our future. And that's why I'm running for President.

I'm running to make sure that by the end of the decade, more of our citizens hold a college degree than any other nation on Earth. I want to help our schools hire and reward the best teachers, especially in math and science. I want to give 2 million more Americans the chance to go to community colleges and learn the skills that local businesses are looking for right now. In the 21st century, higher education can't be a luxury. It is an economic imperative that every American should be able to afford. That's the choice in this election. That's why I'm running for President.

I'm running to make sure the next generation of high-tech manufacturing takes root in places like Columbus and Cleveland and Pittsburgh and Richmond. I want to stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs and profits overseas and start rewarding companies that create jobs right here in the United States of America. That's the choice in this election.

I'm running so that we can keep moving towards a future where we control our own energy. Our dependence on foreign oil is at its lowest point in 16 years. By the middle of the next decade, our cars will average nearly 55 miles per gallon. Thousands of Americans have jobs right now because the production of renewable energy in this country has nearly doubled in just 3 years.

So now is not the time to cut these investments to pay for another \$4 billion giveaway to the oil companies. Now is the time to end the subsidies for an industry that's rarely been more profitable. Let's double down on a clean energy future that's never been more promis-

ing—for our economy and for our security and for the safety of our planet. That’s why I’m running for President. That’s the choice in this election, Ohio.

For the first time in 9 years, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. Usama bin Laden is no longer a threat to this country. Al Qaida is on the path to defeat. And by 2014, the war in Afghanistan will be over.

America is safer and more respected because of the courage and selflessness of the United States Armed Forces. And as long as I’m Commander in Chief, this country will care for our veterans and serve our veterans as well as they’ve served us. Because nobody who fights for this country should have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads when they come home.

My opponent said it was “tragic” to end the war in Iraq. He said he won’t set a timeline for ending the war in Afghanistan. I have, and I intend to keep it. After a decade of war that’s cost us thousands of lives and over a trillion dollars, the Nation we need to build is our own. I will use half of what we’re no longer spending on war to pay down the deficit and the other half to repair our roads and our bridges, our runways, and our wireless networks. That’s the choice in this election, to rebuild America.

I’m running to pay down our debt in a way that’s balanced and responsible. After inheriting a trillion-dollar deficit, I signed \$2 trillion of spending cuts into law. And now I want to finish the job by streamlining Government and cutting more waste and reforming our Tax Code so that it is simpler and fairer and asks the wealthiest Americans to pay a little bit more.

My opponent won’t tell us how he’d pay for his new, \$5 trillion tax cut, a tax cut that gives an average of \$250,000 to every millionaire in this country. But we know the bill for that tax cut will either be passed on to our children or it will be paid for by a whole lot of ordinary Americans. That’s what we know. And I refuse to let that happen again.

I refuse to pay for another millionaire’s tax cut by eliminating medical research projects

into things like cancer and Alzheimer’s disease. I refuse to pay for another tax cut by kicking children off of Head Start programs or asking students to pay more for college or eliminating health insurance for millions of poor and elderly and disabled Americans on Medicaid.

And as long as I’m President of the United States, I will never allow Medicare to be turned into a voucher that would end the program as we know it. We will not go back to the days when our citizens spent their golden years at the mercy of private insurance companies. We will reform Medicare, not by shifting the cost of care to seniors, but by reducing the spending that isn’t making people healthier. That’s what’s at stake in this election. That’s what’s at stake, Ohio.

On issue after issue, we can’t afford to spend the next 4 years going backward. America doesn’t need to refight the battles we just had over Wall Street reform and health care reform. On health care reform, here is what I know: Allowing 2.5 million young people to stay on their parent’s health insurance plan, that was the right thing to do. Cutting prescription drug costs for seniors, that was the right thing to do. I will not go back to the days when insurance companies had unchecked power to cancel your policy or deny your coverage or charge women differently from men. We’re not going back there. We’re going forward.

We don’t need another political fight about ending a woman’s right to choose or getting rid of Planned Parenthood or taking away access to affordable birth control. I want women to control their own health choices, just like I want my daughters to have the same opportunities as your sons. We are not turning back the clock. We are moving forward.

We’re not returning to the days when you could be kicked out of the United States military just because of who you are or who you love. That would be wrong for our national security, and it would be a betrayal of our values.

This should be the last election where multi-million-dollar donations speak louder than the voices of ordinary citizens. We need more checks on lobbyists and special interests, not less.

We're not going to eliminate the EPA. We're not going to roll back the bargaining rights that generations of workers fought for. It's time to stop denying citizenship to responsible young people just because they're the children of undocumented immigrants. This country is at its best when we harness the God-given talents of every individual, when we hear every voice, when we come together as one American family, striving for the same dream.

That's what we're fighting for. That's what we're fighting for, Ohio: a bold America, a competitive America, a generous America, a forward-looking America, where everybody has a chance to make of their life what they will. That's what made us the envy of the world. That's what makes us great. That's why I'm running again for President of the United States.

And that is why I need your help. Ohio, this election will be even closer than the last. Too many of our friends, too many of our neighbors are still hurting because of this crisis. I've heard from too many people wondering why they haven't been able to get one of the jobs that have been created, why their home is still under water, why their family hasn't yet been touched by the recovery.

The other side won't be offering these Americans a real answer to these questions. They won't offer a better vision or a new set of ideas. But they will be spending more money than we've ever seen before on negative ads—on TV, on radio, in the mail, on the Internet—ads that exploit people's frustrations for my opponent's political gain. Over and over again, they'll tell you that America is down and out, and they'll tell you who to blame and ask if you're better off than you were before the worst crisis in our lifetime.

We've seen that play before. But you know what? The real question—the question that will actually make a difference in your life and in the lives of your children—is not just about how we're doing today. It's about how we'll be doing tomorrow.

Will we better off if more Americans get a better education? That's the question. Will we better off if we depend less on foreign oil and more on our own ingenuity? That's the ques-

tion. Will we better off if we start doing some nation-building right here at home? That's the question. Will we be better off if we bring down our deficit without gutting the very things we need to grow? When we look back 4 years from now or 10 years from now or 20 years from now, won't we be better off if we have the courage to keep moving forward?

That's the question in this election. [*Applause*] That's the question in this election. And the outcome is entirely up to you. Now, sure, we'll have to contend with even more negative ads, with even more cynicism and nastiness and sometimes just plain foolishness. There will be more of that than we saw in the last campaign.

But if there is one thing that we learned in 2008, it's that nothing is more powerful than millions of voices calling for change. When enough of you knock on doors, when you pick up phones, when you talk to your friends, when you decide that it's time for change to happen, guess what? Change happens. Change comes to America.

And that's the spirit we need again. If people ask you what this campaign is about, you tell them it's still about hope. You tell them it's still about change. You tell them it's still about ordinary people who believe that in the face of great odds, we can make a difference in the life of this country.

Because I still believe, Ohio. I still believe that we are not as divided as our politics suggest. I still believe that we have more in common than the pundits tell us, that we're not Democrats or Republicans, but Americans first and foremost. I still believe in you, and I'm asking you to keep believing in me. I told you in 2008 that I wasn't a perfect man, and I would never be a perfect President. But I promised that I would always tell you what I thought. I would always tell you where I stood. And I would wake up every single day fighting for you as hard as I know how.

And I have that kept that promise. I have kept that promise, Ohio. And I will keep it so long as I have the honor of being your President. So if you're willing to stick with me, if you're willing to fight with me and press on with

me, if you're willing to work even harder in this election than you did in the last election, I guarantee you, we will move this country forward.

We will finish what we started. We are still fired up. We are still ready to go. And we are going to remind the world once more just why it is that the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. at the Value-City Schottenstein Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. John H. Glenn, Jr.; former President William J. Clinton; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Richmond, Virginia May 5, 2012

The President. Hello, Virginia! What do you think about Michelle Obama? I hate following her, she is too good. And she looked good too, didn't she? Yes, she does. I'm just saying, she looked pretty good. How's it going, VCU?

Well, before I begin, there are a few people that I want to thank for joining us here today. First of all, your mayor Dwight Jones is here. Representative Bobby Scott is in the house. Your former Governor Tim Kaine is here. And a guy that, I gather, is pretty popular in these parts, Coach Shaka Smart is in the house. When I saw Coach backstage, he said, "I just want you to know, we're going to be coming to the White House just like that Kentucky team came this week." And he wasn't smiling. [Laughter]

I also want to thank so many of our neighborhood team leaders for being here today. You guys will be the backbone of this campaign. And I want the rest of you to join a team or become a leader yourself, because we are going to win this thing door by door, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood.

Audience member. We love you, Barack!

The President. I love you back. Love Virginia. Virginia, 4 years ago, you and I began a journey together. I didn't run, and you did not work your hearts out, just to win an election. We came together to reclaim the basic bargain that built the largest middle class and the most prosperous nation on Earth.

We came together because we believe that in America, your success shouldn't be determined by the circumstances of your birth. If

you're willing to work hard, you should be able to find a good job. If you're willing to meet your responsibilities, you should be able to own a home, maybe start a business, give your kids the chance to do even better, no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, no matter what your last name is.

We believe the free market is one of the greatest forces for progress in human history, that businesses are the engine of growth, and that risk takers and innovators should be rewarded. But we also believe that at its best, the free market has never been a license to take whatever you want, however you can get it. We've understood that alongside our entrepreneurial spirit, our rugged individualism, America only prospers when we meet our obligations to one another and to future generations.

We came together in 2008 because our country had strayed from these basic American values. A record surplus was squandered on tax cuts for people who didn't need them and weren't even asking for them. Two wars were being waged on a credit card. Wall Street speculators reaped huge profits by making bets with other people's money. Manufacturing left our shores. A shrinking number of Americans did fantastically well, while most people struggled with falling incomes and rising costs and the slowest job growth in half a century.

And in 2008, that house of cards collapsed in the most destructive crisis since the Great Depression. In the last 6 months of that year, even as we campaigned, nearly 3 million of our