

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks at a Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate R. Creigh Deeds in McLean, Virginia

August 6, 2009

The President. Hello, Virginia. Are you fired up? Are you ready to go? It is good to be in Virginia, a place that has been good to me. First of all, it's just good to be next to a guy who spends every single day thinking about your future, thinking about your children's future, and the future of this Commonwealth, one of my best friends, somebody who is dedicated to the kind of public service that I so deeply believe in, please give it up for your Governor, Tim Kaine.

I think some of you know that Tim was the first statewide official outside of Illinois to endorse me, in Richmond, Virginia. I called him up just a few weeks after I'd announced, and he was kind of new so he didn't know any better. *[Laughter]* So he said, "Yeah, sure, I'll endorse you." *[Laughter]* I think his wife, Anne, had something to do with it also. And he has stood with me ever since, on every tough battle that we've had. And so I am just grateful for him. He was there when people couldn't even pronounce my name. *[Laughter]* So we're grateful.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Now, part of the reason that I like being in Virginia is because there is a tradition here that has been developing, starting with your former Governor and now outstanding Senator, Mark Warner. A tradition that—it starts off with the basic idea that we're all in this together. Mark Warner came in at a time when the fashionable politics was the nasty kind of politics, the slash-and-burn politics, the arguing and arguing without everything—ever getting anything done kind of politics. And Mark Warner said, "You know what, we can try something different. What we're going to do is we're going to be pragmatic instead of ideological. We are going to try to bring people together rather than push them apart. We are going to make sure that we listen to other people's ideas. We're going to bring labor and business together. We're going to make sure that we don't have a southern Virginia and a northern Virginia. We've got one Commonwealth of Virginia."

And so what he was able to do was to shape a kind of politics here in the Commonwealth that has resulted in one of the best-managed States in the country, a State that was able to make investments in education even as it was dealing with a fiscal crisis, a State that has now been able to navigate some of the toughest economic times that we've seen in the history of the country, because of that foundation of civility and practicality and hard work.

Tim Kaine embodied that tradition, and he has now continued it during his term in office. That's not just a stroke of good luck here in the State of Virginia. It's because you stood up and chose that kind of politics. You decided to take the better way, and now you've got the chance to keep moving forward by electing somebody who is cut from the same cloth, somebody who has that same vision for the Commonwealth, Creigh Deeds.

Now, I admit I'm a little biased here. I'm a little biased. First of all, Creigh Deeds and I both have some wonderful daughters. Creigh Deeds and I both served in the State senate. I served for 8 years, and he's now served for 8 years. Creigh Deeds and I both have—let's face

it—sort of funny names. *[Laughter]* Still trying to figure out the spelling of "Creigh"—*[laughter]*—but that's not the reason I'm here tonight. It's not just because of my personal bias.

This is a man who's spent his life working to do right by his family, and the last two decades working to do right by the people of Virginia. As a prosecutor, as a delegate, as a State senator, he has worked tirelessly to advance this Commonwealth that he's loved his whole life.

He wrote Megan's Law, advocated for the AMBER Alert program to protect our children. He worked to preserve open space and protect the environment. When Virginia faced that financial crisis a few years back, he was on Mark Warner's team to make sure that you reformed the budget and controlled spending, and even in the face of that crisis, record investments in education, laying a foundation for Virginia's growth.

Creigh will continue the progress that has been made in this great Commonwealth. He will continue to make that progress, especially when it comes to education. You heard the commitment to education that he made today. And I know he will follow through because that's been the key to our lives. Growing up, neither one of us had much. But we had mothers who loved us and pushed us, who instilled a belief that education was the best shot that we were going to have at life. We are living proof that education is the single best investment we can make in our future and our children's future. And the people of Virginia understand that.

That's why he's going to invest in pre-kindergarten programs and support our teachers and expand access to higher education. He knows the smartest workforce is going to attract the best jobs. And I want to partner with Creigh Deeds, because we're going to make some commitments at the national level. I've already made sure that we strengthen and improve our education system from cradle to graduation, from college through career, so that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. And we're going to have them right here in Virginia.

Smart decisions, sound investments, a civility to our politics, that's why Virginia's become the Nation's number-one State to do business in. That's why Virginia is going to come out of the other side of this recession stronger and better prepared than before, because of the forward-thinking leadership of Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and Creigh Deeds.

Now, we have to be honest, though. Even though Virginia is weathering this recession, this storm, better than most States, primarily because of this Democratic leadership, I know that too many families in Virginia are still hurting. Unemployment is still over 7 percent. Folks here are still losing their homes or being crushed by health premiums that have doubled over the past 9 years. But without the steps we would have—we've taken, our troubled economy and the pain it's inflicting on Virginia's families would be a lot worse.

I'm always amused when I hear some folks, some critics start talking about, "Well, look at the mess that the economy is in." They seem to have some selective memory. It didn't just happen somehow. *[Laughter]* When my administration took office about 6 months ago, we faced the worst recession since the Great Depression. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs a month. It was nearly impossible to take out a home loan or a car loan or a student loan or loans for small business to make payroll and keep the doors open. And economists all across the ideological spectrum, left and right, were saying we might be tipping over into a Great Depression.

At the time, there were some who thought that doing nothing was an option. Remember that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I disagreed. I thought we had to act boldly and firmly. And so we took steps to arrest our housing crisis and avert the collapse of our financial system. Less than 1 month after taking office, we enacted the most sweeping recovery package in history. And by the way, we did it without earmarks and the porkbarrel projects that the previous administration had loaded up with.

Now, there's been a lot of misinformation out there about the recovery plan. I hope you don't mind, Virginia, I just want to set the record straight. This is very simple stuff here. The Recovery Act is made up of three parts. The first part, about one-third of the Recovery Act, is a middle class tax cut for 95 percent of working Americans, a tax cut. And by the way, that's exactly what I promised you when I was running for President of the United States. So when you hear the naysayers and the critics saying this plan isn't money well spent, just remember, one-third of it's going right into your pockets. That seems like well-spent money to me.

Another third—all right, so one-third tax cuts. Sometimes I see folks outside with signs: Don't raise my taxes. I haven't raised your taxes. [*Laughter*] I've lowered your taxes. That's point number one.

Another third was relief for people and States who had fallen on hard times because of the economic crisis. So we expanded unemployment benefits to help folks who had lost their jobs and were looking for work. That means—that's made a difference for about 150,000 Virginians. We made health insurance cheaper for families who rely on COBRA after they've lost a job and they're out there looking for a job. We made it 65 percent cheaper. [*Applause*] That's you right there. That's you right there. I've got some testimony. I've got an amen corner right here.

We helped States facing historic budget shortfalls, which prevented layoffs and protected essential services. In Virginia, that means 13,000 folks who are still working in our schools, more than 300 deputy sheriffs who are still keeping communities safe, State colleges and universities like UVA and Virginia Tech that haven't had to raise tuition, because of the recovery package.

So I just want to know: These critics—I want to make sure—are they opposed to the tax cuts that went into your pocket? Are they opposed to making sure that we're not cutting back on vital services and giving States some relief? That's two-thirds of the Recovery Act.

Now, the last third is making the vital investments that are putting people back to work today to create stronger economy tomorrow, the largest new investment of infrastructure in America since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s. Around here, that means upgrading the Lake Barton Dam, improving the Fairfax County Parkway, building new roads across northern Virginia to ease congestion and make your lives a little bit better.

So step by step, we are moving forward. The American people understand this recession was years in the making. It didn't just start last month. That bank crisis didn't happen on my watch. Let's get the history straight.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. So, you know, and then we start getting into the whole issue of spending. Now, let me tell you, Virginia has a history of prudent fiscal policy. That's what Tim Kaine's been about, that's what Mark Warner's been about, that's what Creigh Deeds is going to be about.

So now you've got folks on the other side of the aisle pointing at the Federal budget and somehow trying to put that at our feet. Well, let's look at the history. When I walked in, we had a \$1.3 trillion deficit. That was gift-wrapped and waiting for me when I walked in the Oval Office. *[Laughter]* Without my policies we'd have an even higher deficit going forward. The one exception is the recovery package that we had to do in order to get this economy moving again.

So you can't go out there and charge up the credit card, go on an all kinds of things shopping sprees on things that didn't grow the economy, hand over the bill to us, and then say, "Why haven't you paid it off yet?" I got that bill from you. *[Laughter]* So we've got some work to do. I don't mind, by the way, being responsible. I expect to be held responsible for these issues because I'm the President. But I don't want the folks who created the mess to do a lot of talking. I want them just to get out of the way so we can clean up the mess. I don't mind cleaning up after them, but don't do a lot of talking. Am I wrong, Virginia?

Audience members. No!

The President. So I'm convinced that the actions we've taken in the first 6 months have helped stop our economic freefall. We're losing jobs at half the rate we were at the beginning of this year. Our financial system is no longer on the verge of collapse. The market is up. Housing prices are up for the first time in nearly 3 years. So, we may just be seeing the very beginnings of the end of this recession.

But if we're going to move from recovery to prosperity, we need to rebuild our economy stronger than before. Because even before this crisis hit, we had an economy that was failing to create the kinds of good jobs with rising incomes for middle class families that is the bedrock of America. There was a lot of money being made at the very top, but it wasn't an economy that was built to compete in the 21st century, one where we spend more on health care than any nation but aren't any healthier—that's not sensible—where we've been slow to invest in clean energy technologies that have created new jobs and new industries in other countries, where we watched our graduation rates lag behind too much of the world. That's not a recipe for success.

That's why, even as we work to rescue our economy from this crisis, we're now laying the new foundation for the country to thrive in the 21st century. We are going to prepare every child, everywhere in America, to compete and win with a world-class education. We're going to invest in the clean energy jobs of the future and train our workers for those jobs. We're going to finally protect consumers and bring down the health care costs that are driving this Nation into debt. We're going to pass reform to ensure that a health care system doesn't just work for insurance companies, but for all the people of Virginia and all the people of the United States.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Yes we can.

There are those out there who want us to go down the same old path, the path where we just throw up our hands and say, "We can't do anything about education. It's too hard. We can't do anything about health care. It's too tough." A path where our children fall behind, our workers lose out—they watch jobs being shipped overseas, our health care costs keep rising, our oil dependency keeps on growing. All we do is just then bicker and point fingers.

Well, that's not the future I accept for the United States of America. That's not the future that Creigh Deeds accepts for the future of Virginia. That's not what you want for your

children and your grandchildren. So we're setting a new course for this Nation. It's the one that Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and Creigh Deeds have already begun blazing right here in Virginia.

They know that leadership is more than just about managing crises. It's about making smart decisions for the future, even in the toughest times. That's what Creigh Deeds will do. And that's why every single one of you is going to have to do the work to put him into office, to carry on that tradition of leadership, to bring about a brighter future for generations of Virginians.

We did not come this far by lowering our sights or scaling back our dreams. That's not the American way. It's not about looking backwards; it's about looking forward. We didn't become the greatest nation on Earth because we just stood still in the face of great challenges, shrugged our shoulders, and said, "No, we can't." We are Americans. We're a forward-looking people. We stare down challenges. We've always faced the future, not with fear, but with determination, not with doubt, but with hope. We've always taken great chances and reached for new horizons and remade the world around us.

Last year, Virginia, you helped lead a movement of Americans who believed that their voices could make a difference, a movement of young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled, not disabled. Everybody was involved. It didn't come from Washington, it came from the bottom up. That's what we need to do in this race. That's what Creigh Deeds is committed to. That's what this election is all about.

I need every one of you to knock on doors and make phone calls and get fired up once again so that we can go towards the future, confident with Creigh Deeds leading the great Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:02 p.m. at the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia and his wife, Anne Holton; Senator Mark R. Warner of Virginia; and Amanda, Rebecca, and Susannah Deeds, daughters, and Emma Hicklin, mother, of Virginia State Senator R. Creigh Deeds. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 7.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Gubernatorial candidate R. Creigh Deeds, rally in McLean, VA.

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Subjects: Budget, Federal : Deficit; Business and industry : Credit freeze situation; Economy, national : American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Standards and school accountability; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment insurance; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Health insurance, protection of coverage; Taxation : Tax relief; Transportation : Highway system,

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