

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Miami, Florida
April 15, 2010

The President. Hello, Miami! Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Everybody have a seat, everybody have a seat. Settle down here for a second. Oh, it is good to be back in Miami. It's good to be back in the Sunshine State. I came to Florida today to visit NASA, lay out a bold new vision for America's future in space. And I figured, hey, while I'm here—[*laughter*]—let's beam down and visit some old friends in Miami, so—[*applause*].

Thank you, Tim Kaine, not only for the generous introduction but for the great job he is doing—[*applause*]—an unbelievable job as DNC chair, just like he did an unbelievable job as the Governor of the great Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you to your vice chair, your own Debbie Wasserman Schultz. We love Debbie. We have in the house Florida's next Governor, Alex Sink. We've got Florida's next CFO and one of the first people in Florida to stand up and endorse my campaign—Loranne Ausley is here as well. Somewhere around here is the next Senator from the great State of Florida, Kendrick Meek. He's here somewhere. There he is. Kendrick's doing a great job.

I also want to point out a great friend of mine, a former member of my administration who just yesterday announced he is running for Congress in Florida's 25th, Joe Garcia is in the house—Joe Garcia. So is Florida's next agricultural commissioner, Scott Maddox. And a wonderful Member of Congress from further up north—I don't know if she came out, but she's doing unbelievable work, so keep her in mind—Suzanne Kosmas. There's Suzanne. There she is. She came out.

And thank you to the talented Esperanza Spalding. Isn't she terrific? I love listening to Esperanza; she is wonderful.

I also want to thank all the leaders of the Haitian American community who are with us tonight. So—[*applause*]—I think some of you know my political director, Patrick Gaspard, is from Haiti. And so through him, we understood how much you've lost and how much you've given. And some of you know, I think, Michelle just took her first solo trip abroad as First Lady. Her first stop was to Haiti. The devastation moved her deeply, and she also saw, though, the resiliency and the resolve of the people. And that filled her with hope. And so I asked her to give the people of Haiti a message from me, which is, the United States of America will continue to stand with the people of Haiti as they recover and they rebuild. That is something that we are committed to.

So it's good to be among friends in Florida. I spent a lot of time here during our campaign. Many of you were on the frontlines, devoting your time, your energy, knocking on doors, making phone calls, arguing with people—[*laughter*]—most of all, affirming that unyielding faith in the promise of America. And so I want to thank you for being part of this journey.

In a time of incredible economic uncertainty, you believed that we could still make the American Dream accessible for everybody who was willing to work for it. And at a time of cynicism, you believed that we could still solve problems that had held us back for years, decades. At a time of great challenge—especially when we were challenged, you believed that change was still possible in the United States of America.

So Miami, I've come back here to tell you tonight that we have kept the faith with those beliefs. We've begun to fix the problems that we identified during the campaign. The change you fought for is beginning to take hold in Washington and all across the country.

Now, change is never easy. I don't know if you've noticed this. [*Laughter*] People tend to be comfortable with the status quo, even when the status quo isn't working for them. And the fact is that with all the turbulence that's been taking place this year, for many Americans, change still can't come fast enough. But I wanted people to understand what we were looking at when we first came into office: a financial crisis unlike any we had seen in generations; an economy that was bleeding 750,000 jobs a month; challenges that ranged from the specter of terrorism to the impacts of globalization to two wars that were costly in every sense of the word.

And before we could start healing, we had to stop the bleeding. We needed to make sure that an economic disaster did not become a full-blown depression. And some of those short-term steps designed to stabilize the economy, they weren't popular. The Recovery Act, even though we gave tax cuts to everybody, somehow got confused with the bank bailout. And then there was the auto thing, and everybody said, "Gosh, what's Obama doing?" [*Laughter*] "He's not listening to the polls; this is unpopular."

But it turns out that there are some things that, shockingly enough, are more important than polls, more important than elections. The country was in trouble. We had to respond. We had to respond to the problems that were facing the American people with the same sense of urgency that they felt in their own lives. That was just over a year ago.

Now, we've still got a long way to travel. There's still a lot of people hurting out there. You see them in your communities; you see them in your own family; maybe you see them in your own lives. But 1 year later, we can say that the financial system has stabilized. People have recouped a lot of what they had lost in their 401(k)s. We had—we've seen that an economy that was contracting is now growing again. We were losing jobs; now we're gaining jobs.

As far as the bank system goes, we recovered most of the money that it cost to stabilize it. And I've proposed a fee on the Nation's biggest banks so that we recover every dime the taxpayers put into them.

So 1 year later, we've made progress: The economy is growing again; the markets are rising again; America's businesses are creating jobs again. One year later, more than 2 million Americans, more than 100,000 Floridians are at work today who otherwise would not be there—because of the Recovery Act, because of what Debbie Wasserman Schultz did and Suzanne Kosmas did and Kendrick Meeks did.

And since today happens to be tax day—[*laughter*]—I should just point out that one-third of the Recovery Act went to tax cuts, tax cuts that strengthened the cornerstone of the American Dream: working for a living; earning an education; owning a home; raising a family. We cut taxes for 95 percent of working Americans, just like I promised we would on the campaign. That made a difference for 7 million families in Florida alone. We cut taxes on small businesses. We cut taxes for students and parents paying for college. We cut taxes for first-time homebuyers, more than 128,000 here in Florida. In all, we passed 25 different tax cuts last year. And one thing we haven't done is raise income taxes on families making less than \$250,000 a year—another promise that we kept.

So I've been a little amused over the last couple of days where people have been having these rallies—[laughter]—about taxes, taxes. You would think they would be saying thank you. [Laughter] That's what you'd think.

So we're headed in the right direction on our road to recovery. But the true measure of our progress is the progress that the American people feel in their lives. And there's still a lot of hurt out here, too many folks still out of work. That's why we're doing everything we can in the short term to accelerate private sector job creation. But here's the thing, Miami: If we want our economy to fuel job creation in the long term, if we want to grow in the way that brings the middle class along for the ride, then we need to rebuild it on a new and a stronger foundation for growth. And that's what we've been doing. We're working to give every American the world-class education they need to compete and win in the global economy—every child in America.

We launched a national competition to improve our schools. We took on the special interests, and with the help of Debbie and Suzanne and Kendrick, we reformed the school loan system—\$68 billion that was going to banks is now going to students and families to help pay for their education. So we're making college education more affordable and more accessible.

We've made the largest investment in clean and renewable energy in our Nation's history, because there are factories to reopen and assembly lines to restart and workers ready to build wind turbines and solar panels and advanced batteries for the new electric cars—right here in America. And the nation that leads the clean energy economy will lead the 21st century economy. And I believe that America has to be that nation. And that's what we're going to fight for.

And Miami, for the sake of our families and businesses, and with your help, we finally passed comprehensive health reform right here in the United States of America. Now, as—[applause].

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

The President. We did it thanks to Debbie and thanks to Suzanne and thanks to Kendrick and thanks to you. As my Vice President said, this is a big deal. [Laughter] Joe's got a way with words. And he was right. It's a big deal.

I mean, think about what we accomplished here. This reform is the strongest, most sweeping insurance reform in history. It will begin to end the worst practices of the insurance industry. It cuts the deficit by over \$1 trillion, puts in place all sorts of reforms that are going to make sure that we are getting better quality health care for less money, and it's going to finally offer millions of families and small-business owners quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it—a lot of people for the very first time in their lives.

So for all the sound and fury and all the scare tactics, here's what you need about health care reform. The law doesn't hand more control to the Government. It doesn't hand more control to health insurance companies. It gives it back to you, the American people. This law doesn't weaken Medicare; it strengthens it and extends its life almost by a decade. This law doesn't increase our deficits; it's going to reduce them—more than \$100 billion over the next decade, over \$1 trillion the decade after that.

And there's an array of consumer protection and benefits that take effect this year. I just want to list some of these off, just in case you're having a conversation with your—[laughter]—you know, a coworker or a friend. I know you've had some of those conversations. [Laughter]

This year, seniors who fall into the doughnut hole coverage gap will receive \$250 to help them pay for their prescriptions, and that begins a pathway where we are closing that doughnut hole completely so that seniors have the coverage they need and the security they need for their prescription drug coverage. This year, millions of small-business owners will be eligible for tax credits to cover the cost of insuring their employees—this year. This year, ten thousands—tens of thousands of uninsured Americans with a preexisting condition and parents with children with preexisting conditions will finally be able to purchase the coverage they need. This year, insurance companies can't drop you when you get sick. This year, insurance companies can't apply lifetime limits on your coverage. These are big deals for families all across America.

Now, this reform's not perfect. There are going to be adjustments that we're going to have to make. This is going to take a few years to fully implement, because we've got the responsibility to get it right.

But when you turn on the television, you've got pundits saying that the country's still divided on health care; it's not universally popular yet. Folks, I want to repeat what I said in Maine: It's only been a couple weeks. [Laughter] You know, sometimes the way they cover stuff in Washington—I was talking about how—the way they'd cover a farm, you know? You'd be up there tilling the soil, and the press would look, and, "Look, the dirt's all messed up!" [Laughter] And then you'd put the seeds in and pack it down. And next morning they'd come up, "There are no crops! It's not working! We're going to starve!" [Laughter] Let me tell you.

And then you've got—then you have some of my Republican friends who were warning that after health care—this was going to be Armageddon—[laughter]—wanted to repeal health reform before the signature was even dry.

So I went to NASA today, and I asked some of the guys, I said, are asteroids coming? [Laughter] Are you sending Bruce Willis and Ben Affleck out to—[laughter]. They told me, "America's going to be okay." [Laughter]

And for those Republicans and folks who are on the "repeal" platform, my attitude is, go for it. I'll have that fight. We'll have that argument. We'll take that argument across the country. If they want to let kids be barred from getting insurance because of preexisting conditions, we can have that discussion. If they want to take back tax cuts from small businesses who want to do the right thing by their employees, I'm happy to have that argument. They want to allow insurance companies to take away your insurance right when you get sick and need it most, I'm happy to have that debate. Are they really willing to look that senior in the eye and say, we're not going to help you afford that medicine?

Audience member. Yes, they are.

The President. Well, they may—[laughter]—but I tell you what, if they do it, I don't think they're going to get a very good response. I don't think they're going to look a small-business owner in the eye and take away their tax credits or say that your son can't have health care after all; too bad, tough luck, you're on your own.

Look what happened the other day, just north of here. Ted Deutch won the first congressional election since health reform passed. Now, look, I mean, let's not get too excited; it's a Democratic district. [Laughter] But to listen to the Republicans, they were warning over and over again this would be a referendum on health care, this is a referendum on the Recovery Act, this is a referendum on Obama. Well, maybe it was. [Laughter] I'm just listening to them.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. I——

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Here's what I think, Miami. Here's what I think. I think if we stay true to our principles, if we do what's right for the American people, then elections will take care of themselves. You know, I noticed that this was one of the great things about running for President—especially for 2 years—[*laughter*]—is it gives you a little perspective, because you realize that these things go in cycles, the mood of the media and how things get portrayed. And so you're like a genius for about a month, and then you're an idiot for about 6 months. [*Laughter*] And then, you know, you're smart again for—you're not as smart as you were, but you're a little smarter than they thought you were. [*Laughter*] And then you're an idiot again. [*Laughter*]

But what it shows you is that you can't hyperventilate about the day-to-day politics and the gamesmanship and the polls. What you've got to focus on is that true North, that lodestar, which is, are the things we're doing over the long term going to help not just this generation, but the next generation? Is this going to make America stronger? Is it going to help the economy grow? Is it going to help equip our children to compete in a new economy?

There are always going to be issues that Democrats and Republicans don't see eye to eye on. That's how our democracy works. I have to say, though, it's one thing to disagree out of principle; it's another to stand in the way simply because of politics. And too often, that's been what's going on. And we had Republican leaders who made a decision even before I took office—now, this is their quote, so I'm not making this up—who just said, you know, "We're not going to work with the Obama administration on the most important issues facing the American people."

A few weeks into my Presidency, I went to the Capitol to meet with some of my Republican friends on the House to talk about what were we going to do about this economy plunging into disaster. It turned out there was a press release issued before I got to the meeting saying they had already decided to vote against it. They didn't know what "it" was—[*laughter*]—but they were going to oppose it.

Early in the health care debate, a Republican Senator said, "If we are able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo; it will break him." When it comes to fiscal responsibility—now, these are the folks who inherited this massive surplus from Bill Clinton and the Democrats, right? So they conveniently forget when they're in charge that they turned this massive surplus into massive deficits, voting for two tax cuts for the wealthy that weren't paid for, two wars, a new entitlement program—paid for none of it. Suddenly we're in, and they've got the green visors out, and they're sharpening the pencils—[*laughter*]—and they're deficit hawks again, blamed me for all of it. I walked in with a \$1.3 trillion deficit. Suddenly it's mine. This is a sight to see. [*Laughter*]

So I said, okay, I'm President, I'm going to take responsibility for it. I embraced a Republican idea—we're going to create a bipartisan fiscal commission to help us close the deficit. What happened? Some of the same folks who had proposed the idea—they were sponsors of the bill—suddenly they're against it. [*Laughter*] So I'm sensing a pattern. [*Laughter*] So somebody's got to tell them, you talk and you share ideas first, then you can say no. You don't say no first. [*Laughter*]

So not surprisingly, people are frustrated with Washington. But if folks spent less time trying to score points and more time thinking about the needs and the hopes of the American people, imagine all that we could accomplish together. I know this may be heresy to say in front of a crowd like this, at an event like this, but there are more important things than political party.

So I'm going to keep on reaching out to Republicans. I'm going to keep on incorporating good ideas when they have them, even if they refuse to consider my good ideas, because there is a lot that we should be able to agree on. We should be able to agree on rebuilding our economy so that hard work is rewarded and families feel like they've got a shot at achieving the American Dream again. This is more than just an economic challenge, because jobs are more than about a paycheck. It's about feeling a job well done, the sense of self-worth and dignity, the fulfillment of meeting one's responsibilities. We've got to think creatively and collaboratively if we want to put America back to work in well-paying jobs.

We should all agree we've got to close our mounting deficits. I take this very seriously. Even as we've had to spend our way out of this recession in the near term, helping people with unemployment insurance and their health insurance needs and helping States so they're not having to lay off teachers and cops and firefighters, we've still been making hard choices necessary to put our country on a more stable fiscal footing in the long run.

But we're going to face more tough choices ahead, and we've got to work on them together. We should all agree that we've got to pass commonsense Wall Street reform that prevents the kind of situation that led us into this crisis in the first place and damaged the dreams of millions of Americans.

Now, it's no surprise that the financial institutions that profit from the status quo have sent hordes of lobbyists to kill reform. It's like throwing a piece of meat into a piranha tank. They're going to race to see how fast they can tear it apart. But we can't allow them to succeed. Every Member of Congress is soon going to have to make a decision; they're going to have to make a choice. And the choice is going to be very simple, between special interests and the American people. If you want the status quo, where banks are able to take wild risks to pump up their bonuses and leave you footing the bill when things go south, that's one option. I don't think it's the right one. And there's going to be a very clear choice to make. And I believe that all of us, Democrat and Republican, can find some common ground here.

So the bottom line is, we've come a long way to go—we've come a long way this past year, but we've got a long way to go. We've got a lot of work left to do. Times are still tough for too many of our fellow Americans. But here's what I want you to remember: America's endured tough times before, tougher times than these, even. And we always come out of them stronger; we always come out of them smarter; we always come out more united. And Miami, I'm convinced that if we keep at it, if we see this through, if we shun the cynics, if we heed the better angels of our nature, if we look beyond the next election, do what's right for the next generation, then we're going to meet our common challenges and we are going to finish what we've started. We are going to keep the promise and hope of America alive for this generation and for the next generation and every generation after that. And we're only going to do it because of you guys and the incredible work that you're doing each and every day.

Thank you. I love you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:42 p.m. at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Esperanza Spalding, Bruce

Willis, and Ben Affleck; and Sen. James W. DeMint. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 16.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee reception in Miami, FL

Locations: Miami, FL.

Names: Affleck, Ben; Ausley, Lorraine; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Clinton, William J.; DeMint, James W.; Deutch, Theodore E. "Ted"; Garcia, Joe; Gaspard, Patrick H.; Kaine, Timothy M.; Kosmas, Suzanne M.; Maddox, Scott; Meek, Kendrick B.; Obama, Michelle; Sink, Adelaide "Alex"; Spalding, Esperanza; Wasserman Schultz, Deborah; Willis, Bruce

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Budget, Federal : Deficit; Budget, Federal : Deficit Reduction Commission; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Banks and financial institutions :: Financial Crisis Responsibility Fee, proposed; Business and industry : Small and minority businesses; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Postsecondary education :: Tax credits, expansion; Education, Department of : Race to the Top Fund; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment insurance; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Florida : Democratic Party event; Florida : Job creation and growth; Florida : President's visits; Haiti : Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Employer-based health insurance coverage; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Health insurance, protection of coverage; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Health and medical care : Seniors, prescription drug benefits; Health and medical care : Small businesses, tax credits to purchase insurance coverage; Housing : First-time home purchase, tax credit; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Space program : Aeronautics and Space Administration, National; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Global threat; Treasury, Department of the : Troubled Asset Relief Program; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Political Affairs Director; White House Office : Vice President.

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