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Remarks at a Fundraiser for Governor Theodore Strickland in Columbus, Ohio

August 18, 2010

Thank you, everybody! Thank you, Ohio! Please, have a seat. Have a seat. Thank you so much. It is great to be here.

There are a couple of people I want to make sure to acknowledge. They may have already been acknowledged, but not by me. So I'm going to acknowledge them because they are doing outstanding work: First of all, the mayor of the great city of Columbus, Michael Coleman; a champion of working families not just in Ohio, but all across the country, Senator Sherrod Brown; a wonderful Member of Congress who's fighting day in, day out, Mary Jo Kilroy is here; and although he is not on the list, he's down a little south from here but he's here, I saw him, so I want to acknowledge him because he is just an outstanding, outstanding young Member of Congress, Steve Driehaus is in the house. There he is.

Lieutenant Governor and soon to be Senator, Lee Fisher is here. Attorney General Rich Cordray is here. Treasurer Kevin Boyce is in the house. And candidate for Lieutenant Governor, Yvette McGee Brown is here.

It is good to be back in Ohio. And it is good to be among such good friends, because as I look out over the audience, I know so many of you worked so hard on behalf of our campaign. You were there when we were up; you were there when we were down. I might not be standing here if it weren't for the incredible efforts that all of you put in here in this State and around the country. So thank you so much for everything that you've done. It truly means a lot.

I have to say, by the way, that earlier today we had a wonderful little mini-town hall in the backyard of some folks, the Weithmans. And you will be pleased to know that for using their backyard, the price they charged was they made me be the "O" in O-H-I-O. [*Laughter*] The—this is true. This is true. This is on videotape—[*laughter*]—which I'm worried about when I go to Michigan. [*Laughter*] But I did their commencement, so hopefully things kind of will balance out.

Look, the main reason I'm here is to stand with somebody who I genuinely believe is one of the best public servants in the country, your Governor, Ted Strickland.

Ted took office during an enormously difficult time in Ohio's history. And this State had been hit harder than almost anyplace else by the loss of manufacturing. And when the recession hit in 2008, times got even tougher. But from the day he stepped in as Governor, Ted Strickland has not wasted a single, solitary minute fighting to turn this economy around. Not a minute has gone by that he hasn't thought about how do we build an economy not just for the present, but for future generations.

And under Ted's watch, Ohio has invested in high-growth industries; he has invested in new infrastructure. He's provided new skills and job training to more than 150,000 workers. There are over 65,000 more students in college than when Ted took office. He's cut redtape. He's kept taxes low so this State can be a better place to do business.

And he hasn't just been concerned about the next election; he's been concerned about the next generation of Ohio families. And his work is not yet done. So I know I'm preaching to the

choir in this room, but I want everybody who's going to be hearing me through the television, I want you guys to know Ted Strickland has done an outstanding job for Ohio, and he needs another term to finish what he has started here. You've got to turn out for Ted Strickland.

Now, we need leaders like Ted in this country—and like Sherrod and Mary Jo and Steve. We need them because we face an incredibly challenging time for America. Eighteen months ago, when I took office, after nearly a decade of economic policies that had given us sluggish growth and falling incomes and falling wages and a record deficit, we knew that it was going to be tough to rebuild this economy. But when I was sworn in, nobody fully, I think, appreciated at that point how bad this recession had become. It turned out this was the worst financial crisis and the worst recession since the Great Depression.

In the last 6 months of 2008, while I was still campaigning, 3 million Americans lost their jobs. In the month that I was sworn in, nearly 800,000 people lost their jobs; 600,000 a month after that; 600,000 a month after that. Before we had any opportunity to put in our economic policies, we had already seen millions of jobs lost, ultimately 8 million jobs.

And these aren't just statistics. Behind each of these stories—behind these statistics is a story of heartache; it's a story of frustration. You got workers, midlife, who are suddenly laid off and don't know what they're going to do next; single moms sending out job application after job application, waiting for the phone to ring, trying to figure out how they're going to pay the bills; college graduates who thought, having worked hard in school, that a degree would land a good job and a decent paycheck, and instead just have a mountain of debt to show for it; and some young people who made the decision to forego college because their families couldn't afford it.

I hear these stories every single day. I read them in the letters that I get each night. The struggles and the hopes of these Americans are the reason I ran for office in the first place. They're the reason that Ted ran for office in the first place. That's why I intend to keep fighting as hard as I can, as long as it takes, to make sure that this economy is working for every single American. Anybody who wants a job got to be able to go out there and get one, and we're not going to be done until we get that result.

Now, we're not there yet. We know that. It will take a few years to fully dig ourselves out of this recession. It will take time to bring back 8 million jobs that have been lost. That's the hard truth. Anybody who's telling you otherwise, they're just running for office. [*Laughter*]

But here's what I can tell you: After 18 months, I have never been more confident that our Nation is headed in the right direction. We are doing what is needed to move the country forward. We're rebuilding this economy not just in the short term, but for the long term, for our children, for our grandchildren, for our great-grandchildren.

You see, we did not become the most prosperous country on Earth by rewarding greed and recklessness of the sort that helped cause this financial crisis. We didn't come this far by letting a handful of irresponsible folks on Wall Street or insurance companies or special interests run wild. We did it by rewarding the values of hard work and responsibility, by investing in people who've built this country from the ground up, middle class families and small-business owners. We did it by outworking and outeducating and outcompeting every nation on Earth. That's what we are going to do again.

But we've got to—but we're going to have to buckle down. We're going to have to buckle down because the competition is fierce out there. Right now, countries like China and India and South Korea and Germany, they are fighting as hard as they can for the jobs of the future. They are trying to outcompete us when it comes to clean energy. They're trying to outcompete

us when it comes to how many engineers they're producing and how many entrepreneurs they're producing. And frankly, in some cases, they've pulled ahead. We used to be ranked number one in the number of college graduates. We have slipped to number 12 in a single generation. That's unacceptable.

The United States of America does not play for second place. We play for first place. We are going to rebuild this economy stronger than it was before. We're going to rebuild this economy stronger than it was before, and at its heart are going to be three powerful words: "Made in America"—made in America.

We got to make stuff here and ship it over there, not the other way around. And that means instead of giving tax breaks to corporations that are shipping our jobs overseas, we need to cut taxes for companies that create jobs right here in the United States of America. It means giving smart tax breaks to small-business owners, tax cuts to clean energy companies. And yes, it means tax cuts, but for middle class families, the 95 percent of our workers that I pledged I would provide a tax cut to, and we delivered on that pledge.

And instead of prolonging an addiction to oil that endangers everything from our security to our coastlines, we're now jump-starting a homegrown clean energy industry in this country. I don't want to see solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars manufactured in Europe or in Asia. I want to see them made right here in the United States of America, by American workers. And that's starting to happen all across the Midwest.

Because of the clean energy investments we've made, you're seeing solar plants and wind turbine plants popping up, advanced battery manufacturing right here in the Midwest. But we've also got to not only spur on clean energy; we've got to build a 21st-century infrastructure. Yes, new roads, new bridges, but also faster Internet access, high-speed railroads, projects that will lead to hundreds of thousands of new private sector jobs.

And we're helping to get the American auto industry back on its feet and retool for the 21st century. Now, this is an industry that had lost hundreds of thousands of jobs in the year before I took office. We had to make a tough decision about whether to help them out or walk away from what could have potentially been another million jobs lost. And I decided we couldn't walk away.

And you'll recall that was not necessarily a popular decision. Folks in Washington are always puzzled by me doing things that don't poll well. [*Laughter*] But let's take the case of the automakers. They said, couldn't be done, it was better to just walk away. Instead of providing them bailouts with no obligations in return, like it had happened in the previous administration, we said, we'll help you out, but you got to restructure, because we want you to be able to compete in the 21st century.

And today all three U.S. automakers are operating at a profit for the first time in years. They've had the strongest job growth in more than 10 years. Folks are working across the Midwest because of the decision that we made.

I visited a Chrysler plant in Detroit a few weeks back. Turns out 14 workers had won the lottery. Now, you would have thought they might have decided to retire. But instead of quitting, most of them had stayed on their jobs because they love their work. They're proud of what they do. In fact, the guy who had bought the winning lottery ticket, not only is he staying on his job, but he used the money to buy a new Grand Cherokee that he had built for his wife.

So my message to the naysayers in Washington is this: Don't bet against the American worker. Don't bet against the American people. Don't bet against American businesses. Don't bet against American ingenuity. We are coming back, and we are coming back strong. We're moving forward. And Ohio is moving forward.

To ensure that our workers can compete with any workers on Earth, we are reforming our education system based on what works for our children, not on what works for the status quo. We've eliminated billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies to the big banks that were providing college loans to take that money, the savings, and use it to make college more affordable for millions of students.

To lower the costs for families and businesses, we passed health insurance reform that is finally going to make coverage affordable and stop insurance companies from jacking up your premiums or refusing to cover you just because you're sick. To ensure that an equal day of work means an equal day of pay, I signed a law that will help end pay discrimination in the workforce. To keep faith with the brave men and women who risk their lives for ours, we are increasing access to health care and benefits and education for our veterans and their families.

And we are keeping the promise I made when I began my campaign for the Presidency: By the end of this month, we will have removed 100,000 troops from Iraq, and our combat mission will be over in Iraq.

To ensure that a financial crisis like the one we just went through doesn't happen again, we passed financial reform that provides new accountability and tough oversight of Wall Street, reform that will stop credit card companies from charging you hidden fees or unfair rate hikes and that will end Wall Street bailouts once and for all.

All these reforms will make America more competitive in the 21st century. All these reforms are helping to move us forward. And on each of these reforms, we reached out to Democrats and Republicans for ideas and support. But in just about every instance, almost every Republican in Congress said no. They said no to help for small businesses. They're still saying no. They said no on middle class tax cuts. This is supposed to be the party of tax cuts—said no when it came to tax cuts for folks who needed them, no on clean energy jobs right here in Ohio and across the country, no on making college more affordable, no on Wall Street reform.

You remember our slogan during the campaign, "Yes we can"? This year, their slogan is, "No we can't." [*Laughter*] It's catchy. [*Laughter*] It's really inspiring. It puts a little pep in your step—"No we can't." [*Laughter*] That's their philosophy.

And the reason they're saying no is because they won't give up on the economic policies, the philosophy that they've been peddling for most of this decade. And their agenda is pretty straightforward: You cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires, you cut rules for special interests, and then you cut working folks loose to fend for themselves. If you can't find a job or you can't afford college or you don't have health insurance or your child doesn't have health insurance, tough luck, you are on your own.

The thing is, we tried this philosophy, remember? For 8 years. And it didn't work out real well. All it gave us was record deficits and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Now, I bring this up not to relitigate the past. I bring it up because I don't want to relive the past. [*Laughter*] It would be one thing if Republicans, after y'all voted them out, had said,

"You know what, maybe our philosophy doesn't work"—they'd gone off into the desert and kind of meditated and came back—"We've learned from our mistakes; we promise to do things differently this time; we've got some new ideas we want you to try." I would have gladly said, all right, come on, let's work together. But that's not what they're doing.

One of the leaders in Congress was asked what his party would do if he took over Congress. He said, we will pursue "the exact same agenda" as before President Obama took office—the exact same agenda. Now, think about that. Basically, they're betting on—between now and November—they're betting on you coming down with a case of amnesia. [*Laughter*] That's their strategy. They figure you're going to forget what their agenda did to this country over the last 8 years.

Now, I was using an analogy—I was talking out in California—it's—imagine our economy is a car. And these guys, I don't know what they were doing. I don't know whether they were on their BlackBerry while they were driving or they were doing something else irresponsible. They drive it into the ditch.

And so me and Sherrod and Mary Jo and Steve and Ted and a whole bunch of folks, we're all putting our boots on, and we go down into the ditch. And it's muddy down there, and it's hot, and there are bugs swirling around. And we're pushing on the car, trying to get it out of the ditch, putting our shoulder—shoving it, pushing it. And the Republicans are up there looking at us, sipping on their Slurpees. [*Laughter*] "You're not pushing hard enough. You're not pushing the right way. Push harder." And we invite them to come down and help us out, and they just sort of said, "No, we don't want to. No, we can't." [*Laughter*]

And then finally we get this car up on level ground, and it's ready to finally move forward. And we feel this tap on our shoulders, and we turn around, and it's those Republicans, and they're saying, "We want the keys back."[*Laughter*]

Well, no, you cannot have the keys to the car back. You drove it into the ditch. You don't know how to drive. We worked hard to get it out of the ditch. We now want to move forward; we don't want to move backwards. We don't want to move backwards. We don't want to move backwards. If you want, you can sit in the back. [*Laughter*] We're happy to have you along for the ride. But we're moving forward.

And I just want to point out, when you want your car to go forward, what do you do? You put into "D." When you want it going backwards, what do you do? You put into "R." [*Laughter*] We don't want to go into reverse. We don't want to go back into the ditch. That's not a coincidence. [*Laughter*] That's not a coincidence. That's not a coincidence. [*Laughter*]

Let me tell you what will happen if the other party takes over Congress in November. If you want to know what will happen if the other party takes over Congress, all you've got to do is look what they've done over the last 18 months on issue after issue. They've sided with special interests over the middle class families; voted to keep giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas, despite folks like Sherrod Brown, who fought hard on this issue; voted to give insurance companies the power to keep denying coverage to people who are sick.

The top Republican on the Energy Committee, you may recall—this is the guy who would be in charge of the Energy Committee in the House of Representatives—apologized after the oil spill to BP. [*Laughter*] Remember this? He apologized because I had said to BP, you need to set aside $20 billion to make sure that we're making fishermen and small-business owners whole as a consequence of your mistakes. This guy, he apologized to BP. He said, "Oh, the

President shook you down," a "Chicago-style" shakedown. That's what he called it. [*Laughter*] That's what he called it. He had to throw in the Chicago thing in there. [*Laughter*]

Imagine that. That's what's at stake in this election. If we give them the keys back, they will drive right back into the ditch. And riding shotgun with them will be every other special interest under the Sun.

And by the way, let me make this point: I want business in this country to succeed. The free market is the greatest wealth producer in our history. We were built on entrepreneurship and private enterprise. And if you are a responsible business owner, I will do everything I can to help you grow and prosper and hire more employees. And Ted Strickland will do the same. But I don't think it's antibusiness to say we should make sure an oil rig is safe before we start drilling. I don't think it's antibusiness to say that Wall Street banks should play by the same rules as everybody else. I don't think it's antibusiness to say that insurance companies shouldn't deny people care just because they get sick.

We can't have an attitude that what's good enough for me is good enough. We've got to have an attitude that says, what's good for America? What's good for everybody? What's best for all of our businesses? What's best for all of our people? That's what we do in this country. That's how we move forward as one people, as one nation. And that is what we've got to get back to, those core American values that moves everybody forward and builds a broad middle class where everybody can prosper.

Now, I know times are tough, Columbus. And when times are tough, it can be easy to give in to cynicism, and it can be easy to give in to fear, to set our sights lower, to settle for the status quo, to pit people against each other, to find wedge issues, to focus on those things that appear to give a tactical advantage but have nothing to do with whether or not our country is going to be successful over the long term. That's—let's face it, that's how politics works too much.

That's what the other side is counting on in this election. They're not offering new plans. They're not offering new ideas. They're just offering cynicism, and they're offering fear.

But that's not who we are. That's not the country I know. We are Americans. We do not give up. We do not quit. We do not fear the future. We shape the future. We seize our own destiny.

That's what this election is about. And so I need all of you, every single one of you, to go out there and join me and Ted Strickland in building a future. Let's build a future where our small businesses flourish on the power of ideas and ingenuity and a future where clean energy powers the world, produced right here in factories and fields in America. Let's build a future where our children are getting the best education possible, so they're competing with anybody. Let's build a future where we are bound by our sense of optimism and our confidence and our hopefulness, our fearlessness, all that's made America the most dynamic country on Earth.

That's how we built the last American century. That is how we are going to build the next American century. The American people do not believe in the words, "No we can't." That's not how this country got built. In times of great challenge, we push forward with the unyielding faith that, yes, we can.

Thank you very much, Ohio. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. at the Columbus Athenaeum. In his remarks, he referred to Joe and Rhonda Weithman of Columbus; Chrysler employee William Shanteau, and his wife Lisa; and Reps. Pete Sessions and Joe L. Barton.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Governor Theodore Strickland, fundraiser in Columbus, OH.

Locations: Columbus, OH.

Names: Barton, Joe L.; Boyce, Kevin L.; Brown, Sherrod; Coleman, Michael B.; Cordray, Richard; Driehaus, Steve; Fisher, Lee; Kilroy, Mary Jo; McGee Brown, Yvette; Sessions, Pete; Shanteau, Lisa; Shanteau, William; Strickland, Theodore; Weithman, Joe; Weithman, Rhonda.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Corporate responsibility; Business and industry : Domestic investment, proposed tax breaks for; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Decline; Business and industry : Small and minority businesses; California : President's visits; Civil rights : Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; Civil rights : Wage equality; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Career training and continuing education; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Employment and unemployment : Job training assistance; Employment and unemployment : Outsourcing to foreign countries; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Energy : Battery technology for hybrid automobiles; Energy : BP p.l.c.; Energy : Foreign sources; Energy : Offshore oil and gas drilling; Energy : Oil and gas industry, Federal regulations and oversight; Energy : Renewable energy, tax incentives; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Environment : Oil spills :: Corporate responsibility; Gulf of Mexico : Deepwater Horizon oil spill :: Economic effects and recovery efforts; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Michigan : Chrysler Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit; Michigan : President's visits; Ohio : Democratic Party events; Ohio : Governor; Ohio : President's visits; Science and technology : Broadband technology; Taxation : Tax relief; Transportation : High-speed rail lines, development and expansion; Transportation : Highway system, modernization efforts; Veterans : Benefits.

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