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Remarks Prior to White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs's Final Briefing

February 11, 2011

Press Secretary Gibbs. You should brief today. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We got a one and one. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right. Well, listen, obviously, Gibbs's departure is not the biggest one today. [*Laughter*] Having said that, I thought I should come into the briefing room just to say a few words about my departing Press Secretary.

As some of you know, Robert started very early with me on this wild ride that I've been on. I had run for the United States Senate. I was not expected to win. When I won the Democratic primary in Illinois, I realized that I was going to have to start staffing up a little bit; at the time, I only had I think six, seven people working for me. And I still didn't have a lot of money, so all I could afford was Gibbs. [*Laughter*]

And so Robert came to work with me and we had what appeared to be a pretty significant general election, and then Alan Keyes came in and so that ended up not being our primary focus. We then had this incredible opportunity to speak at the national convention in Boston. And I know that a lot of you think that probably most attention was devoted to the speech that I delivered, the keynote speech in Boston, but in fact actually the most challenging problem was what tie to wear.

And this went up to the very last minute. I mean, 10 minutes before we were about to go on stage, we were still having an argument about ties. I had bought five, six ties. And Michelle didn't like any of them. Axelrod didn't like a couple of them—him being, you know, one of the best dressed men in the world. [*Laughter*] So we really valued his opinion. [*Laughter*]

And then somebody—I don't remember who it was—turned and said, you know what, what about Gibbs's tie? What about Gibbs's tie? That might look good. And frankly, Robert didn't want to give it up because he thought he looked really good in the tie, but eventually he was willing to take one for the Gipper. And so he took off his tie, and I put it on. And that's the tie that I wore at the national convention.

He has not said about—anything about this tie all these years. But I have to tell you that I know there's a simmering resentment—[*laughter*]—that he never got it back. And so as a consequence, I wanted here today—I wanted this on the record, on camera—[*laughter*]—that I am finally returning Robert's tie. And if he chooses to break the glass, he can. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President presented departing Press Secretary Gibbs with the necktie mounted in a frame*.]

But this is going to be a reminder to me that Robert has not only been an extraordinary Press Secretary, but he has been a great friend. And you could not ask for somebody better in the foxhole with you during all the twists and turns of my candidacy and then the incredible challenges that we faced over the last 2 years.

So I'm so proud of him, and everybody here loves Robert. He's going to be working closely with us. I don't think we could have a better Press Secretary. I think Jay is going to do

an outstanding job of filling Robert's shoes. But I certainly couldn't have a better friend at the podium each and every day. So just wanted to say congratulations, Robert.

Q. Did you sign?

The President. Well, I didn't actually——

Q. What's it say?

The President. I didn't actually sign the tie, because, as I said, he may decide he wants to wear it. It just said I thought that I should finally give you your tie back. It and you helped me get started. All right. Thank you, brother.

Press Secretary Gibbs. Thank you.

The President. You notice, by the way, that he bought one just like it. [*Laughter*]

Press Secretary Gibbs. I like that tie.

Q. Can we ask you about Egypt?

Q. Anything further about Egypt?

Press Secretary Gibbs. I like that tie. Let me get a few things—let me just say a few things before we get down to talking about what we have every day and what we should every day, and that's the business of the country.

I—it is a tremendous honor and privilege to do this each and every day, to serve and to take part in days like today that are so momentous. And I want to thank the President and all of his team for, again, the privilege to serve.

I don't want to spend a lot of time doing this. I don't talk about myself well. But I would be remiss if I didn't talk about a group of people that, I want to be clear, doesn't work for me, but I have the great privilege and I'm lucky enough to work with. I would not want to do this job, as amazing and as exciting as it is, without them. And I wouldn't have made it through it without them.

I don't intend, today or tomorrow, to tell any of you goodbye, because I don't intend to go anywhere. You all are forever a part of this experience for me. You've become a greater extension of my family. We've shared a lot of extraordinary times.

I will miss boring days like today at the White House. [*Laughter*] I should tell you that for all of you that are looking for help on your morning shows, that Jay likes calls around 4:15 a.m. in the morning. [*Laughter*] If you don't get through at first, just keep dialing. [*Laughter*]

And again, it has been an extraordinary privilege. And I will have more to say to all these guys and more to say to those of you that are in the back of the room that have meant so much to me and continue to mean so much to me.

But before I lose it, we should probably start the 250th briefing of the Obama administration with Mr. Feller [Ben Feller, Associated Press].

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:32 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; former White House Senior Adviser David M. Axelrod; and White House Press Secretary-designate James "Jay" Carney. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the full press briefing.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs's final briefing, remarks prior to.

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