

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2011*

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

*June 30, 2011*

Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. I think I'm going to use this instead. Is this working? There you go.

Well, what a spectacular evening, and thank you all for taking the time to be here. I want to first of all, obviously, thank Rhonda and David for not only hosting this incredible event, but also just being such great friends for so many years. Thank you very much, you guys. Really appreciate it.

To those who helped to organize this event, thank you all. To our outstanding DNC chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, we love her; to one of the finest mayors in the country, Michael Nutter. And to one of my dearest friends—I always tell this story: When we were campaigning during the primary back in 2008, and it was still pretty rough going, this guy stepped up, endorsed me despite the fact that we were losing here in Pennsylvania, didn't bat an eye, volunteered to do it and did it happily, and has been a great friend ever since—so we just love him, Bob Casey.

I want to spend most of my time tonight taking questions and having a good conversation, so I'm just going to make a few remarks at the top. Obviously, we've gone through as tough an economic time in this country as we have in my lifetime and in most of our lifetimes. Since the Great Depression, we haven't seen the combination of a financial crisis and then a recession as severe as the one that we experienced in 2008.

And as a consequence, my administration had to make a series of tough decisions. A lot of them weren't popular, but they were the right things to do. And as a consequence of those decisions, we've seen an economy that was shrinking by 6 percent now growing again, and we've created over 2 million private sector jobs over the last 15 months.

But as I think everybody here is aware, things are still tough for folks out there. I get letters, about 10 a night out of the 40,000 communications we get from all across the country, and some of the stories are inspiring, but a lot of them are also heartbreaking, of people losing their homes, people losing their jobs, people trying to figure out if they can save a small business that's been in the family for years, for generations, but suddenly, capital is frozen up; from kids who are worried about their parents losing their home and what it might mean to move.

And it's a reminder that as much progress as we've made, we've got a long, long way to go and that the challenges that America is facing right now weren't a year in the making or 2 years in the making, but are actually 10 years in the making. And what we've seen over the last decade has been a stagnation of income and wages. Some of that was covered up by a housing boom and bubble and everybody using up the credit card. But the truth is, is that the underlying economy is going through all kinds of structural changes because of global competition, because of automation. We are in a more competitive world than ever before.

And part of the reason that I ran for President—the primary reason that I ran for President—was I want to make sure that America makes the tough decisions that allow us to

compete effectively in the 21st century and we start reversing the squeeze on the middle class and the decline of our economic fundamentals that have been going on for a very long time.

Now, what does that mean? It means that we're going to have to improve our education system. And I know that Mayor Nutter and others have struggled this—with this for many years. We are making extraordinary progress thanks to as good of a Secretary of Education as I think we've ever seen in Arne Duncan, and we're starting to hold schools accountable, giving them more resources in exchange for more reform. But we've got a long way to go. That's not a project that we can finish in 2, 2½ years.

We've got to revamp our community colleges and make sure that our young people can afford to go to a 4-year college. And we've made progress there by changing the student loan program so that billions of dollars of subsidies that were going to banks are now going to young people to make college more affordable. But making sure that we once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world, the goal that I set 2 years ago, we're on track, but that's going to take a few more years.

We have to have an energy policy in this country. We still don't have one, which is why so many people around the country are so vulnerable to changes in the price of oil. And so what we've done through the Recovery Act and through clean energy programs all across the country is making sure that clean energy jobs are created here in the United States, and we're starting to create a more efficient transportation sector so that we can start weaning ourselves off of dependence on foreign oil.

And a lot of people don't realize that even without legislation last year, we raised fuel efficiency standards on cars for the first time in 30 years, and we're going to do it again. But reversing our energy policy and making it smart in a way that not only saves people's dollars, but also helps save the planet, that's not a 2-year project, that's a multiyear project.

We still have not dealt with immigration in a serious way. And the fact of the matter is, historically, we're a nation of laws and we're a nation of immigrants. And I have consistently said that there's a way of reconciling what, I think, everybody recognizes is a problem of illegal immigration, but doing so in a way that's true to our values so that we're attracting the best and the brightest to stay here and to study here and that young people understand that they're welcome as a part of the American family.

We still have work to do when it comes to infrastructure. We used to have the best roads and the best bridges and the best airports. And we don't anymore. A lot of people here travel, and you go to Beijing airport or Singapore airport, and you look at the trains in Europe or in Japan, and you realize that we've fallen behind and we're not making the investments that we should. And think about all the construction workers who used to be in housing who could be put to work right now doing the work that America needs done, right here in Philadelphia and right here in Pennsylvania and all across the country.

So when it comes to the economy, we've got enormous work to do. And that's a lot of what this debate in Washington is about right now surrounding the deficit. Some of you know that I had a press conference yesterday that attracted a little bit of attention, and I'll probably have to have a few more before we get this issue resolved.

This is not just a numbers debate, this is a values debate. All of us agree that we've got to lower our deficit and lower our debt so that we have a sustainable fiscal path. All of us agree on that. We actually roughly agree on the numbers. We need to bring down the deficit by about \$4 trillion over a 10- to 12-year window and start bending the cost curve on health care costs.

And the question is, how do we do it? And what I've said is that we can come up with \$2 trillion worth of cuts: cuts to domestic discretionary spending, which includes cuts of some things that I think are worthy and I'd like to do, but we can't afford to do right now; cuts to defense spending, where we have an obligation to make sure that our troops have the best equipment and we continue to have the finest fighting force in the world, but let's face it, the Pentagon has waste too, and we've already identified \$400 billion worth of waste. We can identify at least the equivalent to make sure that we're also maintaining economic security here at home.

But we're going to have to also, if we want to achieve this goal, make sure that we do two tough things that frankly neither party wants to do but have to be done. The first is we're going to have to make sure that we continue to focus on how do we reduce Medicare and Medicaid costs, and the second is we're going to have to have more revenue. And what I've said to the Republican Party and what I've said to the Democratic Party in Congress is, there's a way to do this that makes sure that we still maintain our sacred commitment to our seniors so that they have the security that they need in retirement, and there's a way to do it that makes sure that businesses aren't overburdened and that success is still rewarded in our society. We can make changes that are balanced, that involve some shared sacrifice, but assure that we're still making the investments we need to win the future and assure that we're not mortgaging our future because of irresponsible fiscal practices.

And the question is going to be, do we have a politics that's up to the task? This is not a technical problem. A lot of folks have been talking about, well, we need to bring all the parties together and just sort of hammer it out. Well, the truth is, is that you could figure out on the back of an envelope how to get this thing done. The question is one of political will. And one of the reasons I ran in 2008 was because what I saw was a political system that refused to speak hard truths and then act in terms of what was best for our country as opposed to what's best for our politics. And that's needed now more desperately than ever.

So part of the reason I think many of you—as I look around the room, I've got some folks who supported me in 2008 for the same reason that I ran, because you've still got confidence in our politics and you've still got confidence in the future of this country. And I guess the point I'd like to make—and then we'll just open it up for questions—is I hope that all of you understand that when we started off on this project back in 2007, it wasn't going to be done by 2011. We've still got a lot of work to do, and I'm going to need you as bad as I needed you back then. I have a few more trappings now. My plane is much nicer than when we ran. *[Laughter]* And I understand that sometimes generating the same energy is difficult because we've now gone through 2 years of very difficult work. And my hair is grayer, so I'm not as young and vibrant as I was. *[Laughter]*

But I hope you understand that the stakes are enormously high. And again, as you watch this debt limit and deficit debate unfold, I hope you remember, we can make sure that Medicare is there for future generations and that we are maintaining our commitment to our seniors. And we can make sure that we have a Tax Code that is simpler and fairer and is not inhibiting business and is not inhibiting the free market. We can accomplish those things while still bringing down the deficit, but we've got to do it in a way that is fair and balanced so that we're still investing in things like medical research, we're still investing in our infrastructure, we're still investing in our kids.

That's what I think everybody understands and everybody believes. The only way it's going to happen is if you're engaged in this debate. And if you are, if you stand with me, if you stand with Bob and Debbie and Michael and others who I think are trying to do the right thing, I'm

confident we'll be able to look back at this period as, yes, a period of great challenge, but also a period in which America made extraordinary strides to secure its future for the next generation.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. at the residence of Rhonda R. and David L. Cohen.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Philadelphia, PA.

*Locations:* Philadelphia, PA.

*Names:* Casey, Robert P., Jr.; Cohen, David L.; Cohen, Rhonda R.; Duncan, Arne; Nutter, Michael A.; Wasserman Shultz, Deborah.

*Subjects:* Armed Forces, U.S. : Military technologies, development and funding; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Entitlement spending, reform; Budget, Federal : Fiscal year 2012 budget; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Congress : Bipartisanship; Defense, Department of : Funding; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : American Graduation Initiative; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Community colleges; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Standards and school accountability; Education, Department of : Funding; Education, Department of : Secretary; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Domestic sources; Energy : Foreign sources; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Energy : Greenhouse gas emissions, regulation; Energy : National energy policy; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Immigration and naturalization : American "melting pot"; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Pennsylvania : Democratic Party events; Pennsylvania : President's visit; Social Security and retirement : Social Security program; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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