

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Chicago, Illinois
August 3, 2011

The President. Thank you. Everybody have a seat, have a seat, have a seat.

Well, if you guys are taking off your jackets, I'm going to take mine off too. [*Laughter*] It's too hot. It is too hot.

Well, it is wonderful to see all of you.

[*At this point, Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago took the President's jacket.*]

The President. Thank you. Now that's service. [*Laughter*] I still have that pothole in front of my house. [*Laughter*] Golly, I've been working on that. Trees need trimming. [*Laughter*]

It is wonderful to see all of you. I know that most of you had a chance to listen to me speak downstairs, so I'm not going to give another long speech. The main thing I just want to do is to say thank you to all of you. A lot of folks came, traveled from across the country.

And obviously, we've just gone through an extraordinary week in Washington, an extraordinary 2 weeks in Washington. It's not the kind of extraordinary that the American people are looking for. [*Laughter*] Because at a time when so many families are struggling, at a time when we should be singularly focused on how to make ourselves more competitive and make sure our kids have the best educations possible and how are we transforming our energy strategy and how are we building on high-tech industries and the huge competitive advantages that we have, politics continues to get in the way.

And I think this episode was just a severe example of what's been going on for quite some time. And it's part of what led me to run for President. It's part of what led Rahm to get into public service. And it's part of the reason why, hopefully, all of you are here tonight, because you recognize we've still got some more work to do.

The good news is that after this week we have made a legitimate downpayment on deficit reduction in a way that's actually responsible, that is not going to dismantle our social safety net, isn't going to prevent us from making the key investments we need to win the future.

But it also sets the stage for what is going to be a singular debate over the next year and a half, and that is two alternative visions about where the country needs to go.

I give the other side credit. They are single minded in their focus in wanting to cut programs and shrink Government. My argument, Dick Durbin's argument, the argument that I think all of you believe in, is that we need a government that is smart, that is living within its means, but also we need a government that is making the kind of commitment to opportunity for everybody, for every child, that is making investments that the private sector alone can't make—that are setting policies that allow us to be competitive into the future—that is looking after our seniors and poor children and the disabled and empowering them—and that all of us have a role to play in that kind of America and all of us have to make some sacrifices to deliver that kind of America.

And I think most of the American people believe the same thing. But in this kind of environment of 24-hour cable chatter and big money flooding the airwaves and slash-and-burn politics, sometimes I think that core belief in what is possible here in America gets lost. It's our

job to constantly restore it and revitalize it and to have confidence in the American people, that if we're making our arguments with the same kind of passion and commitment that the other side is showing, that ultimately our democracy will make a decision, and I think it will be a decision to pursue the kind of vision that all of us believe in.

But we're going to have a lot of work to do, and it's going to be tough. And this week, I think, signifies not only how tough it's going to be, but exactly what's at stake. And for you to make the kind of commitment to be here tonight, to be committed to engaging, the fact that you're in, is going to make all the difference in the world.

So thank you very much, everybody. And I think we're going to just take a bunch of questions, then I'm going to have a chance to walk around the room and shake everybody's hands before I head back home and see my kids. Malia is coming home from camp tomorrow just for her daddy's birthday, and I'm very happy about that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:21 p.m. at the Aragon Entertainment Center. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 4. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Chicago, IL.

Locations: Chicago, IL.

Names: Durbin, Richard J.; Emanuel, Rahm I.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha".

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Education : Global competitiveness; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Energy : National energy policy; Illinois : Democratic Party events; Illinois : President's visit; Science and technology : Research and development.

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