

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser

September 30, 2011

Well, to Jim and Jeff, thank you so much for the hospitality; to all of you, for being here. I have to say that the good doctor could run for office. [*Laughter*] He's quite an orator. So that was an extraordinarily gracious introduction, and thank you for opening up your home. To all of you who are here, some of you who've been longtime supporters, some of you who I'm seeing for the first time, it's wonderful to be here.

And what I want to do is have more of a conversation than a monologue, so I'm just going to say a few words at the top very briefly, and then we'll open it up for questions.

I was just on the West Coast, traveling across the country, talking to people about the jobs act and why we need to put people back to work, talking to them about a wide range of issues like energy and health care. And I made the argument to them that I'll make to you, which is that this election is in some ways even more consequential than 2008.

I think in 2008 we understood that for decades there had been a host of problems that had been building up over time. That the dream of middle class folks or folks who were aspiring to the middle class—being able to work hard, get a good education, get a good job, act responsibly, buy a home, make sure that their kids are doing even better than they are, retire with some dignity and respect—that dream felt like it was slipping away. And for a whole host of reasons: because we had underinvested in our human capital and our education system and in our infrastructure; because, frankly, we had seen the rules tilted against ordinary folks in favor of those who were well connected in Washington or powerful on Wall Street.

And we argued in 2008, and we captured, I think, the imaginations of a lot of people, that we could bring about some fundamental change if we got past some of the partisan rancor and the constant politicking that had come to characterize Washington.

Now, we've done a lot over these 2½ years. Obviously, in the midst of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, we've been able to avoid a great depression, stabilize the financial system. We've been able to move forward on a lot of the campaign pledges that we had talked about from making sure that health care is affordable and accessible to every American, to reforming our education system at the K through 12 level so that our kids can compete in this global economy, to ending "don't ask, don't tell," to making sure that we signed into law equal pay for equal work.

Extraordinarily proud of the accomplishments and the progress that we've made over the last 2 years. But what we haven't done is change Washington. And we still have work to do to make sure that this town is working on behalf of ordinary folks so that they can start once again believing in the American Dream, because people have lost confidence in the capacity of folks to look out for them as opposed to look out for themselves or their most powerful patrons. And that's part of what 2012 is all about.

We've got the other party that is laying out for all to see what their agenda is, and that is to roll back environmental regulations, to try to shrink the capacity of Government to act in a proactive way to make sure that we can out-educate and out-innovate and out-build the rest of the world, to basically allow the most powerful forces in our society to write their own rules and

everybody else is going to be on their own. And the argument I made in 2008 applies to 2012: That's not the story of America.

What Jim was just talking about in terms of the history of this home is a story of people making it in part because somebody was investing in public schools, somebody was making sure that we were investing in basic research and development that could ensure that America had the technological edge. The story of America is all of us joining together and everybody sharing in sacrifice, but also sharing in opportunity. And that's what we need to sustain and that's what's at stake in this 2012 election.

Now, it's going to be hard. The economy is coming out of this enormous world recession and people, understandably, are hurting. All around the country where I travel, folks are having a very difficult time. They don't believe in the other side's vision, but they're frustrated.

And so we've got to be able to make the argument—an argument, I believe, that if we stay the course, if we stay on track, if we keep on the task of reforming our education system and making college more affordable, if we stay on track in terms of implementing health care to start making it more efficient, if we stay on track in rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our schools, and if we stay on track in terms of bringing manufacturing back to the United States and making it effective, then I have no doubt that America can compete. Because we still have the universities, we still have the best entrepreneurs, we still have the best scientists, and I believe we've got the best system of government, when it's working.

And the only way it works is if everybody is involved and everybody is paying attention and everybody is engaged. We got people engaged and excited in 2008. We've got to reengage them and reexcite them in 2012. And I can't do that by myself. I'm going to need all of you to be a part of that.

So let me just close by saying this. I could not be prouder to have friends and supporters like the people in this room. I hope you are signed up for a year of hard work. This is not going to be easy. But if we have that same sense of urgency, what I called in 2008 the "fierce urgency of now," if we still possess that, then not only are we going to be able to succeed in the election, but more importantly, we're going to be able to give the American Dream back to the American people.

Thank you so much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 p.m. at the residence of James D'Orta, who introduced the President. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: D'Orta, James.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Business and industry : Entrepreneurship :: Promotion efforts; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; Civil rights : Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : School improvement and renovation; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections;

Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Environment : Air quality, improvement efforts; Environment : Water quality, improvement efforts; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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