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Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Dearborn, Michigan
April 18, 2012

The President. Hello, Michigan! How is everybody doing? It is good to be in Dearborn. It is good to be back in the Motor City!

A couple of people I want to acknowledge here. First of all, give it up for Jeff. Thank you so much for that outstanding introduction. Thank you, Jeff.

We've got Dearborn mayor—John O'Reilly is here; Wayne County Sheriff Benny Napoleon; Wayne County Commissioner Gary Woronchak. Although he is not here, he has done an outstanding job representing this district for longer than just about anybody—John Dingell. And John's wonderful wife Debbie is here. I want to thank Keith William Brown and Gary Bolda from the UAW. And I'm grateful that Cynthia and Edsel Ford II are here. Thank you so much.

And I'm glad all of you are here. This is a fantastic museum. I've got to bring the girls back here. I've got to check it out.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Look at this guy—I didn't mean to start a dialogue here. [*Laughter*]

Well, listen, I am here not just because I need your help, although I do. I'm here because the country needs your help. I see a lot of folks here who worked tirelessly on my 2008 campaign and, let's face it, you did not do it because you thought this was going to be a cakewalk. When you decide to support a candidate named Barack Hussein Obama, you know the odds are not necessarily in your favor. You didn't need a poll to tell you that wasn't going to be a sure thing. [*Laughter*]

But the point is you didn't get involved in this campaign just because of me. You did it because you were making a commitment to each other. You had a shared vision for America. It wasn't a vision where just a few were doing well and everybody else is left to fend for themselves and play by their own rules. It was a big, bold, generous vision of America where everybody who works hard has a chance to get ahead; not just those at the very top.

That's the vision we shared. That's the commitment you made to each other. And we knew it wasn't going to be easy. We knew the changes that we believed in wouldn't necessarily come quickly. But we understood that if we were determined, that we could overcome any obstacle; that we could meet any challenge. And in just 3 years, because of what you did in 2008, we've begun to see what change looks like. We've begun to see it.

Think about it. Change is the decision we made to rescue the American auto industry from collapse, when some politicians said let Detroit go bankrupt. There were 1 million jobs on the line, and fate—the fate of communities all across the Midwest was on the line, and we weren't going to let it happen. I placed my bets on American workers. Today, GM is back on top as the number-one automaker in the world. Chrysler is growing faster than any other car company. Ford is investing billions in plants and factories all across America, bringing thousands of jobs home—200,000 new jobs over the last 2½ years. The American auto industry is back. And that happened because of you. That happened because of you.

There are folks like Jeff all across the country—and all across Michigan, all across Ohio and Indiana, and all across the Midwest. Because you had confidence in America's capacity to change, they were able to show just what they can do.

Change is the decision we made to stop waiting for Congress to do something about our oil addiction and finally raise fuel efficiency standards on cars. With the agreement of the auto industry, by the next—by the middle of the next decade, we will be driving American-made cars, better than ever, that get 55 miles to a gallon. That saves the typical family over $8,000 at the pump; helps the environment. That's what change is. That happened because of you.

Change is the first bill I signed into law.

Audience member. Lilly Ledbetter!

The President. Lilly Ledbetter, a law that says women deserve an equal day's pay for an equal day's work. Our daughters should have the same opportunities as our sons.

Change is the fight we won to stop handing out over $60 billion in taxpayer giveaways to banks who are managing the student loans—give that money directly to the students. And now you've got millions of students all across America who are benefiting with higher student loans, help—more help. That happened because of you. This young man right here mentioned it when I saw him behind stage.

Change is health care reform that we passed after a century of trying. Because of your commitment, here in the United States of America, nobody has to go broke because they get sick. Already 2.5 million young people have health insurance that didn't have it before, because this law lets them stay on their parent's plan. Millions of seniors, now paying less for their prescription drugs. It means Americans can no longer be denied or dropped by their insurance companies when they need care the most. And it means every American will be able to get health care, regardless of who you are, how much money you make. It doesn't matter if you've got a preexisting condition, you will be able to get coverage. That's what change is.

Change is the fact that for the first time in history, you don't have to hide who you love in order to serve the country you love, because we ended "don't ask, don't tell."

Change is the promise we made in 2008: For the first time in 9 years, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. We have refocused our efforts on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11. Al Qaida is weaker than it's ever been. Thanks to our amazing troops, Usama bin Laden no longer walks the face of this Earth. We have begun to transition out of Afghanistan. That's what change is.

None of this change would have happened if it weren't for you. And now we've got more work to do. We've got a lot more work to do. There's still too many Americans here in Michigan and all across the country that are out there looking for work. There's still too many Americans who have a tough time paying the bills or making the mortgage. We're still recovering from the worst economic crisis of our generation.

But the good news is, is that over the past 2 years, businesses have added over 4 million new jobs. Our manufacturers are creating jobs for the first time since the 1990s. Now we've got to keep it going. And the last thing we can afford to do is to go back to the very same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. That's part of what this election is all about.

You know we—that's what these other folks who are running for this office want to do. They make no secret about it. They want to roll back Wall Street reforms, so suddenly Wall

Street is playing by its own rules again. They want to roll back health insurance reform; go back to the days when insurance companies could jack up your rates or deny you coverage without any reason. They want to spend trillions of dollars more on tax breaks for our wealthiest citizens, even if it means adding to the deficit, even if it means gutting student loan programs and education programs and clean energy, and making Medicare more expensive for seniors.

Their philosophy is, is that we're better off if a few are doing well at the top and everybody else is fending for themselves. And they're wrong. I have no doubt they love this country, but they're wrong about this.

In the United States of America, we have always been greater together than we are on our own. We're better off when we stick to that notion that if you work hard in this country—no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, no matter what your religious faith, if you work hard—if you believe in this country, you can do well enough to raise a family, own a home, send your kids to college, put a little away for retirement.

That idea—that's what's at stake. That's the choice in this election. This is not just another political debate. There's always going to be debating in Washington. I mean, they'll argue about anything. [*Laughter*] But this—this is real. This is a make-or-break moment for the middle class in this country and all those who are fighting to get into the middle class. Are we going to create those rungs on the ladder to opportunity, so that everybody has a shot?

We can go back to an economy that's built on outsourcing and bad debt and phony financial profits. That's what we saw before 2008. Or we can fight for an economy that's built to last, built on American manufacturing and American energy and skills for American workers, and the values that made this country great: hard work, fair play, shared responsibility.

You look at these amazing planes in this museum and cars in this museum, and you're reminded, part of what made us great is making stuff. And I want the next generation of manufacturing taking root not in Asia, not in Europe. I want it to happen right here in Detroit, right here in Michigan, in Pittsburgh, in Cleveland, in the United States of America. I don't want us to just be known for buying stuff from other countries: I want to invent and build and sell American products all around the world.

I want us to stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas. I want to reward companies that are investing here, creating jobs in America. I want us to make sure that we've got the best schools in the world. And that means reform. It means properly funding our schools. It means looking out for the man or woman at the front of the classroom.

A good teacher can increase—[*applause*]—a good teacher can increase the lifetime earnings of a classroom by over $250,000. A great teacher can offer an escape from poverty for a child who thinks maybe they're bound by their circumstances but suddenly, that teacher helps them to raise their sights. So I don't want us defending the status quo, but I also don't want a bunch of folks in Washington bashing teachers. I want to give schools the resources they need to keep good teachers; to reward the best ones. I want to give schools the flexibility they need to teach with creativity and passion and stop teaching to the test and train teachers properly.

And those who can't make it, we understand they shouldn't be in the classroom. We want accountability, but we also want to make sure that we understand how important teaching is. Nothing is more important.

And when kids do graduate from high school, we've got to make college affordable. Americans already owe more tuition debt than credit card debt. That's one of the reasons Congress has to stop interest rates on student loans, which are scheduled to go up in July, if we don't do anything.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Yes, that's not good. And then, colleges and universities have to do their part by keeping tuition from going up. And State legislatures have to step up and make sure that they're providing the support to higher education that's necessary. Higher education cannot be a luxury. Whether it's a 2-year program at a community college or a 4-year program or a post-doctorate program, it is not a luxury. It is an economic imperative. Every American family should be able to afford getting the skills they need to compete in this global economy. And that's what we're fighting for.

We need to be supporting scientists and researchers who are trying to make the next breakthrough in clean energy or biotech. I want clean energy to happen here in the United States. I want advanced batteries made here in the United States. I want electric cars made here in the United States. I want solar and wind power made here in the United States. We've been subsidizing oil companies with taxpayer giveaways for about 100 years now. It's time for us to double down on clean energy that has never been more promising.

And we need to build in America—roads, bridges, ports, airports, broadband lines—that's what this museum reminds us of, is what it means to build. It's time we stop taking the money that we're spending at war—use half of it to pay down our debt, use the other half to do some nation building here at home. And when we talk about the deficit——

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you, baby. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Audience member. We love you more! [*Laughter*]

The President. When we talk about the deficit, it's a real problem. It is something that we're going to have to address. We can't leave a bunch of unpaid bills for our kids and our grandkids. And so that means that we've got to make some tough decisions, get rid of programs that don't work to make that we can invest in programs that do. But we've also got to make sure that the tax system reflects everybody doing their fair share.

The Republicans in the Senate just rejected the Buffett rule; wouldn't let it come up for a vote. Simple idea that if you make more than a million dollars a year, you shouldn't pay a lower tax rate than your secretary. Now, the reason that's important is because if we abided by that rule, then we could say to folks what I have repeatedly said, which is, the 98 percent of Americans who make $250,000 a year or less, your taxes shouldn't go up. And that idea is not—it's not class warfare to say that somebody like me can afford to do a little bit more. It's just basic math.

If I get a tax break that I don't need and the country can't afford, then one of two things has to happen: either it adds to the deficit because it's not paid for—that's what they've been doing—or somebody else is going to have to shoulder the burden: a student who has to pay a higher rate on their student loan, a senior who has got to pay higher for their Medicare, a veteran who doesn't get the help that they need to deal with the aftermath of having fought for our freedoms, a family that's trying to get by. That's not right. That's not who we are.

And when I hear politicians talk about values—I agree, this campaign is, and should be, about values. Hard work, that's a value. Looking out for one another, that's a value. The idea that I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper, that's a value. That I have a commitment to something larger than myself.

Each of us is here—every one of us is here because somebody, somewhere——

Audience member. Made a sacrifice.

The President. ——made a sacrifice, was looking out for us. It starts with the family, but it extends beyond the family. You think about what—this museum was built because the Ford family and others said, you know what, this is important to the community that gave us so much. Our grandparents, our great-grandparents, immigrants, slaves—think about all the sacrifices they made not just to think about themselves but to think about the country. Think about all our men and women in uniform making sacrifices because they believe that we are all in this together.

The American story has never been about just what we do on our own. We don't win the race for new jobs and new businesses and security and growth if it's just a you're-on-your-own economics. It doesn't work. And it's never worked. And we've tried it. We just finished trying it. Between 2000 and 2008, we tried what they're selling. It didn't work. Most sluggish job growth that we've seen, outsourcing, manufacturing deteriorating, and then it culminates in the worst crisis since the Great Depression. Why would we think that it would work now? [*Laughter*] Why would we want to go back to that?

We've all got a stake in each other's success. When an outstanding teacher is attracted to the profession, given the pay that she deserves, and then that teacher goes on to teach some talented kid, maybe of modest means, and that kid goes on to become the next Steve Jobs, we all benefit. If we provide faster Internet service and then it goes to a rural community and suddenly some small business has the chance to market to the world and is hiring more workers, that benefits everybody's bottom line. That benefits the entire economy. We build a new bridge that saves the shipping company time and money. You think about the research that led to the invention of the Internet and how much wealth has been created, but that came out of our collective efforts. We all invested in that. That's how we grow.

This is not a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. This is an American idea. It was Teddy Roosevelt, a Republican, who called for a progressive income tax and Dwight Eisenhower, a Republican, who built the Interstate Highway System so all these outstanding cars from Michigan could have somewhere to go. It was a Republican in Congress that helped FDR give millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, a chance to go to college under the GI bill. This is an American idea.

And you know that spirit still exists today. Maybe not in Washington, but out in the country—you go on Main Streets and town halls and VFW halls, you talk to the members of our Armed Forces, you go to our places of worship.

Our politics is divided, but most Americans, they still understand we're in this together. No matter where we come from, no matter what we look like, no matter what our last names are, we rise or fall as one nation and as one people. And that's what's at stake right now. That's what this election is all about.

So let me just say, Michigan, I know these last three and a half years, four years, have been tough. I know there are times where we think change isn't happening as fast as we'd like. But—

and I know that there's a tendency sometimes—and look at Washington and just say, you know what, it's easier being cynical. It's easier just—it's tempting to just say, maybe this isn't possible. But remember what we said during the last campaign. I said this was going to be hard. Change takes time. Sometimes it takes more than a year, it takes more than a single term. It takes more than a single President.

As I was walking in here, you've got a display of Abraham Lincoln, and then you've got the bus that Rosa Parks sat down in. It takes ordinary citizens to bring about change, who are committed to keep fighting and keep pushing and keep inching this country closer to our highest ideals.

That's why I need all of you. I need all of you. I said in 2008, I am not a perfect man, I will never be a perfect President, but what I promised you was that I would always tell you what I thought, I would always tell you where I stood, and I would wake up every single day fighting for you as hard as I know how. And I have kept that promise. I have kept that promise.

And if you're willing to keep pushing with me, to keep working on behalf of our higher ideals, there is nothing that will stop us. And we will finish what we started in 2008.

God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:34 p.m. at the Henry Ford Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Jeff Klayo, Local 1700 member, Keith W. Brown, Local 245 president, and Gary Bolda, Henry Ford Museum chairman, United Auto Workers; and Edsel B. Ford II, member of the Board of Trustees, Henry Ford Museum, and his wife Cynthia.

Categories: Remarks and Addresses : Obama Victory 2012 fundraisers :: Dearborn, MI.

Locations: Dearborn, MI.

Names: Bolda, Gary; Brown, Keith W.; Dingell, Debbie Insley; Dingell, John D.; Ford, Cynthia; Ford, Edsel B., II; Klayo, Jeff; Napoleon, Benny N.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; O'Reilly, John B.; Woronchak, Gary.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Decline; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Civil rights : Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; Civil rights : Wage equality; Economy, national : Economic concerns; 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; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, interest rates and refinancing; Education : Reform legislation; Education : Standards and school accountability; Education : Teachers; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections ; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Outsourcing to foreign countries ; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: U.S. production; Energy : Domestic sources; Energy : Foreign sources ; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Hybrid and alternative fuel automobiles :: Battery technology, U.S. production; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Subsidies, elimination; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Seniors, prescription drug benefits; Health and medical care : Young adults :: Insurance coverage as dependents, age limit extension; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment;

Michigan : Democratic Party events; Michigan : Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn; Michigan : President's visit; Taxation : Tax Code :: Reform; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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