

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

April 28, 2012

The President. Thank you. Good evening, everybody. Good evening. I could not be more thrilled to be here tonight—[*laughter*—at the White House Correspondents' Dinner. This is a great crowd. They're already laughing. It's terrific.

Chuck Todd, love you, brother. [*Laughter*] I'm delighted to see some of the cast members of "Glee" are here. [*Laughter*] And Jimmy Kimmel, it's an honor, man. [*Laughter*] What's so funny?

My fellow Americans, we gather during a historic anniversary. Last year at this time—in fact, on this very weekend—we finally delivered justice to one of the world's most notorious individuals.

[*At this point, a photo of Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, was shown.*]

Now, this year, we gather in the midst of a heated election season. And Axelrod tells me I should never miss a chance to reintroduce myself to the American people. So tonight this is how I'd like to begin: My name is Barack Obama. My mother was born in Kansas. My father was born in Kenya. And I was born, of course, in Hawaii. [*Laughter*]

[*The President winked at the audience.*]

In 2009, I took office in the face of some enormous challenges. Now, some have said I blame too many problems on my predecessor, but let's not forget that's a practice that was initiated by George W. Bush. [*Laughter*] Since then, Congress and I have certainly had our differences; yet, I've tried to be civil, to not take any cheap shots. And that's why I want to especially thank all the Members who took a break from their exhausting schedule of not passing any laws to be here tonight. [*Laughter*] Let's give them a big round of applause.

Despite many obstacles, much has changed during my time in office. Four years ago, I was locked in a brutal primary battle with Hillary Clinton. Four years later, she won't stop drunk-texting me from Cartagena. [*Laughter*]

Four years ago, I was a Washington outsider. Four years later, I'm at this dinner. Four years ago, I looked like this.

[*A photo of the President during his 2008 election campaign was shown.*]

Today, I look like this. [*Laughter*]

[*A recent photo of the President was shown.*]

And four years from now, I will look like this. [*Laughter*]

[*A photo of actor Morgan Freeman was shown.*]

That's not even funny. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, it's great to be here this evening in the vast, magnificent Hilton ballroom, or what Mitt Romney would call a little fixer-upper. [*Laughter*] I mean, look at this party. We've got men in tuxes, women in gowns, fine wine, first-class entertainment. I was just relieved to learn

this was not a GSA conference. [Laughter] Unbelievable. Not even the mindreader knew what they were thinking. [Laughter]

Of course, the White House Correspondents' dinner is known as the prom of Washington, DC, a term coined by political reporters who clearly never had the chance to go to an actual prom. [Laughter]

Our chaperone for the evening is Jimmy Kimmel, who is perfect for the job since most of tonight's audience is in his key demographic, people who fall asleep during "Nightline." [Laughter] Jimmy got his start years ago on "The Man Show." In Washington, that's what we call a congressional hearing on contraception. [Laughter]

And plenty of journalists are here tonight. I'd be remiss if I didn't congratulate the Huffington Post on their Pulitzer Prize. You deserve it, Arianna. There's no one else out there linking to the kinds of hard-hitting journalism that HuffPo is linking to every single day. [Laughter] Give them a round of applause. And you don't pay them. It's a great business model. [Laughter]

Even Sarah Palin is getting back into the game, guest hosting on "The Today Show," which reminds me of an old saying: What's the difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull? A pit bull is delicious. [Laughter] A little soy sauce—[laughter].

Now, I know at this point many of you are expecting me to go after my likely opponent, Newt Gingrich. [Laughter] Newt, there's still time, man. [Laughter] But I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to attack any of the Republican candidates. Take Mitt Romney. He and I actually have a lot in common. We both think of our wives as our better halves, and polls show, to a alarmingly insulting extent, the American people agree. [Laughter] We also both have degrees from Harvard; I have one, he has two. What a snob. [Laughter]

Of course, we've also had our differences. Recently, his campaign criticized me for slow jamming the news with Jimmy Fallon. In fact, I understand Governor Romney was so incensed he asked his staff if he could get some equal time on "The Merv Griffin Show." [Laughter] Still, I guess Governor Romney is feeling pretty good about things because he took a few hours off the other day to see "The Hunger Games." Some of you have seen it. It's a movie about people who court wealthy sponsors and then brutally savage each other until only one contestant is left standing. I'm sure this was a really great change of pace for him. [Laughter] I have not seen "The Hunger Games," not enough class warfare for me. [Laughter]

Of course, I know everybody is predicting a nasty election, and thankfully, we've all agreed that families are off limits. Dogs, however, are apparently fair game. [Laughter] And while both campaigns have had some fun with this, the other day I saw a new ad from one of these outside groups that, frankly, I think crossed the line. I know Governor Romney says he has no control over what his super PACs do, but can we show the ad real quick?

[A video was shown.]

The President. That's pretty rough—[laughter]—but I can take it, because my stepfather always told me, it's a boy-eat-dog world out there. [Laughter]

Now, if I do win a second term as President, let me just say something to all the—[applause]—let me just say something to all my conspiracy-oriented friends on the right who think I'm planning to unleash some secret agenda: You're absolutely right. [Laughter] So allow me to close with a quick preview of the secret agenda you can expect in a second Obama administration.

In my first term, I sang Al Green; in my second term, I'm going with Young Jeezy.
[*Laughter*]

The First Lady. Yeah.

The President. Michelle said "yeah." [*Laughter*] I sing that to her sometimes. [*Laughter*]

In my first term, we ended the war in Iraq; in my second term, I will win the war on Christmas. [*Laughter*] In my first term, we repealed the policy known as "don't ask, don't tell"—[*applause*—wait, though; in my second term, we will replace it with a policy known as "it's raining men." [*Laughter*] In my first term, we passed health care reform; in my second term, I guess I'll pass it again.

I do want to end tonight on a slightly more serious note. Whoever takes the oath of office next January will face some great challenges, but he will also inherit traditions that make us greater than the challenges we face. And one of those traditions is represented here tonight: a free press that isn't afraid to ask questions, to examine, and to criticize. And in service of that mission, all of you make sacrifices.

Tonight we remember journalists such as Anthony Shadid and Marie Colvin, who made the ultimate sacrifice as they sought to shine a light on some of the most important stories of our time. So whether you are a blogger or a broadcaster, whether you take on powerful interests here at home or put yourself in harm's way overseas, I have the greatest respect and admiration for what you do. I know sometimes you like to give me a hard time—and I certainly like to return the favor—[*laughter*]—but I never forget that our country depends on you. You help protect our freedom, our democracy, and our way of life.

And just to set the record straight, I really do enjoy attending these dinners. In fact, I had a lot more material prepared, but I have to get the Secret Service home in time for their new curfew. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent, NBC News; James C. Kimmel, host, ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" program; David M. Axelrod, communications director of the President's 2012 election campaign; Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and his wife Ann; Arianna Huffington, founder and editor in chief, The Huffington Post; former Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska; Republican Presidential candidate Newton L. Gingrich; James T. Fallon, Jr., host, NBC's "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon" program; and musicians Albert Green and Jay W. "Young Jeezy" Jenkins. He also referred to journalists Anthony Shadid, who died while on assignment in Syria on February 16, and Marie Colvin, who was killed while on assignment in Homs, Syria on February 19.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : White House Correspondents' Association dinner.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Axelrod, David M.; Bush, George W. ; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Fallon, James T., Jr.; Gingrich, Newton L.; Green, Albert; Huffington, Arianna; Jenkins, Jay W. "Young Jeezy"; Kimmel, James C.; Obama, Michelle; Palin, Sarah; Romney, Ann L.D.; Romney, W. Mitt; Todd, Chuck; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Civil rights : Freedom of the press; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; State, Department of : Secretary; White House Correspondents' Association.

DCPD Number: DCPD201200317.