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Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Atherton, California

May 23, 2012

The President. Thank you, everybody. Please, please have a seat.

Well, let me start out by just saying that the Goldman family and Doug and Lisa, they have had my back from the get-go. At a time when a lot of people had no idea who I was, they stepped up and were enormous supporters, along with some of the people in this room. They've been great friends. Even though the boys here beat me in air hockey—[*laughter*]—they haven't rubbed it in, except for when I show up and they have an air hockey table here. [*Laughter*] But they've just been extraordinary supporters, and I could not thank them more for everything that they've done. So please give them another round of applause.

I want to thank David Crosby and Graham Nash for providing some wonderful music. It's not every day you get Rock and Roll Hall of Famers strumming the guitar for you. So we really appreciate them. And they've been wonderful supporters as well. We really appreciate that.

I want to thank Don Cheadle for helping to frame the debate here. And Don has been a terrific friend as well. I'm not going to talk about the basketball game we had a couple of weeks ago. [*Laughter*] We're not going to say anything about it.

Actor Don Cheadle. Thank you.

The President. Nothing. [*Laughter*]

And I want to thank all of you for being here.

Now, in these kinds of settings, I try not to give a long speech. What I'd like to do is just make some very brief remarks at the top, because I want to save as much time as possible just for questions, for comments, for advice. I always get advice at these things so—[*laughter*]—I'm sure this crowd will not be shy.

But as has already been said, we've gone through 3½ of the toughest years in our lifetimes. It wasn't just the 800,000 jobs a month that we were losing. We had lost 3 million jobs before I was even sworn into office. We had lost 8 million before our economic policies had a chance to take effect. And we've still got a long way to go here in California and all across the country. There are a lot of folks who are hurting, people are out of work or underemployed, people whose homes are $100,000 underwater and have no sense of how they'll ever get out from under the debts that they've accumulated. There are an awful lot of young people here who are extraordinarily talented, but don't see a path or a vision for the future. So our work is not done.

The good news, though, is that we're beginning to steer that ship in the right direction. We've set a path and a target and a direction where this is again a country where everybody gets a fair shot, everybody does their fair share, everybody plays by the same set of rules. A lot of that has to do with making sure that every kid in this country is getting a good education. And I could not be prouder of the work that we've done on education reform.

A lot of it has to do with making sure that higher education is not a luxury. And it's not just 4-year colleges. We need more engineers, we need more scientists, we need more Stanford grads, but we also need folks who are going to community colleges and are able to get the skills and the training that they need in order to compete for jobs the 21st century.

We're making progress when it comes to science and innovation and all the investments that we've been making to try to make sure that we retain the edge that made us into an economic superpower. We've started to rebuild our infrastructure, not just the infrastructure of the past, not just roads and bridges, but also smart grids and high-speed rail.

We're starting to make progress when it comes to advanced manufacturing, bringing jobs back here to the United States of America. And our exports have surged. We're opening up markets all across the world. And it turns out that America continues to have the best workers and the best businesses in the world. We just have to get organized, and we're starting to do so.

Health care continues to be an extraordinary challenge, but we're starting to see the impact of the health care bill. And young people, 2.5 million young people who are able to stay on their parent's plan because of the health care bill, millions of seniors who are seeing reductions in the cost of their prescription drugs. And ultimately, 30 million people who right now are showing up at the emergency room are going to have the chance for affordable, decent health care coverage. And in the process, we're rationalizing the system, so that we start driving down costs.

We've doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars. We have doubled the amount of clean energy that we're producing. We've still got a long way to go to have the kind of energy strategy that we need. But we actually have seen our imports of foreign oil drop down under 50 percent, the lowest that it's been in 15 years. And through not only the production of clean energy, but massive investments in energy efficiency, we've got a chance to get control of our energy future in a way that is good for our economy, good for our national security, and is good for our environment. And we can start tackling climate change in a serious way and lead the world on that issue.

It's been mentioned that we ended the war in Iraq. We're in the process of ending the war in Afghanistan. And in the process, we're also restoring respect for this country all around the world. I had a chance to speak to 1,100 cadets who were graduating from the Air Force Academy this afternoon—this morning. And I told them, don't buy this whole notion that America's influence is declining in the world, because the truth is, as we travel everywhere, we continue to be the agenda setters. Folks continue to look to us to help shape international rules and norms that allow us to tackle things like terrorism or climate change or poverty and development. We continue to be the one indispensible nation. And because we project it with our values and our ideals and restored a sense of rule of law, people are paying attention, people are listening, and people are hungry for our leadership.

So the strides that we've made over the last 3½ years have been extraordinary, but we've still got a long way to go. We've got a lot of work to do. We may not even finish it in 5 years, but I certainly need 5 more years to get us locked in on where we need to go.

And that's where all of you come in. A lot of people here have made a lot of sacrifices to put me in this office. And you've continued to help inform and guide a lot of my thinking on a lot of important issues. But I tell you, we're not done. And as much noise as there is out there—and those of you who follow this stuff and you're reading blogs and watching cable TV and it feels like the sky is falling—let me tell you, when you get out into the country, this is a country full of decent people who believe in America and are generous and kind and tolerant.

You know, I gave one commencement this week before I went to the Air Force Academy; it was the high school graduation at Joplin High. Now, you'll recall this is a town that had been devastated by a tornado, and the kids ended up going to high school in a mall, and they ended

up eating at the food court there for lunch, which they thought was an improvement. [*Laughter*] But to see the faces of these young people and their parents, and all they had been through—there was a young man who had lost both his parents in the tornado, had been thrown and was out for 3 days. When he finally woke up, he had to go through 5 weeks of rehabilitation, and he had to look after a sister. And he was graduating this year and going on to college. And when you talk to a young man like that and he says, "I know it's not easy, but I don't quit," that captures who we are and what we're about.

And that's been displayed—that resilience and that strength has been displayed—over the last 3½ years, just like it's been displayed over the last 300 years. And that's not fading. That's as strong as it's ever been. And that's what inspires me. That's what makes me as determined now—more determined now than I was in 2008.

So I hope you have that same determination, because I intend to win this things, and I intend to keep on changing this country.

So thank you. Thank you. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:03 p.m. at the residence of Douglas E. and Lisa M. Goldman. In his remarks, he referred to Jason E. and Matthew W. Goldman, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Goldman; and Quinton Anderson, student, Joplin High School, and his sister Grace. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 24.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Obama Victory Fund 2012 fundraisers :: Atherton, CA.

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