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Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Fort Collins, Colorado

August 28, 2012

The President. Hello, Colorado State! How's it going, Rams? It is good to be back in Fort Collins. The last time I was here, back in 2008, it was a spectacular day. It was a little later; it was in the fall, and the leaves were turning, and had a little nip in the air, and I wanted to stay. But as usual, they had something else scheduled. [*Laughter*] So it is wonderful to be here.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. I'm thrilled to be here.

I've got a couple of people I want to acknowledge. First of all, give Haley a big round of applause for the great introduction. One of the finest Governors in the country, John Hickenlooper. His outstanding Lieutenant Governor, Joe Garcia. Congressman Jared Polis is here. And the outstanding Secretary of the Interior and your hometown guy, Ken Salazar is in the house.

So class is back in session. The Rocky Mountain Showdown is this Saturday. And like Haley said in her introduction, we are giving the Rams and the Buffs a second chance to go at it this fall. We've set up a Rocky Mountain rumble to see which school can register more voters. And you guys can get a head start by registering right here, right now. We've got volunteers all throughout the audience. Volunteers, raise your hands—there. They've got their clipboards ready. They are ready to go. If you are not registered, get registered. If for some reason these outstanding volunteers miss you somehow, then you can also register online at gottaregister.com. Now, I understand this—excuse me, English professors, but this is "gotta register"; this is g-o-t-t-a-register. This is not "got to register"—"gotta register."

And we need you guys to get your friends and your classmates and your neighbors to do it as well because this is important.

Look, just over 2 months from now—70 days—for the first time in many of your lives, you'll get to pick a President. Now, the truth is, you guys have more at stake in this election than anybody. When you step into that voting booth, the choice you make in that instant will shape this country, the world, your lives for decades to come. And I know that's kind of a heavy idea to lay on you on a Tuesday afternoon. But it's true. The decisions that we make as a country on the economy and jobs and taxes and education and energy and war and climate change and the Supreme Court, these are all decisions that will affect you directly in very personal ways.

And I feel that same sense of urgency because the decisions I make are ones that are going to affect Malia and Sasha, my daughters, for generations to come. And this is the way it's always been. One generation may make decisions, but they're making them not just on behalf of that generation; they're making them on behalf of future generations. And the thing is, Colorado State, your generation can choose the path we take this country on. Your vote will decide where we go from here.

We—and so as you prepare for November, you've got to ask yourself some questions: Are we going to make sure that good jobs and opportunities take root not in China or India or Germany, but here in Colorado and all across America so you don't have to leave home to find

a good job? Will we reward an honest day's work so that people have a chance to buy a home of their own, and you'll have health care that will be there for you when you get sick, and you'll have the chance to put a little bit of money away for retirement and take a vacation once in a while and, most importantly, be able to give your children a life that's even bigger and better than yours?

Will this country make it easier for future generations to afford a degree, pay off student loans? Are we going to build more good schools and hire more good teachers so that more kids are prepared to attend colleges like Colorado State? Will this country be one that keeps moving away from foreign oil and towards renewable sources like wind and solar and biofuels that make our economy and our planet more secure? Are we going to be a country that leads not just with the strength of our military, but also the power of our diplomacy and the power of our example?

Will this be an America where no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter who you love, no matter what your last name is, you can pursue your own happiness, you can make it if you try?

That's what the last 4 years have been about, Fort Collins. That's what this campaign is all about, and that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States of America.

I know that it's sometimes easy to get a little cynical about politics. [*Laughter*] Campaigns seem meaner and smaller, and Washington seems more gridlocked than ever. Every day there's this steady stream of ads, and it's a diet of cynicism, telling you change is impossible. You can't make a difference; you won't be able to close the gap between life as it is and the life that we imagined for each other.

And frankly, some on the other side, they make this a political strategy. They tell you over and over again how bad things are and, of course, how it's Obama's fault. [*Laughter*] And they tell you that if you believed in change 4 years ago, your faith was misplaced, you're naive. Last week, my opponent's campaign called you the "lost generation."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. And they hope that by telling you these things that you'll get discouraged, and that you'll stay home this time, because they know that young people came out in record numbers 4 years ago.

Well, I'm here to tell you: Don't listen to the cynics. Don't listen to the naysayers. Four years ago, we understood that solving our biggest challenges was going to take longer than one year or one term or even one President. But we went ahead, and we got started anyway. And we may have a lot of work to do, but we know the path we're traveling. We know where we need to get going, and we know we're going to get there.

We understand that this country is moving forward, and I'm confident we're going to get there because I believe in you. I believe in the American people. I believe that as tough as times are, the American people are tougher.

I believe this generation is full of passion and full of service. I've seen your generation eager to make a difference, whether it's in a homeless shelter or working on an environmental project. And you've already proved that you can do it. You've proved it. You proved it 4 years ago.

Four years ago, you believed that we could put a college education within the reach of everybody who was willing to work for it. And because of that faith, we were able to create a college tax credit that's saving families up to $10,000 for college tuition over the course of 4 years. We fixed the student loan system that was giving billions of dollars of taxpayer money to banks. We said let's give it directly to students. And we were able to double grant aid for millions of students.

When some on Capitol Hill were ready to let Federal student loan rates double for 7 million students, we said no, and you helped us, and we beat that back. That would not have happened in Washington without you. That's what your vote accomplished. You helped millions of young people, maybe including yourself, earn a college education. You made that happen.

You believed we could use less foreign oil and reduce the carbon pollution that threatens our planet. And in just 4 years, we have doubled the generation of clean, renewable energy like wind and solar. We developed new fuel standards for our cars so that cars are going to get 55 miles a gallon next decade. That will save you money at the pump. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a level roughly equivalent to a year's worth of carbon emissions from all the cars in the world put together.

Today, America is less dependent on foreign oil than any time in the last 20 years. We're on track to emit fewer greenhouse gases this year than we have in nearly 20 years. You can keep those trends going. That all happened because of you.

You believed that in America, nobody should go broke just because they get sick. And today—today—because of Obamacare—and yes, I do care—that's why we passed the law. Nearly 7 million young people have health insurance because they're able to stay on their parents' plans. Your grandparents are saving money on their prescription drugs. Women have gained access to free preventive care like mammograms and contraception. Your vote made that happen. You made that change.

It was young people like you who said we can end this war in Iraq. And today, the war is over. More troops are at home with their families. They're earning their education through the post-9/11 GI bill. They're out there starting new businesses. And nobody will ever again have to hide who they love in order to serve the country that they love, because we ended"don't ask, don't tell" once and for all. You made that change. You made that happen. Your voice made a difference.

Audience member. You did!

Audience member. With your help!

The President. I helped a little bit. But this change was because you put in the effort. You put in the time. You had confidence in America's future.

So now we've got more work to do, to grow this economy, to create more good jobs, to strengthen the middle class. And in November, your voice is going to matter more than ever before. Because this week in Tampa, my opponents will offer you their agenda.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, vote. That's the best response. Vote. And get some of your friends to vote.

Now, look, the show in Tampa I'm sure will be very entertaining. And I'm sure they'll have wonderful things to say about me. It will be well produced; they've hired all kinds of fancy TV producers. The only problem is, it won't offer a path forward.

They've got an economic plan that says if you just give big tax cuts—$5 trillion worth, mostly to wealthy folks—so that $3 million—somebody who makes $3 million a year would get another $250,000 in additional tax cuts——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——that somehow prosperity will rain down on everybody else. And some of you are a little young to remember this, but we tried this for a decade; it didn't work. It didn't work then; it won't work now. I don't want to pay for another millionaire's tax cut by raising taxes on middle class families, and I sure don't want to pay for a tax cut for folks like me who don't need it—or folks like Governor Romney who needs it even less—[*laughter*]—by cutting financial aid for 10 million students. Our economic strength doesn't come from the top down. It comes from students and workers. It comes from small-business people and middle class families who are out there striving and hustling. Because when they do well, everybody does well. When they've got money to spend, businesses have customers. And then they hire more workers. And then those workers have more money to spend. And everybody does well.

That's how you grow an economy, from the middle out, from the bottom up. That's what I'm fighting for. That's why I'm running for a second term for President.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. So in just 2 months, you're going to choose the path we take. And I want everybody, when you're talking to friends and neighbors, just explain to them what's at stake. Tell them you can choose whether we give massive new tax cuts to folks who've already made it or do we keep taxes low for Americans who are still trying to make it. I've cut taxes for middle class families and for small businesses and for students, and I want to make sure that taxes are not raised a single dime on the first $250,000 a year income—which, by the way, means 98 percent of families and 97 percent of small businesses would not see a tax increase.

That's a choice in this election. Because we're going to have to close the deficit, and the question is are we going to do it Mr. Romney's way or are we going to do it in a balanced way that says, yes, we cut spending we don't need, but we also ask everybody to do their fair share.

We can choose whether we give up new jobs and new industries to other countries or whether we fight for those jobs in States like Colorado and Iowa and Ohio, by investing in the research of our scientists, investing in the skills of our workers and our students, in the innovation that harnesses new sources of energy, that brings about the next generation of manufacturing in places like Fort Collins. That's what's at stake.

You can make a decision as to whether we're going to keep college affordable. You know, Governor Romney has a suggestion in terms of you affording college, he says, borrow money from your parents. Now, my suspicion is if your parents got it, they've already given it to you.

But I don't think that's the path we should be taking. I think we've got to make sure that we help every single American earn the kind of education you're earning right here at Colorado State. Let's help more Americans go to community colleges to get the skills and training that employers are looking for right now.

You know—see, maybe my opponent doesn't understand, but I do. Because Michelle and I, we just finished paying off our student loans about 8 years ago. We know what it's like. We shouldn't be making it harder. We should be making it easier. We shouldn't end the college tax credit that we created; we should be expanding it. In America, a higher education cannot be a luxury; it's an economic necessity that every family and every young person in America should be able to afford. That's what's at stake in this election. That's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

If your friends or neighbors are concerned about energy, you tell them, do we want an energy plan written by and for big oil companies?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or do we want an all-of-the-above energy strategy for America, renewable sources of energy. Governor Romney calls them "imaginary." Congressman Ryan calls them a "fad." I think they're the future. I think they're worth fighting for.

This university gets 10 percent of its power—soon to be 30 percent—from solar energy. About 10,000 good Colorado jobs depend on wind and solar industries. It is time to stop giving $4 billion a year in taxpayer corporate welfare to oil companies that are making money every time you fill up with a tank of gas. And let's invest that money in homegrown energy that has never been more promising. That's the future, and in America, we seize the future. It's good for jobs, it's good for our economy, and it's good for the planet too. That's what's at stake in this election.

Ask your friends, ask your neighbors: Should we go back to a health insurance system that lets insurance companies decide who and when they want to cover?

Audience members. No!

The President. So if you've got a preexisting condition, you're out of luck. Or should we keep moving forward with the new health care law that's already cutting costs and covering more people and saving lives?

[*At this point, the President sneezed.*]

Audience members. Bless you!

The President. Thank you. See, it gives me a cold just thinking about what they might do. [*Laughter*]

Governor Romney, he's promised that somewhere in between his first day and, I don't know, the next day, he's going to sit down and grab a pen, and he's going to eliminate Obamacare.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. This is what's called the "Romney-doesn't-care" plan. [*Laughter*] Kick 7 million young people off their parent's plan. Raise prescription drug costs for seniors. Tell folks with prescription—or with preexisting conditions, you're out of luck again. I——

Audience members. No!

The President. I do care. And I think that all of us care, because all of us at some point in our lives might need to get health care and we might not always be able to afford it, no matter how well we've planned, no matter how well we think we've insured ourselves. And when that happens, I want to make sure we live in a country where every single person knows that they

can get the care they need and they're not going to have to lose their home or lose their savings because of it.

We don't need to refight the battles of the past. The Supreme Court has spoken. We're moving forward. If somebody wants to help to improve our health care system I'll work with them, but I'm not going to leave millions of Americans out in the cold. That's what we're fighting for. That's what's at stake in this election.

On issue after issue, these guys seem to just want to go backwards. Sometimes they want to go back 10 years, sometimes 20, sometimes 50, sometimes 100. This isn't the time to refight battles that we've already settled. In November, you can say that in this century, women should be trusted to make their own health care decisions.

At a time when one of the biggest assets we have is the diversity of our talent and our ingenuity, it doesn't make sense for us to tell young people who have grown up in America, who have pledged allegiance to the flag, who have understood themselves to be Americans, who want to serve in our military or attend our universities, that somehow because their parents were undocumented, they should be sent back to countries they've never even heard of. That's not who we are as a people.

We're not going to go back and reinstate "don't ask, don't tell" like these other folks are talking about. We're moving forward. We don't need to rewrite our Constitution to somehow say that people who love each other and aren't bothering anybody else, that somehow they cannot get married.

That's not who we are. We go forward. We don't go backwards. We don't, we don't—the history of this country has not been to see if we can exclude more people. The history of our country has been to gather everyone together. If you're willing to work hard, if you're willing to act responsibly, if you believe in that American creed, then you're welcome. We're part of a family. And we don't believe in sending people to the sidelines. We believe that the strength of our country, the character of this Nation comes from hearing every voice, from harnessing every talent, from realizing that in America we are greater together than we are on our own. And this November, you get to decide whether that remains true.

And it's not just about this country. When we think about internationally, America remains the one indispensible nation. Issues of war and peace are ones where we've always got to be at the forefront. And so you get to decide the future of the war in Afghanistan. Governor Romney says that me ending the war was "tragic."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. He's criticized me for bring 33,000 troops home from Afghanistan next month. Now, look, I take a backseat to no one when it comes to our national security, but I believe in making sure that we act smartly in how we deal with our national security. I said we'd end the war in Iraq; we did. I said we'd go after Al Qaida and bin Laden, and we did.

By bringing our troops home from Iraq, by bringing our troops home from Afghanistan, we're going to be able to start doing some nation-building here at home, and that's part of our national security. And by the way, as long as I'm Commander in Chief, those veterans who served us, we're going to have to serve them just as well as they served us, because nobody who fought for America should have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads when they come home.

That's what we're fighting for. That's the choice in this election.

I want to thank Colorado State for being so good to our troops, so good to our veterans, helping them earn the opportunity that they have helped defend.

And here's the bottom line, Colorado: If the other side has its way and they pass this $5 trillion tax cut that's targeted towards the wealthiest Americans, it won't create jobs. It won't cut the deficit. Ignoring inequality doesn't make it go away. Denying climate change doesn't make it stop. These things don't make our future brighter. They won't make your future stronger. And so the ultimate question is, will you choose the path that actually leads to a better future?

You have a chance to prove the cynics wrong one more time. And over the next 2 months, the other side is going to spend more money than we've ever seen before. They will throw everything they've got and the kitchen sink. They'll just make stuff up if they have to; they're doing it already.

And they will send an avalanche of attack ads and insults. They will try to distract you, and sometimes—how do I put this nicely—they will just fib. [*Laughter*] And it's backed by $10 million checks. I mean, they've got wealthy donors who like things just the way they are. They're counting on young people to accept their version of the status quo, to accept their version of the way things ought to be, to leave the questions that affect your lives up to big oil and insurance companies, and a bunch of men in Congress.

That's what they're counting on, and so I just want all of you to understand your power. Don't give it away, not when you're young. If you're going to get cynical, wait till you get older. [*Laughter*] Wait till you have a few bumps and bruises. But right now America is counting on you. And I'm counting on you.

Those who oppose change, those who benefit from an unjust status quo, they've always bet on your cynicism and complacency. But throughout American history, they have lost that bet. They're going to lose that bet this time because of you.

Because we've got a lot more work to do. You're going to have to register to vote. You're going to have to get your friends registered to vote. You're going to have to drag your friends to the polls. You're going to have to refuse to wait for the next person to do it, because somebody is waiting on you. They're waiting on you to bring about this change. They're waiting for you to lead.

Sometimes, your parents may be waiting on you. Back in 2008, part of the way we ended up winning was because we had a whole bunch of young people telling their parents, you got to get on board. It's time for change.

Yes, we can. Fired up. Ready to go. And I'm still fired up, and I'm still ready to go, because we've got more work to do. We've got more jobs to create. We've got more schools to build. We've got more teachers to hire. We've got more young people to send to college. We've got more troops to bring home. We've got more renewable energy to generate. We've got more doors of opportunity to open to everybody who is willing to work hard and walk through them.

That's what's at stake in this election. And that's what's at stake right here in Colorado because if we win Colorado, we will win this election. If we win Fort Collins, we will win this election. We win Fort Collins, and we'll finish what we started, and we will remind the world just why it is that the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:40 p.m. at Colorado State University. In his remarks, he referred to Haley Damm-Hamblin, student, Colorado State University; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and Vice Presidential candidate Rep. Paul D. Ryan.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Fort Collins, CO.

Locations: Fort Collins, CO.

Names: Damm-Hamblin, Haley; Garcia, Joseph; Hickenlooper, John W.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Polis, Jared S.; Romney, W. Mitt; Ryan, Paul D.; Salazar, Kenneth L.

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; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Civil rights : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Colorado : Democratic Party events ; Colorado : Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Colorado : President's visits; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: U.S. production; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Foreign sources; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Subsidies, elimination; Environment : Climate change; Health and medical care : Contraception and family planning; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; ; Veterans : Job training and education assistance; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Veterans : Benefits.

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