

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at the Ohio AFL–CIO Convention in Columbus, Ohio

September 17, 2012

The President. Hello, AFL–CIO! It is good to be back in Ohio. Good to see my brothers and sisters in labor.

I want to start off by saying you've got an outstanding leader in Tim. Give him a big round of applause. Love what he's doing. But you are also—I was going to say lucky, but you're also wise to have somebody who fights on your behalf every single day in the halls of Capitol Hill, and that is your outstanding Senator, Sherrod Brown.

Now, you guys have a seat, have a seat, have a seat. I am not going to be long, but I'll admit, we didn't necessarily know what you guys were up to until, kind of, the last minute. And I said, well, I can't leave Ohio without seeing my friends at the AFL–CIO.

And it's pretty—it's timely to be able to see you, because I was in Cincinnati today, came up to Columbus this afternoon, and in both places, we announced the work that we've done, in conjunction with Sherrod, to make sure that we're filing a new WTO case challenging China's illegal trade and subsidies in autos and auto parts.

My attitude is, when other countries don't play by the rules, we're going to stand up to them, which is why we've actually filed twice as many cases as the previous administration; won every case that has been decided. So we were able to stop some of these cheap tire imports that were coming into this country unfairly; make sure that a thousand jobs right here in the United States were maintained. It's the reason that we are going to keep on pressing to make sure that they are playing by the rules, because my attitude is the United States of America has the best workers on Earth, we've got the best businesses on Earth, and if they are competing fairly, we will win every single time. That's what I believe.

You may have noticed the guy who's running against me——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, vote. Vote.

He has been running around, talking about how he's going to get tough with China. Now, this is a guy who started off investing in companies that are called "pioneers" in the business of outsourcing jobs to countries like China. So I don't think that we can have a lot of confidence if 7 weeks before an election, he suddenly says he wants to get tough on China, when his entire history has been feeling pretty comfortable with seeing jobs shipped to China. In fact, on that tire case, he complained that I was being protectionist.

And so now, all of a sudden, he is going to go around trying to claim the mantle of fighting for the American working man and woman. This gives you some sense of what is at stake in this election. And we've got two fundamentally different visions about how we move this country forward.

They are peddling the same top-down economics that got us into this mess in the first place. You ask them, what's your ideas to build this economy, they'll tell you, well, we've got tax cuts in the morning and tax cuts at night—[laughter]—tax cuts when there's peace and tax cuts

when there's war. In between, we'll roll back some regulations and try to bust some unions, and then we'll go back to some more tax cuts. That's their entire agenda.

Well, we've got a different vision. We want to restore that basic bargain in America that says if you work hard, you can make it; that says if you're acting responsibly and looking after your family and willing to put in the effort, you can afford a home that you can call your own, you have a job that pays the bills; that you won't have to worry about going bankrupt if you get sick; that you'll be able to retire with some dignity and some respect. And you'll be able to save up enough to help your kids do even better than you did.

That's what the union movement's been about. That's what America has been about. That's what built the middle class. That's what built our economy. That's what we're fighting for. And we're not going backwards. We're going forward. That's what this election is about.

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

The President. And the nice thing is when you make this choice, you've got a track record to look at. When I came into office, the first thing I did was overturn bans on project labor agreements on Federal—in Federally funded construction, expanded Davis-Bacon coverage in the Recovery Act, appointed folks to the NLRB who actually recognize that their jobs is to be fair and decent brokers and to understand that you should be thinking a little bit about labor if you're a member of the NLRB.

We made fair pay protections the law of the land, because my attitude is, if a woman is in there working just as hard on that assembly line or on that construction site, she should get paid just like a man does.

We committed to doubling our Nation's exports so we're not just sending jobs overseas; we should be sending products overseas, keeping those jobs right here in the United States of America.

When some folks said let's let Detroit go bankrupt, I said we've got a million jobs on the line, a whole bunch of them right here in Ohio. And so we placed our bet on American workers, and now the American auto industry has come roaring back, hiring 250,000 folks back on the job all throughout the Midwest.

We're making investments in entire new industries: in clean energy, folks making wind turbines, building long-lasting batteries. We are investing in our community colleges to make sure that folks are trained for the jobs of the future. That's the vision that we've got. We believe that America grows best when everybody has got a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same rules, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, DC.

That's what we're fighting for. That's why I'm running for a second term. That's why I intend to win Ohio. That's why I intend to win this election. I'm going to need your help. I hope you are ready, because I'm just getting started. And if we win Ohio, we win this election. If we win this election, we'll finish what we started, and we will work on behalf of the working men and women of this country, and we'll remind the world by the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

Let's get to work. Seven more weeks. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:17 p.m. at the Renaissance Columbus Downtown Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Timothy W. Burga, president, Ohio American Federation of Labor-

Congress of Industrial Organization; and Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Ohio AFL–CIO convention in Columbus, OH.

Locations: Columbus, OH.

Names: Brown, Sherrod C.; Burga, Timothy W.; Romney, W. Mitt.

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