

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Virginia Beach, Virginia
September 27, 2012

The President. Jim Webb!

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

The President. Thank you! How's it going, Virginia Beach? It—[*laughter*].

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

The President. Thank you. It is good to be back. It is good to have all kinds of friends here today. I want to acknowledge a couple of people. First of all, outstanding Congressman Bobby Scott. A good man who's running to join him in Congress, Paul Hirschbiel. And I could not be prouder of a man who has served this country his entire life—as a marine, as Secretary of the Navy, as an advocate for veterans, as a United States Senator, somebody who is responsible for successfully passing the post-9/11 GI bill—my friend and a true patriot, Senator Jim Webb.

And it's good to see all of you.

Now, unless you've been living under a rock or you didn't pay your cable bill—[*laughter*—you may be aware that there's an election going on here in Virginia. I was talking to my campaign manager. He was meeting with a young couple; they had a 4-year-old son with them, Sammy. And they're strong supporters, and so they were excited; they saw a picture of me on the wall, and they said, "Sammy, Sammy, who's that?" And the 4-year-old says, "That's Barack Obama." And then they said, "And what does Barack Obama do?" And Sammy thought about it for a second, and then he said, "He approves this message." [*Laughter*] He approves this message. There's a true story.

So you know you're in campaign season, and I approve this message. And I've got to tell you, the reason is, in the coming weeks, you're going to have a very big choice to make. I mean, Jim could not have been more eloquent about what's at stake. This is not just a choice between two candidates or two parties, it's a choice between two fundamentally different visions about how we move forward, two different ideas about our future.

See, today, I believe that as a nation, we're moving forward again. We're not where we need to be, not yet. We've got a lot more folks who have to get back to work. We've got a lot more work to do to make the middle class secure again. But the question is, whose plan is better for you?

Audience members. Yours!

The President. No, well, I know some in the crowd may be a little biased, but—[*laughter*—but I also want to speak to the audience who may be seeing this over the television.

Look, my opponent's a big believer in top-down economics. He thinks that if you just spend another \$5 trillion on tax cuts that favor the wealthiest Americans, if you get rid of more regulations on Wall Street, that jobs and prosperity will rain down on everybody. The deficit will magically disappear. We'll live happily ever after.

But there's a problem with this. We just tried this. We tried it in the last decade, before I was elected President. It didn't work then, and it won't work now. Because top-down

economics doesn't work. We don't need to double down on the same trickle-down policies that got us into this mess in the first place.

This country doesn't succeed when only the rich get richer. We succeed when the middle class gets bigger, when there are ladders of opportunity for all who strive to get into the middle class, when everybody who's willing to work hard has a chance to get ahead and live up to their God-given potential.

I don't think we can get very far with leaders who write off half the Nation as a bunch of victims who never take responsibility for their own lives. I know I travel around a lot in Virginia and across this country; I don't meet a lot of victims. I see hard-working Virginians. I see students trying to work their way through college. I see single moms, like my mom, putting in overtime to raise their kids right. I see senior citizens who have been saving for retirement your entire lives.

Like Jim Webb said, I see a whole bunch of veterans who are—served this country with bravery and distinction. And I see soldiers who defend our freedom every single day. And I see those military families who are wondering whether their loved ones are going to come back home, safe and sound. That's who I see.

We don't believe anybody is entitled to success in this country. We don't believe Government should help folks who aren't willing to try to help themselves. But we do believe in something called opportunity. We do believe in a country where hard work pays off, where responsibility is rewarded, where everyone gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody plays by the same rules. We believe in an America where no matter what you look like, no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, no matter who you love, it—you can make it if you try.

That's the country I believe in. That's what I've been fighting for as President. That's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States of America.

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

The President. During campaign season, you always hear a lot about patriotism. Well, you know what, it's time for a new economic patriotism: an economic patriotism rooted in the belief that growing our economy begins with a strong and thriving middle class.

And I won't pretend that getting there is easy. The truth is, it's going to take a few more years to solve challenges that were building up over decades. But I want everybody here to understand our problems can be solved. Our challenges will be met. We've got everything it takes to succeed. We've got the best workers in the world. We have the best entrepreneurs in the world. We've got the best researchers and scientists in the world. We've got the best colleges and universities in the world. I travel around the world, and I know there's not another country on Earth that wouldn't trade places with the United States of America.

So no matter how hard the path may seem sometimes, the path I'm offering leads to a better place. That's why I've put forward a practical plan to create jobs and grow the middle class, rebuild this economy on a stronger foundation.

So what's my plan? Just in case, you weren't watching the convention—or maybe you just saw Michelle. So I want to lay it out for you.

Number one, I want to export more products and I want to outsource fewer jobs. When my opponent said we should just "let Detroit go bankrupt"—

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, now. I want you to vote.

Audience members. Vote! Vote! Vote!

The President. [Laughter] But when Governor Romney turned his back on the American auto industry, I said I'm going to bet on American workers. I'm going to bet on American ingenuity. We came together, and we reinvented a dying auto industry that is now back on top of the world. In the last 2½ years, we created more than half a million manufacturing jobs.

So now, you've got a choice, Virginia. You can follow Governor Romney's advice and keep——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, vote.

We can give—we can keep giving tax breaks to corporations that ship jobs overseas, or we can start rewarding companies that open new plants and hire new workers and create new jobs right here in Virginia, right here in the United States of America.

We can help big factories and small businesses double their exports. We can create a million new manufacturing jobs in the next 4 years. You can make that happen with your vote.

Second, I want to control more of our own energy. After 30 years of doing nothing, we raised fuel standards so that by the middle of the next decade, your car will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. We've doubled the amount of renewable energy that we generate from things like wind and solar. Thousands of Americans have jobs today building wind turbines and long-lasting batteries. Today, the United States of America is less dependent on foreign oil than at any time in nearly two decades.

So now you've got a choice. Governor Romney wants to reverse this progress.

Audience members. No!

The President. Or we can build on that progress. See, unlike my opponent, I'm not going to let the oil companies write this country's energy plan. I'm not going to see them collect another \$4 billion in corporate welfare from our taxpayers.

We've got a better plan where we keep investing in wind and solar and clean coal technology and where farmers and scientists are harnessing new biofuels to power our cars and trucks and where we put construction workers back to work refitting homes and factories so they're more energy efficient; where we're developing a hundred-year supply of natural gas; where we cut our oil imports in half by 2020 and create hundreds of thousands of jobs all across this Nation. That's the plan that will move us forward. That's why I'm running for a second term.

Number three, I want to give more Americans the chance to learn the skills they need to compete, and I want us to have the best education system on Earth. I am only standing here because of a great education. I wasn't born into wealth or privilege, but I got a great education because I was born here in the United States of America. Education was the gateway of opportunity for Michelle. It was the gateway of opportunity for a whole lot of you. It's now the gateway to a middle class life. And so we have not just talked the talk, we've walked the walk when it comes to education.

Millions of students are now—right now—paying less because we took on a system that was wasting billions of taxpayer dollars on banks and lenders, and we said let's give that money directly to students. Let's keep interest rates on student loans low. Let's make sure that we are implementing the post-9/11 GI bill so everybody has got a fair shot.

So now you've got a choice—we could gut education to pay for more tax breaks for the wealthy——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo——

Audience members. Vote!

The President. Vote.

Or we can decide that in the United States of America, no child should have her dream deferred just because of an overcrowded classroom. No family should have to set aside a college acceptance letter because they don't have the money. No company should have to relocate to China because they couldn't find the workers they need right here in the United States of America.

So, Virginia, I'm asking you to help me recruit 100,000 new math and science teachers, and improve early childhood education. Help give 2 million workers the chance to learn skills at a community college for a job that is hiring right now. Help us keep tuition costs down for young people all across this country. They deserve opportunity just like I got opportunity, just like you got opportunity. That's what we're fighting for. That's why I'm running for a second term. We can meet these goals. You can choose this future for America.

Number four, I want to cut the deficit without sticking it to the middle class. I put forward a very specific plan to reduce the deficit by \$4 trillion. I've already worked with Republicans in this Congress to cut a trillion dollars' worth of spending, and I'm willing to do more. I want to reform the Tax Code so it's simple and fair. But I also want to make sure that the wealthiest households in America pay modestly higher taxes on incomes over \$250,000, which is the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was President. Our economy created nearly 23 million new jobs. We went from deficit to surplus, and we produced a whole lot of millionaires to boot.

Now, the reason is—4 years ago, I said I'd cut taxes for middle class families, and I did. The typical family has seen their tax burden go down about \$3,600 on the Federal level because of our policy. And I want to keep your taxes low because you need it.

What happens when middle class families have a little extra money?

Audience member. Spend it!

The President. They spend it. Maybe you got to finally trade in that 15-year-old car and get a new one. Maybe you need to buy a computer for your kid who's going off to college. And what happens is when the middle class or folks fighting to get into the middle class, when they've got a little extra money, they spend it. And now suddenly, business has more customers, which means they have more profits, which means they're doing better so they hire more workers. And you get a virtuous cycle going up. Everybody does better. That's how you grow an economy: not from the top down but from the middle out.

Now, in fairness, my opponent also has a plan. But as President Clinton pointed out down in Charlotte, there's one thing missing from it: arithmetic. *[Laughter]* Arithmetic. My

opponent somehow says we can lower our deficit while spending trillions of dollars more on new tax breaks for the wealthy. And it doesn't add up.

Every few days, he keeps on saying he's going to "reboot" this campaign and they're going to start explaining very specifically how this plan is going to work, and then they don't. They don't say how you'd pay for \$5 trillion in tax cuts that are skewed towards the wealthy without raising taxes on middle class families. They don't explain how you'd spend \$2 trillion more on military spending that our military hasn't asked for without having you foot the bill. The math doesn't add up.

My opponent thinks it's fair that somebody who makes \$20 million a year, like him, pays a lower tax rate than a cop or a teacher who makes 50,000.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo——

Audience members. Vote!

The President. Vote.

Look, I just disagree. I don't think that's fair. And I don't think it helps grow our economy. And I refuse to ask middle class families to give up your deduction for owning a home or raising kids just so we pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I refuse to ask the college students who are here to pay more or kick kids off of Head Start or eliminate health insurance for millions of poor and elderly and disabled just to pay for a tax cut for me. That is not right. That's not who we are.

And I will never, ever turn Medicare into a voucher, because no American should have to spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies. They worked all their lives; they should be able to retire with dignity. We'll reform and strengthen Medicare for the long haul, but we'll do it by reducing the cost of health care, not by dumping those costs onto seniors. Just like we're going to keep the promise of Social Security by taking the responsible steps to strengthen it, and that means we're not by turning it over to Wall Street.

Now, Virginia, our prosperity at home is linked to our policies abroad. Four years ago, I said I'd end the war in Iraq, and we did. I said we'd wind down the war in Afghanistan in a responsible way, and we are. You've got a new tower across the New York skyline, Al Qaida is on the path to defeat, bin Laden is dead.

But we still face serious threats, as we saw just a couple of weeks ago with the tragic death of our Ambassador and three of his colleagues. And that's why, as long as I'm Commander in Chief, Virginia, we will sustain the strongest military the world has ever known. And as Jim Webb so eloquently stated, when our troops take off their uniforms, we will serve them as well as they've served us, because nobody who fights for this country should have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads when they come home.

Now, my opponent seems to have different views. He said it was "tragic" to end the war in Iraq; he won't tell us how or what he'd do in Afghanistan. I have, and I will. And I will use the money we're no longer spending on war to pay down our debt and put more people back to work rebuilding roads and bridges and schools and runways, because after a decade of war, it is time to do some nation-building right here at home.

So that's the choice we now face.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Love you back.

But that's what this election comes down to. The other side, they keep on running these ads, and their basic message is, is that somehow bigger tax cuts and fewer regulations is the only way; that because government can't do everything, it should do almost nothing. Their theory is, if you can't afford health insurance, hope you don't get sick. Their theory is, if you can't afford to go to college, borrow money from your parents.

You know what? We've got a different idea. We're fighting on behalf of a different idea. We don't think that anybody owes us anything, and we don't think government can solve all our problems. But we do think that the government can help, that it's not the source of all our problems.

We don't believe in a politics that tries to separate people out, whether it's corporations or unions or welfare recipients or immigrants or gays or. Here in America, we believe that we're in this all together. We believe America only works when we accept certain responsibilities for ourselves, but also for others and for future generations, to create more opportunity and more possibility for this Nation.

We understand America is not what can be for us, but what can be done by us, together, as one Nation and as one people. And you understood that 4 years ago. That's what I took away from 2008. The election 4 years ago wasn't about me. It was about you and your capacity to move this country forward.

You're the reason a mother in Richmond doesn't have to worry about her son being denied medical coverage because of a preexisting condition. You made that happen. You're the reason a middle class family in Leesburg got a tax cut, money they can use to buy groceries, put gas in the car, pay their bills. That was because of you.

You're the reason a student in Charlottesville or Blacksburg or Hampton has help to pay for her college education; the reason a returning veteran like Jim's son can go to college on the new GI bill. That's because of you.

You're the reason a young immigrant who grew up here and went to school here and pledged allegiance to our flag will no longer be deported to—from the only country she's ever known, the country she calls home.

You're the reason why we ended "don't ask, don't tell." You're the reason that thousands of families have finally been able to say to the loved ones who served us so bravely, "Welcome home."

You know it's funny, I made this point in Florida: I said one of the things I learned after 4 years, it reminded me that change doesn't come from the inside; you got to change Washington from the outside. You change it with the help of ordinary Americans who are willing to have their voices heard. And for some reason, this got Governor Romney really excited. And he rewrote his speech, and he stood up at a rally, and he proudly declared, I'll get the job done from the inside. Which got me thinking, what kind of inside job are you talking about?
[Laughter]

Because if it's the inside job of rubberstamping the top-down, lobbyist-driven agenda of this Republican Congress, we don't want that.

Audience members. No!

The President. If it's the inside job of letting oil companies write energy policy, insurance companies writing health care policy, outsourcers writing our Tax Code, we don't need that.

Audience members. No!

The President. If it's the inside job of trying to control the health care choices that women are perfectly capable of making themselves, we'll take a pass on that.

We don't need an inside job. We want change in Washington. And I've always said that change takes more than one term or one President. It takes more than one party. It can't happen if you write off half the Nation before you take office.

In 2008, 47 percent of this country did not vote for me. But the night of the election, I said to all those Americans, I said, I may not have won your vote, but I hear your voice. I need your help. I will be your President too.

And so I say this to Virginia: I don't know how many of you out there will be voting for me. But I'll be fighting for you no matter what. I'm not fighting to create Democratic jobs or Republican jobs, I'm fighting to create American jobs. I'm not fighting to improve schools in blue States or red States, I'm fighting to improve schools in the United States.

The values of hard work and personal responsibility and looking after your neighbor, those aren't just values of rich folks or poor folks or the 1 percent or the 99 percent,. They are American values, and they belong to all of us. And if we reclaim those values now, if we rally around a new economic patriotism together, we can rebuild this economy together. We will grow the middle class together. We will move forward together.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I don't believe we're as divided as our politics make it seem. I think we've got more in common than the pundits give us credit for. I still believe in you. And if you still believe in me, I'm asking for your vote. If you stand with me and work with me, we'll win the Tidewater again. We'll win Virginia again. We'll finish what we started and remind the world why the United States is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. at the Farm Bureau Live arena. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Hirschbiel, owner and president, Eden Capital; James A. Messina, manager, 2012 Obama reelection campaign; Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; U.S. Ambassador to Libya J. Christopher Stevens, Sean P. Smith, Foreign Service officer, and Glen A. Doherty and Tyrone S. Woods, security officers, Department of State, who were killed in an attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11; and Jimmy Webb, son of Sen. James A. Webb.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Virginia Beach, VA .

Locations: Virginia Beach, VA.

Names: Clinton, William J.; Hirschbiel, Paul; Messina, James A.; Obama, Michelle; Romney, W. Mitt; Scott, Robert C.; Webb, James A.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Improvement ; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry ::

Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Science and math programs; Energy : Domestic sources; Health and Human Services, Department of : Head Start programs; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax relief; Virginia : Democratic Party events ; Virginia : President's visits .

DCPD Number: DCPD201200753.