

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Mentor, Ohio

November 3, 2012

The President. Hello, Ohio! Hello, Cardinals!

The—let me begin by just saying how grateful I am for Kevin for that great introduction, but also how proud I am of Erin and her sisters and their whole family. Give them a big round of applause. There they are right there.

Now, the only thing I have to say is, is that Erin—she was pretty excited about meeting me, but she saw Justin Bieber the other day—[*laughter*]*—so I'm, like, the second most exciting person she's met in the last few days. [Laughter]*

My understanding also is that this band right here just won the State championship. Best band in Ohio right here! In the house! Congratulations. And the football team is in its first playoff game tonight. So the Cardinals got a lot going on right now.

And despite all that, the fact that you guys still came out I'm grateful for, so thank you.

Now, for the past several days, all of us have been focused on one of the worst hurricanes in our lifetimes. And each day, I've been getting on calls with mayors and Governors, county officials, just trying to make sure that people are getting help. And I tell them that the entire country is behind them. We mourn those who were lost. We will walk with the people whose lives have been upended by the storm every step of the way in this long, hard road for recovery. And I hope everybody is out there—I hope everybody understands this will be a—not just a couple of weeks, but it's going to be months of recovery for a lot of these families. So those of you who can still help out through the Red Cross, please do so. And for the first-responders who are here today, it's just a reminder of how important you are, because when you see our firefighters, our police officers, our EMS folks out there every single day working, it's amazing.

And so despite this tragedy, we've also been inspired by what we've seen over the last several days, over the last week. You see heroes running into buildings, wading into water to help their fellow citizens; neighbors helping neighbors cope with tragedy; leaders of different political parties working together to fix what's broken. It's a spirit that says no matter how bad a storm is, no matter how tough times are, we're all in this together. We rise or fall as one nation and as one people.

And that spirit has guided this country along its improbable journey for more than two centuries. It's carried us through the trials and tribulations of the last 4 years.

Remember, in 2008, we were in the middle of two wars and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Today, our businesses have created nearly 5½ million new jobs. The auto industry is back on top. Home values are on the rise. We're less dependent on foreign oil than any time in the last 20 years. Because of the service and the sacrifice of our brave men and women in uniform, the war in Iraq is over, the war in Afghanistan is winding down, Al Qaida is on the run, and Usama bin Laden is dead.

So we've made real progress these past 4 years. But Ohio, we're here today because we all know we've got more work to do.

Audience member. We love you, Mr. President!

The President. I love you back. And we've got more work to do.

As long as there's a single American who wants a job and still can't find work, as long as there are families who are working harder and harder but are still falling behind, as long as there's a child anywhere in this country who's languishing in poverty or barred from opportunity, we've got more work to do.

Our fight goes on. Our fight goes on because we know that—we know this country can't thrive, can't succeed without a growing, strong middle class. Our fight goes on because America is always at its best when everybody gets a fair shot and everybody's doing their fair share and everybody's playing by the same rules. That's what we believe. That's why you elected me in 2008. And that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

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

The President. Now, in 4 days, you have a choice to make, although here in Ohio, there's early vote, so you could make it right after you leave here. It's not just a choice between two candidates or two parties. It's a choice about two different visions for America. It's a choice between going back to the top-down policies that crashed our economy, or a future that's built on a strong and growing middle class.

When you think about the history of our economy, we've always honored the entrepreneurs and the small-businessmen, the strivers, the dreamers, the risk takers; they're the driving force behind our free enterprise system, and that's the greatest engine of growth and prosperity the world's ever known. But we also believe that in this country, our businesses do well, markets do well when everybody is given a shot; when they have a chance, everybody, to get a decent education and learn new skills; when we support research into medical breakthroughs or new technologies.

We believe America is stronger when everybody can count on affordable health insurance and Medicare and Social Security. We think America is stronger when there are rules—some rules in place to protect our kids from toxic dumping, to protect consumers from being taken advantage of by unscrupulous credit card companies or mortgage lenders. We think that Washington has a role to play in making sure that we're creating great infrastructure—roads and bridges—in our country, so that we can move products and services everywhere.

And then we also believe there are some things Washington doesn't need to do. For example, Washington shouldn't control the health care choices that women are capable of making for themselves.

Now, Mentor, for 8 years, we had a President who shared these beliefs. His name was Bill Clinton. And his economic plan asked the wealthiest to pay a little bit more so we could reduce our deficit and still invest in the skills and ideas of our people. And at the time, when he first came into office, the Republicans in Congress and a Senate candidate by the name of Mitt Romney—

Audience members. Boo!

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

The—but they said that Bill Clinton's plan would hurt the economy, that it would kill jobs. And it turns out his math was just as bad back then as it is today. *[Laughter]* Because by the

end of President Clinton's second term, America had created 23 million new jobs. Incomes were up. Poverty was down. Our deficit had become a surplus.

So, Ohio, we know our ideas. We know they work. We also know the ideas of the other guys; they don't work, because we've tried those too. For most of the last decade, before I came into office, we tried giving big tax cuts to wealthy Americans. We tried giving insurance companies and oil companies and Wall Street free license to do whatever they wanted to do. And what we got was falling incomes, record deficits, and the slowest job growth in half a century, all ending with a economic crisis that we've been cleaning up after ever since.

So this isn't an abstract debate. We have tried our ideas, and they worked. We tried their ideas, and they don't work.

Governor Romney, he's a very talented salesman. So in this campaign, he has tried as hard as he can to repackaging the same policies that didn't work and offer them up as change. But here's the problem, Ohio: We know what change looks like, and what he's offering ain't it.

Giving more power to the biggest banks, that's not change.

Audience members. No!

The President. Another \$5 trillion tax cut favoring the wealthy, that's not change.

Audience members. No!

The President. Refusing to answer the details of your policies until after the election, that's definitely not change. That's the oldest trick in the book. *[Laughter]* Ruling out compromise, pledging to rubberstamp the Tea Party agenda, that's not change. Changing the facts when they're inconvenient to your campaign, that's definitely not change.

But that's what Governor Romney has been doing these last few weeks right here in Ohio. You've got folks who work at the Jeep plant who've been calling their employers, worried, asking if their jobs were being shipped to China. You've heard about this. Everybody heard about this?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And the reason they're worried is because Governor Romney is running ads saying that Jeep is shipping jobs to China. There's only one problem: It's not true. Everybody knows it's not true. The car companies themselves told Governor Romney, knock it off. GM said, "We think creating jobs in the United States should be a source of bipartisan pride." They don't want this to become some political football in Governor Romney's TV ad. And I couldn't agree more.

Look, I understand that Governor Romney has had a tough time here in Ohio because he was against saving the auto industry. It's hard to run away from that position when you're on videotape saying, let's let Detroit go bankrupt. But that's not a justification for running those kinds of ads, because this is not a game. These are people's jobs. These are people's livelihoods. Our car companies, they're putting a lot of effort and time and energy and money into building up and restoring the brand of American cars, made in America, by American workers. You don't scare hardworking Americans just to scare up some votes. That's not what being a President's all about.

When I first made the decision to rescue the auto industry, I knew it wasn't popular. It wasn't even popular in Ohio and Michigan. But I also knew it was the right thing to do. Betting

on American workers was the right thing to do. Betting on American ingenuity was the right thing to do. And that bet paid off. It paid off in Lordstown and Toledo, where companies are creating new jobs not in China, right here in Ohio. Right here in the United States.

And this raises an essential part of what your choice is all about, because when you elect a President, you don't know what kinds of emergencies may happen; you don't know what problems he or she may deal with. But you do want to be able to trust your President. You want to know that your President means what he says and says what he means. And after 4 years as President, you know me. You may not agree with every decision I've made. You may at times have been frustrated by the pace of change. But you know what I believe. You know where I stand. You know I tell the truth, and you know I'll fight for you and your families every single day as hard as I know how. You know that. *[Applause]* You know that.

So when I talk about change, I know what real change looks like because I've fought for it. I've got the scars to prove it. I've got the gray hair to show for it. *[Laughter]* And you fought for change too. And after all we've been through together, we can't turn back. We can't give up on it now.

Change—let me tell you the change I see moving forward. Change is a country where everybody has a shot at a great education. And that means parents have to parent and teachers have to teach. But don't tell me that hiring more teachers won't help grow this economy. Don't tell me that students who can't afford college should just borrow more money from their parents. That wasn't an option for me, and I'll bet it wasn't an option for a whole lot of you.

That's why I want to cut the growth in tuition; over the next 10 years I want to cut the growth in half. I want to recruit 100,000 math and science teachers so our kids don't fall behind the rest of the world. I want to train 2 million Americans at our community colleges with the skills businesses are looking for right now. That's the kind of change we need. That's what we're fighting for in this election.

Change—real change—means we live up to this country's legacy of innovation. The great thing about what's happened in the auto industry, we're not just building cars again, we're building better cars, cars that by the middle of the next decade will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. Today, there are thousands of workers here in Ohio and across the country who are building long-lasting batteries and wind turbines. And I don't—I want to make sure they keep building them here. I don't want tax codes that subsidize oil company profits when they're already making money hand over fist; I want to help and support clean energy jobs here in Ohio and the new technology that will help us cut our oil imports in half.

I don't want a Tax Code that rewards companies for shipping jobs overseas; I want to give tax breaks and reward companies that are creating the next generation of manufacturing right here in America, making American products, stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's my plan for jobs and growth. That's what's at stake in this election.

Change is turning the page on a decade of war so we can do some nation-building here at home. As long as I'm Commander in Chief, I will make sure that we pursue our enemies with the strongest military the world's ever known. But it's time to use the savings from ending the war in Iraq and winding down the war in Afghanistan to pay down our debt and rebuild America, repairing roads and bridges and schools all across our country and putting our veterans back to work, because anybody who has served our country and fought for its freedom shouldn't have to fight for a job when they come home. That's what I believe. That's my commitment to them. And that's what's at stake in this election.

Change is a future where we reduce our deficit, but we do it in a balanced, responsible way. I've signed a trillion dollars' worth of spending cuts. I want to do more. But if we're serious about the deficit, then we've got to ask the wealthiest Americans—folks like me and Governor Romney—to go back to the tax rates that were paid when Bill Clinton was President. And the reason—[*applause*]*—first of all, I promise you we can afford it. [Laughter]* Second of all, a budget is choices, and if we're serious about reducing the deficit, then we've got to make choices. And as long as I'm President, I will never try to reduce the deficit on the backs of middle class folks and poor folks. I'm not going to turn Medicare into a voucher just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I'm not going to make it more expensive for young people to go to college just to give me a tax break.

Ohio, we know what change is. We know what the future requires. But we also know it's not going to be easy. We know it's not going to be easy. Back in 2008, when I was talking about change we can believe in, I wasn't just talking about changing Presidents. I wasn't just talking about changing parties. I was talking about changing our politics. I ran back in 2008 because the voices of the American people—your voices—had been shut out of our democracy for too long by lobbyists and special interests and politicians who were willing to do whatever it takes and say whatever it takes just to keep things the way they are.

And over the last 4 years, the status quo in Washington, the protectors of the status quo, they have fought us every step of the way. They spent millions to try to stop us from reforming health care so that Erin could get the care that she needs. They spent millions trying to prevent us from reforming Wall Street so we don't have another taxpayer-funded bailout. They engineered a strategy of gridlock in Congress, refusing to compromise on ideas that Democrats and Republicans had supported in the past.

And what they're counting on now, Ohio, is that you'll be so worn down by all the squabbling and all the dysfunction that you'll finally just give up and walk away and put them back in power.

Audience members. No!

The President. That's what they're counting on. In other words, their bet's on cynicism. But Ohio, my bet's on you. My bet's on you. My bet's on you.

And by the way, I don't feel cynical; I feel hopeful, because of you. And every fight we've fought I've known that there are millions of people all across the country who care about that fight and support us. When the—and by the way, when the other party has been willing to work with me to help middle class families, like cutting taxes for middle class families and small businesses or when some Senators came across the aisle to help repeal "don't ask, don't tell," I've welcomed that. I want to see more cooperation in Washington. And I will work with anybody, of any party, to move this country forward.

And if you want to break the gridlock in Congress, you'll vote for leaders who feel the same way, whether they're Democrats, Republicans, Independents; people who are serious about putting people first, not the next election first.

But if the price of peace in Washington is cutting deals that will end up kicking students off of financial aid or getting rid of funding for Planned Parenthood or letting insurance companies discriminate against people with preexisting conditions or eliminating health care for millions on Medicaid who are poor or elderly or disabled, I'm not going to have that. That's not a price I'll pay. That's not bipartisanship. That's not real change. That's surrender to the

same status quo that's been hurting middle class families for way too long. And I don't know about you, but I'm not ready to give up on that fight.

And I hope you aren't either, Ohio. I hope you aren't weary. I hope you still got some fight left in you.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Because, understand, the folks at the very top in this country, they don't need a champion in Washington. They've always got a seat at the table. They always have access and influence. The people who need a champion are the Americans whose letters I read late at night, the men and women I meet on the campaign trail every day.

The laid-off furniture worker who's going back to a community college to retrain for a job of the future, she needs a champion. The restaurant owner who needs a loan to expand after his bank turned him down, he needs a champion. The cooks and the waiters and the cleaning staff working overtime at a Vegas hotel, trying to save enough to buy a first home or send their kid to college, they need a champion.

Our police and firefighters and EMS folks, our first-responders who make sacrifices thinking about others before they think about themselves, they need a champion. Our autoworkers who got laid off and now are back on the job with so much dignity and pride, building great cars, they need champions. That teacher in an overcrowded classroom, digging into her own pocket to pay for school supplies, trying to make a difference in kids' lives, she needs a champion.

All those kids, all those young people in inner cities and small farm towns, in the rolling hills of Virginia and the valleys of Ohio and right here in Mentor, kids dreaming of becoming scientists or doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, diplomats, maybe Presidents, they need a champion in Washington, because the future will never have as many lobbyists as the status quo, but it's the future that we've got to fight for. It's the dreams of those children that will be our saving grace.

And that's why I need you, Ohio, to make sure their voices are heard. To make sure your voices are heard. I want to keep fighting for you, and we've come too far to turn back now. We've come too far to let our voices grow faint.

It's time to keep pushing forward to educate all our kids, train all our workers, create new jobs, rebuild our infrastructure, discover new sources of energy, broaden opportunity, grow our middle class, restore our democracy so that no matter who you are or where you come from, what you look like, how you started out, you can achieve the American Dream. That's what we're fighting for.

That's why I need your vote. And if you're willing to knock on doors with me and make some phone calls with me and early vote for me and turn out on Tuesday for me, we'll win Ohio. We'll win this election. We'll strengthen the bonds between us and reaffirm the spirit that makes the United States of America the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. at Mentor High School. In his remarks, he referred to Kirtland, OH, resident Kevin Potter, his wife Jeni, and their daughters Erin, Annie, and Mary; entertainer Justin D. Bieber; and Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney.

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