

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

November 3, 2012

The President. How's it going, Milwaukee? Oh, it is good to be back in Wisconsin!

Now, listen, you know I'm working hard because my voice is getting a little raspy. So, folks in the back, if you can't hear me, you let me know. Are you guys all right back there?

It is good to be this close to home. Can everybody please give it up for Katy Perry for performing earlier? And I just have to say Katy has been working so hard these last couple of weeks, and I'm so grateful to her.

And I also want you to give it up for a great team of folks who fight for Wisconsin and for America every single day: Herb Kohl, Gwen Moore, Tom Barrett, and your next United States Senator, Tammy Baldwin.

Now, Wisconsin, for the past several days, all of us have been focused on what's happening on the East Coast and one of the worst storms we've ever seen. I spent this morning talking to local and State officials there, and the loss of life, the hardships that folks are going through, are just heartbreaking. And it's a reminder of how fragile things are sometimes, and as a nation, we've got to mourn those who've been lost. Our thoughts and prayers go out to their families. We're going to stay with the folks whose lives have been upended every step of the way until we have fully rebuilt. That's what America does; that's what we're about.

Because the thing is, in the midst of these tragedies, we're also inspired by the heroes that run into buildings and wade through water, 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 may get, we always bounce back, because we're all in this together. We rise or fall as one Nation and as one people.

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

In 2008, we were in the middle of two wars and the worst crisis since the Great Depression. Today, our businesses have created nearly 5½ million new jobs. The American 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. And because of the service and sacrifice of our brave men and women, the war in Iraq is over, the war in Afghanistan is coming to a close, Al Qaida is on the run, Usama bin Laden is dead.

So we've made real progress these past 4 years. But, Wisconsin, we're all gathered here today because we've got more work to do. As long as there's a single American who wants a job, but can't find one, our work is not yet done. As long as there are

families working harder, but falling behind, our work is not yet done. As long as there's a child anyplace in Milwaukee, anyplace in Wisconsin, anyplace in this country who's languishing in poverty and barred from opportunity, our fight goes on.

Our fight goes on because this Nation cannot succeed without a growing, thriving middle class. Our fight goes on because America has always done best when everybody has got a fair shot, everybody is doing their fair share, everybody is playing by the same rules. That's what we believe. That's why you elected me in 2008. 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, Wisconsin, in 3 days, you have a choice to make. It's not a choice between two candidates or two parties, it's a choice between two very different visions for our future. It's a choice between a return to the top-down economics that caused our economy to crash——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo——

Audience members. Vote!

The President. Vote.

It's a choice between that and a future that's built on making sure everybody is playing their part, that we're creating a strong and growing middle class, but also ladders of opportunity for people who are willing to work hard to get into that middle class.

And listen, keep in mind, we don't, as Americans, expect success to be handed to us. As Americans, we honor the strivers and the dreamers and the risk takers, the entrepreneurs and the small-business people, everybody—the folks who are the driving force behind our free enterprise system, the greatest engine of growth and prosperity the world's ever known. But we also believe that for our markets and for free enterprise to succeed, everybody has to have a shot. Opportunity has to be open to everybody, not just some. We think our country succeeds when everybody has the chance to get a good education and learn new skills, when we support research into new energy sources and medical breakthroughs.

We believe America is stronger when everybody can count on affordable health care, when Medicare and Social Security are there for our golden years, when there are rules in place to protect our kids from toxic dumping and mercury pollution, when there are rules in place to protect consumers from unscrupulous credit card companies or mortgage lenders. We believe that our democracy works best when everybody has a voice.

We believe that politicians in Washington need to stay in touch with what's happening on the ground and that there's some things they should leave alone, for example, making sure that health care choices for women are controlled by women, as opposed to controlled by politicians in Washington.

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

Audience members. Boo!

Audience member. Don't boo——

The President. Vote!

They said that Bill Clinton's plan would hurt the economy and kill jobs. Does that sound familiar?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. That's what they said. Turns out, their math was just as bad back then as it is now. Because by the end of Bill Clinton's second term, America had created 23 million new jobs, and incomes were up, and poverty was down, and our deficit had turned into a surplus.

So, Wisconsin, we know what ideas work. We know our ideas work. And we know that their ideas don't work. *[Applause]* We know it. And the reason we know it is we just tried it a few years ago. After Bill Clinton was out of office, they tried their ideas. We tried giving big tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans. We tried giving insurance companies and Wall Street a free rein to do whatever they pleased. And what we got was falling incomes, record deficits, slowest job growth in 50 years, and an economic crisis that we're still cleaning our way out of.

So we know what works, and we know what doesn't. And Governor Romney, now, is a very talented salesman. So in this campaign, he's trying as hard as he can to repackage the same old ideas that didn't work and offer them up as change. He's saying he's the candidate of change, lo and behold. Now, here's the thing though: We know what change looks like, and what Governor Romney is offering ain't it.

Giving more power to the biggest banks, that's not change. Another \$5 trillion tax cut to the wealthiest Americans, that's not change.

Audience members. No!

The President. Refusing to answer details about your policies until after the election, that's definitely not change. *[Laughter]* We've heard that from politicians before. Ruling out compromise, pledging to rubberstamp the Tea Party's agenda in Congress, that's not change. Changing the facts when they're inconvenient to your campaign, that's definitely not change. Now, that's the attitude we need to get rid of.

Wisconsin, after 4 years as President, you know me. So—*[applause]*. You know me. You've watched me age before your eyes. *[Laughter]* And you may not agree with every decision I've made. Sometimes, you may have been frustrated by the pace of change,

but you know where I stand. You know what I believe. You know I mean what I say and I say what I mean. You know I tell the truth.

When I said I'd end the war in Iraq, I ended the war in Iraq. When I said I'd end "don't ask, don't tell," I ended "don't ask, don't tell." When I said I'd pass health care reform, I passed health care reform. When I said that I'd cut taxes for middle class families and small businesses, that's what I did. You know that I'll fight for you and your families every single day as hard as I know how. And that's why I'm running for a second term, because I keep my word and I want to keep fighting for you.

I know what change—I know what real change looks like, because I've fought for it. And so have you. I've got the scars to prove it. And after all we've been through together, we can't give up now.

Audience members. No!

The President. We need to keep on going because we've got more change to bring about. So let me paint that vision of change for you.

Change is a country where every American has a shot at a good education. Don't tell me hiring more teachers won't help this economy grow. Don't tell me that students who can't afford college should just borrow money from their parents. That wasn't an option for me; I'll bet it's not an option for a lot of you.

That's why I want to cut the growth of tuition in half over the next 10 years. That's why 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 that businesses are looking for right now. That's what we're fighting for in this election. That's what real change is. That's what we're fighting for.

Change comes when we live up to this country's legacy of innovation. I'm very proud I bet on American workers and American ingenuity and the American auto industry. But what I'm especially proud of is, 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.

But it doesn't stop at autos. We're innovating everywhere. Today, there are thousands of workers building long-lasting batteries and wind turbines and working to figure out new sources of fuel all across the country. And I want to make sure we're not having a Tax Code that subsidizes oil company profits when they're already making a lot of money. I want to support the new sources of energy, the jobs of tomorrow, the technology that will cut our oil imports in half and help our national security and help our environment. That's what change is.

I don't want a Tax Code that rewards companies for shipping jobs overseas, I want to reward companies that are investing right here in Milwaukee, investing in Wisconsin, investing in the next generation of manufacturing. That's the future I see for our country, and I know it's there. It's ready, within our grasp.

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, we will pursue our enemies with the strongest military the world's ever known. But it's time to use some of the savings from ending the Iraq war, winding down the Afghan war, to pay down our debt and rebuild America. Let's put some folks to work right now rebuilding roads, bridges, making sure our schools are state of the art. Let's lay broadband lines into our rural communities.

And let's use our veterans—let's make sure they've got jobs—because when you've fought for our freedom, you shouldn't have to fight for a job when you come home.

That's my plan to keep us strong. That's my commitment. And that's what's at stake in this election.

And yes, change is a future where we reduce our deficit, but we do it in a balanced way. I've signed a trillion dollars' worth of cuts; I am prepared to do more. But if we're serious about the deficit, we've also got to ask the wealthiest Americans to go back to the tax rates they paid when Bill Clinton was in office. Because budgets are about choices, and if you're going to reduce the deficit, something has got to give. And as long as I'm President, I'm not going to turn Medicare into a voucher, making our seniors more vulnerable, just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I'm not going to ask young people to pay more for college so I get a tax cut.

So we know what change is. We know what the future requires. And, Wisconsin, we know it won't be easy. The next phase of change will not be easy. Back in 2008, I know a lot of folks, they were swept up in the excitement and had the posters and—but sometimes maybe people didn't hear me when I said change we believe in is not just changing Presidents, it's not just changing parties. It's changing our politics. It's changing the system.

I ran because the voices of the American people—your voices—had been shut out of our democracy for way too long: by lobbyists and special interests; politicians who were willing to do whatever it takes, say whatever it takes just to keep things the way they are; the protectors of the status quo. Over the last 4 years, those protectors of the status quo in Washington, they have fought us every step of the way, spent millions of dollars to stop us from reforming the health care system, spent millions trying to stop us from reforming Wall Street. They engineered a strategy of gridlock in Congress, refusing to compromise on ideas that Democrats and Republicans used to agree to in the past.

And the reason they did it is because they're counting on you to be so worn down by all the squabbling, so tired of all the dysfunction, that you just give up, you walk away, you leave them in power.

Audience members. No!

The President. In other words, Wisconsin, their bet is on cynicism. They figure they can outlast you.

Audience members. No!

The President. They figure, you know what, yes, these guys may get enthusiastic, but over time, that enthusiasm fades away, and we're still here. But, Wisconsin, see, my bet is on you. My bet is on the goodness and decency of the American people.

And by the way, the point I'm making here is not partisan. When the other party has been with me to fight for middle class families, I've loved working with them. When we cut taxes for middle class families and small businesses, that was bipartisan. When we repealed "don't ask, don't tell," there were some courageous Republicans in the Senate who voted with us. That was leadership.

I will work with anybody of any party to move this country forward. And if you really 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 put you first, who put the American people first, not the elections first or partisan advantage first or special interests first or big-money contributors first or super PACs first, but put the people of Wisconsin first. That's what you should be thinking about.

But you know what, there are going to be some fights sometimes, because there are fights that need to be had to bring about change and push through the resistance of the status quo. If the price of peace in Washington is cutting deals that will kick students off of financial aid or get rid of funding for Planned Parenthood or let insurance companies go back to discriminating against people with preexisting conditions or eliminate health care for millions on Medicaid who are poor or elderly or disabled, that's not a deal I'm willing to take. That's not a price you should want your President to pay. That's not bipartisanship. That's not change. That's surrender to a status quo that's doesn't work for middle class families. And I'm not ready to give up on the fight! I'm not ready to give up on the fight. And I hope you aren't either, Wisconsin. I hope you aren't either.

The folks at the very top in this country, they don't need another champion in Washington. They always have a seat at the table. They'll always have access. They'll always have influence. The people who need a champion are the Americans whose letters I read late at night after my work in the office is done, the men and women I meet on the campaign trail every day.

A laid-off worker who's gone back to community college at the age of 55 to try to retrain for a biotech job, she needs a champion. The restaurant owner who needs a loan to expand his small restaurant after the bank turned him down, he needs a champion. The cooks and the waiters and the cleaning staff working overtime in a Vegas hotel, trying to save enough to buy a first home or send their kid to college, they need a champion.

The autoworker who thought he'd never see his plant reopen and who's now back on the job, filled with pride and dignity of building a great car, helping to build America, he needs a champion. That teacher in an overcrowded classroom with outdated schoolbooks, digging into her own pocket to buy school supplies, but never giving up hope that she can change lives of some child in her class, she needs a champion.

All those kids in inner cities and small farm towns, in the rolling hills of Virginia or the valleys of Ohio or right here in Milwaukee—kids dreaming of becoming scientists or doctors, engineers or entrepreneurs, diplomats, maybe a President—they need a champion. Because the future will never have lobbyists like the status quo does, but the dreams of those kids will be our saving grace.

That's what we're fighting for. That's what this election is about. That's why I need you. That's why I need you, Wisconsin: to make sure their voices are heard, to make sure your voices are heard. We have come too far to turn back now. We've come too far to let our hearts grow weary, to let our hearts grow faint.

Now is the 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, and make sure that no matter where you come from, no matter how you started out, no matter what you look like, no matter who you love, no matter what your last name is, here in America, you can make it if you try.

That's what we're fighting for, Wisconsin. That's why I'm asking for your vote. And if you're willing to work with me and knock on doors with me and make some phone calls with me and turn out with me and grab your friends and your neighbors and your coworkers and get them to the polls for me, we'll win Wisconsin. We'll win this election. We'll renew the bonds that tie us together and reaffirm the spirit that makes the United States of America the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. at the Delta Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Thomas M. Barrett of Milwaukee; and Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Milwaukee, WI.

Locations: Milwaukee, WI.

Names: Baldwin, Tammy S.; Barrett, Thomas M.; Clinton, William J.; Kohl, Herbert H.; Moore, Gwendolynne S.; Perry, Katy; Romney, W. Mitt.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Congress : Bipartisanship; Education : Science and math programs; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Veterans : Benefits; Wisconsin : Democratic Party events; Wisconsin : President's visits.

DCPD Number: DCPD201200864.