

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Atherton, California

April 4, 2013

Thank you so much. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. This is an intimate group. What I want to do is mostly have a conversation. But first of all, obviously, I want to thank Liz and Mark for their incredible hospitality. We couldn't be more appreciative. And I want to thank all of you for being here today.

A lot of you—in fact, almost everybody here I've known—have supported me. Some of you were involved in my first campaign when nobody could pronounce my name. *[Laughter]* And you stuck with me through thick and thin, and I just want to say how much I appreciate all of you for taking the time.

Some people have been asking me, "Well, what's different about the second term?" And I say, well, for one thing, I'm not raising money for myself, and that's good. *[Laughter]* For another thing, the girls are getting old enough now where they don't want to spend time with us on the weekends. *[Laughter]* They have sleepovers and parties and sports and all that stuff. I don't know if you guys are doing the same thing to your parents, but it's starting to happen.

But I think the most important thing is that when you don't have another race to run, all you're really thinking about it is how do I leave a legacy, not simply for the next President, but for the next generation that makes America stronger: that helps assure our children can compete with an ever-changing world; that we are solving what I think is one of the core challenges we face as a generation; and that is making sure that we have a strong, growing middle class and ladders of opportunity for everybody who is willing to work to get into that middle class; that we continue to be innovative; that we address some of our core environmental challenges, particularly climate change, to make sure that the planet we leave behind is one that our children can thrive in.

So you end up taking the long view on things. And you also feel a great urgency because you know you don't have a lot of time. And so the main message I want to deliver here today is that I could not be prouder of the track record that we've put together over the last 4 years and 2 months, whether it was saving an economy from a great depression; doubling fuel efficiency standards on cars; expanding access to college for the millions of young people; making sure that nobody in this country has to go bankrupt because they get sick; reupping the law preventing violence against women; making sure that we have the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which I think has laid the groundwork for further progress when it comes to LGBT rights.

On so many issues, we've made progress. But we've got so much more work to do. And I laid out what that vision might look like during both the Inauguration speech and in the State of the Union. I want to make sure that we've got the best education system in the world and that starts young. And so we've given all the research that we have. Expanding our investment in childhood education can make all the difference in the world and will pay enormous dividends for a very, very long time.

I want to make sure that we're rebuilding this country, our infrastructure. We've got \$2 trillion in deferred maintenance. We could be putting people back to work right now, and not only improving our current economic growth, but laying the foundation for economic growth

for many years to come. Many of you are aware that I am a big proponent of investments in science and research, and obviously, this entire region has thrived precisely because it has been the epicenter of innovation. And that requires us putting money into research in biomedicine, in nanoscience. Our recent initiative around the brain and being able to map that and crack the code potentially not only can help us cure things like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, but can generate entire new industries and put people back to work and be the next great challenge for the American economy.

And I believe that we've got to get a handle on our energy policy so that we are growing and we are productive, but we are not simply investing in the energy sources of the past, we're also investing in the energy sources of the future. We've doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars, but we've also had a chance to double our production in solar and wind and biofuels. We can continue to make progress on that front. We can continue to make sure that electric cars and other new technologies for transportation are built here in the United States of America and not someplace else.

We can make sure that our buildings, our schools, our hospitals are more efficient. If we were able to achieve the same efficiencies that Japan already has achieved using existing technologies, we'd cut our power utilization by 15, 20 percent, which would have enormous ramifications in bringing down our carbon footprint.

And we can do all this without spending massive amounts of money. The truth is, is that our fiscal situation has improved significantly since I first came into office, but we still have a long way to go. The way for us to do it intelligently is the kind of balanced approach I've talked about in the past: making sure that everybody is doing their fair share; making sure that those of us in this room and, frankly, in this whole town probably—[laughter]—recognizes the incredible blessings that we've been given and make sure that we're willing to invest back in the next generation and also making sure that our money is wisely spent.

We still waste money in all kinds of things that don't work, and we have the capacity to shift those dollars into things that do work and that will grow our economy. And we can reduce our deficit, stabilize our debt, and do so without sacrificing the kinds of investments that are going to be required to grow.

Now, the last point I'll make is just politics. Our policies, the ones that we prevented—or the ones that we've presented, traditionally, would be considered pretty bipartisan. There's nothing particularly Democratic about road building or basic science or environmental protection. Teddy Roosevelt started the conservation movement. Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican President, was pretty big on building infrastructure and investing in things like science and research.

Unfortunately, we continue to still have some of that gridlock in Washington. Part of it is fed by changes in information and communications that amplify conflict and extremes as opposed to trying to bring people together. I know it's a great source of frustration for the American people. I assure you it's a source of frustration for me as well. [Laughter]

But what I believed when I was running for this office back in 2007, 2008, what I believed when I was running for a second term is what I still believe now, and that is, this country is not as divided as our politics would suggest. And the only way we break through this gridlock is when people's voices are heard and people are engaged and involved. I am very optimistic that we get immigration reform done in the next few months. And the reason I'm optimistic is because people spoke out through the ballot box, and that's breaking gridlock.

It's going to be tougher to get better gun legislation to reduce gun violence through the Senate and the House that so many of us, I think, want to see, particularly after the tragedy in Newtown. But I still think it can get done if people are activated and involved.

And so on every front, on every issue that all of you care about, making sure that we can provide good information to the American people, engage them, inform them, make sure that they are embracing a form of citizenship that goes beyond just voting, but involves understanding what's at stake and talking to their neighbors, talking to their coworkers, talking to their friends, writing to their Members of Congress, getting organized, getting mobilized—all that ends up being really the critical ingredient and the constant dynamic change and improvement that has characterized this country for so long.

And your involvement with the DNC helps us do that. It will help us register voters. It will help us make sure that they understand what's at stake in all of these issues. It's hugely important. It's not always glamorous. It's not always sexy. But it's really what ends up driving our ability to make policy and to deliver for the young people who are here today.

So again, I want to thank Liz and Mark for making this spectacular home available to us. And I want to thank all of you for not only what you've done in the past on my behalf, but more importantly, what you're continuing to do on behalf of this country as a whole.

Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:28 a.m. at the residence of Elizabeth Simons and Mark W. Heising. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Atherton, CA.

Locations: Atherton, CA.

Names: Heising, Mark W.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Simons, Elizabeth.

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