

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Dallas, Texas
April 24, 2013

Thank you so much. Well, let me begin by thanking Naomi and Larry for opening up this extraordinary home to all of us. It is wonderful to see them again. And they've been such longtime supporters. They were there back in the day when many of you could not pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] But they've just been great friends and are active on so many fronts. Obviously, Larry is labor, and Naomi is management—[*laughter*—as is true in our household as well. [*Laughter*] But we really appreciate them and their very impressive sons.

I also want to acknowledge Henry Munoz who's here and is just doing an outstanding job as our finance chair of the DNC. Where's Henry? There he is. Thank you, Henry. And I understand that the former mayor of this great city, Ron Kirk, is still around. So, everybody, give a big round of applause to Ron.

Obviously, this has been a tough couple of weeks for the country. I have spent time in Boston and have been inspired by the incredible resilience of that city in the wake of such a horrific tragedy, had a chance to visit with some of the victims of the explosion and talk to the families of some of the folks who were lost. And then tomorrow I'll be attending a memorial service for the tragedy that took place in West, Texas, and have a chance to visit with some of those families.

And there's no words that are satisfactory when you're confronting these kinds of losses. And families cope, they do their best, but obviously, their lives are transformed by this. And so I don't want to pretend that somehow you can put a positive gloss on those kinds of events. On the other hand, what is remarkable is the strength and the courage and the fellowship that you see in people when they're confronted with these kinds of challenges. And in Boston, what you saw was not just the character of an extraordinary American city, but it was also the character of a nation.

There is something about tough times that brings out the best in us, and all the petty differences and the divisions of race and class and religion and political persuasion all seem to fade away. And I remember, as I was driving from the airport to the memorial service in Boston, I was with Deval Patrick—outstanding Governor of Massachusetts and a great friend, who handled the whole situation as well as anybody could—and we agreed that wouldn't it be something if we could just somehow capture and sustain that spirit beyond tragedy.

That's kind of a cliché. We talk about this a lot. We talked about this after 9/11; we talk about it after a natural disaster like Sandy. We're all struck by how we come to each other's aid and these huge waves of empathy come forward and people are willing to do anything for strangers because they understand there but for the grace of God go I. And they also understand that there's something fundamental that binds us together as Americans and that we love this country and this country is simply a collection of incredible people: our fellow citizens.

And that idea of citizenship, the idea that we don't just have obligations to ourselves—we do; we have obligations obviously to our families and our immediate circles. But we have also an obligation to something larger than ourselves; that our orbit of concern extends to a child somewhere in a border town in Texas who is struggling to get a decent education. And it

extends to a senior citizen somewhere in Maine that is trying to figure out how they can get enough heating oil to get through a winter and have enough to eat at the same time. And it extends to the young immigrant who just came here and is trying to find their way in California. And it applies to a single mom in New York who is going back and has gotten her education and is looking for some decent daycare. That all of us have a stake in their success, and all of us have a stake in a country that expresses this incredible quality of compassion and concern and fellow feeling not just in our churches or our synagogues or our mosques or our temples, not just in our workplaces or our neighborhoods or our Little League, but also expresses itself through our government.

And the reason, I think, all of you are here is because you believe that too. And the Democratic Party at its best tries to give expression to that. The Democratic Party doesn't always get it right, and this is not a feeling that is unique to Democrats. I'm really looking forward to attending the Bush Library opening tomorrow, and one of the things I will insist upon is that whatever our political differences, President Bush loves this country and loves its people and shared that same concern and was concerned about all people in America, not just some, not just those who voted Republican. I think that's true about him, and I think that's true about most of us.

But what's also true is that policy matters. How we express that best part of ourselves is a matter of significant debate, and it's a matter of votes, and it's a matter of legislation and budgets and how we're allocating resources and how we're prioritizing what we think is important. And although I couldn't be prouder of the work that we've done over the last 4 years, we all know we've got a lot more work to do on that front.

Middle class families all across America are struggling to get by. And things have stabilized since the crisis in 2008, but for a lot of folks, they're still just barely keeping their heads above water. There are millions of kids across this country who are still poorly educated or malnourished or don't have any place to go outside of school. And for them, college is just a distant dream. They can't even imagine the prospect of actually creating a life for themselves that's similar to what they see on television or maybe just walking down the streets of Dallas. It's like looking through a pane of glass.

We have made enormous strides when it comes to broadening equality in this country. And I could not be prouder of the work that we've done under my administration to make sure that we have a strong civil rights division, that we ended "don't ask, don't tell," that we're championing the rights of the LGBT community, that we're making sure that women are getting paid the same as men for the work that they do. But we all know that in all kinds of interactions, large and small, there are people out there who aren't getting a fair shot, still aren't getting a fair deal, still aren't being treated the way we would want ourselves to be treated. And government has something to say about that.

We have enormous challenges like climate change that are easy to ignore in the short term, and yet I think most of us here want to make sure that the next generation is bequeathed the same incredible bounty, this amazing land of ours, that we inherited from our parents and our grandparents.

So we've got a lot of work to do. And unfortunately, right now Washington is not—how do I put this charitably? *[Laughter]* It's not as functional as it should be. It could do better. And when you think about the work that we've been able to do over the last 4, 4½ years, some of it, happily, has been bipartisan. There have been times where we've been able to tackle issues together. And particularly when it comes to national security and keeping America safe, I think

that there's been some convergence among Democrats and Republicans that we have to act wisely overseas and we've got to make sure that we're supporting our troops when they come home and we've got to take every step that we can to guard against terrorist acts, but we've also got to do so consistent with our Constitution and rule of law.

But when it comes to domestic policy, when it comes to budgets, when it comes to action that is translating into real change for people day to day, the fact of the matter is, is that when Democrats were in charge of the House, we were able to make sure that 30 million people get health care and that people who have health care have the kinds of protections they need from insurance company abuse and are getting the kind of preventive care that's going to drive our health care costs down over the long term.

The fact of the matter is, is that when Democrats were in charge we were able to rein in some of the excesses of Wall Street in a way that assures long-term stability in the financial system and makes it a lot less likely that we end up seeing the kinds of taxpayer bailouts that not only weren't fair, but aren't good for our economy. The fact is, is that when Democrats were in charge, that's when we were able to make sure that we got "don't ask, don't tell" ended. And so who's setting the agenda and who's running the show in Congress makes a difference.

And I'm going to spend the next year and a half doing everything I can to try to bring the parties together around some basic, smart, commonsense agendas that in past years haven't even been particularly partisan: making sure that we're balancing our budget or making sure that we're bringing down our deficits and managing our budgets in a way that doesn't just load up the entire burden on seniors or students or the poor, but asks a little bit from everybody.

And making sure that we can still invest in things like early childhood education and making sure that we're investing in research and science so that we can continue to maintain our cutting edge internationally, rebuilding our infrastructure so that we continue to have the best infrastructure in the world—these are not things that, in the past at least, have been Democrat and Republican.

I come from the "Land of Lincoln," and it turns out that was the first Republican President's agenda as well. He wanted to build railroads and locks and dams, and he started the National Foundation for Science and started land-grant colleges because he understood that we have a free market and the genius of America is unleashing the capacities of our people. But he also understood that there's a role for Government to play to make sure that everybody is getting a fair shot, to make sure that there are ladders of opportunity, to make sure that everybody can realize their full potential.

So these aren't Democratic ideas, these are American ideas. Unfortunately, they've gotten caught up in some partisan politics. And we're going to do everything we can over the next year and a half to break through that.

So occasionally, I may make some of you angry because I am going to reach out to Republicans. I'm going to keep on doing it. Even if some of you guys think I'm a sap, I will keep on doing it—[laughter]—because I think that's what the country needs. But what I also believe in is that when Democrats have the opportunity to set the agenda, then we don't have a country where just a few are doing really, really well; we've got a country where potentially everybody has a chance to do well if they're willing to work hard and if they're willing to take responsibility.

That's what we're fighting for. That's why you're here. And I hope that all of you recognize that despite the fact that I've got a lot of gray hair and I don't look exactly like I did the first

time I came to Dallas as a potential Senate candidate, the same passion and the same values that motivated me then are the values that motivate me now and that we win elections to give us the possibility of actually getting stuff done on behalf of the American people. We don't win elections just to have a party on Inauguration day, and we don't win elections just so we've got a title on our door, and we don't win elections just because it's sport. We win elections so that we have the possibility of delivering for the American people. And delivering means sustained work after the election.

So I can't do that by myself. I can only do it with you. And as Larry helpfully reminded me, I understand that Texas is a so-called red State, but you've got 10 million Democrats here in Texas. And beyond the fact that there are a whole lot of Democrats in Texas, there are a whole lot of people here in Texas who need us and who need us to fight for them. And I don't know about you, but I intend to fight for them as long as I have the honor of holding this office and probably a little bit after that as well.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:06 p.m. at the residence of Naomi Aberly and Laurence H. Lebowitz. In his remarks, he referred to former U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 25. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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