

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Lunch in Denver, Colorado

July 9, 2014

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. It is good to be back here. *[Laughter]* I love Colorado, love Denver. Everybody looks good in Denver too. *[Laughter]* I don't know what it is, the hair or sun, altitude? I don't know. *[Laughter]* It's just a bunch of good-looking people in Denver, Colorado. *[Laughter]*

We've got some great friends here, and I just want to mention some of them. First of all, nobody has a bigger heart, nobody did better work on behalf of the natural resources of this amazing country of ours, nobody has been a better friend to me than the person who just introduced me. Love him dearly. We came into the Senate together, and our lives have crossed paths ever since, and I'm so very, very proud of him and Hope. So please give Ken Salazar a big round of applause.

To Maggie Fox and Tess Udall, thank you for putting up with somebody in politics. *[Laughter]* That's always rough, but you do it with grace, and we're so grateful to you.

To your wonderful former Governor, Bill Ritter, who continues to do great work on behalf of the environment. My dear friend, who was actually on the steering committee for my first race in '08, one of our national board members, Federico Peña, your former mayor. Somebody who helped begin the tradition of great Democratic Senators from Colorado, Gary Hart is here. There he is. Former Mayor Wellington Webb is here in the house. Andrew Romanoff, who is running for Congress, is here. My good friend Betsy Markey, who is running for treasurer, is here. There's Betsy.

And all of you are here. *[Laughter]* And I'm happy about that. This is actually the hotel that I stayed in for the convention in 2008. So as I walked in, the manager says: "Hey, it's great to see you. Do you remember me? How are those wonderful girls? I'll bet they changed a lot." *[Laughter]* And when we were here, Sasha was, I think, about this big. *[Laughter]* And I had to break the news to the manager that, yes, Sasha is taller than you now. *[Laughter]* So yes, things have changed. *[Laughter]*

But what hasn't changed is my incredible faith in the American people. I just came from that gorgeous park of yours, and after having had dinner with some letter writers, people who wrote me letters just telling me about their hopes, their dreams, the challenges that they were facing, we had pizza. Somebody bought me a beer. I walked over—blocked traffic, but I walked over to Hickenlooper's old joint. *[Laughter]* Hickenlooper was there. He challenged me to pool. *[Laughter]* You can ask him how that went. *[Laughter]* I took his lunch money. *[Laughter]*

But in each of these conversations, what I'm always inspired by is the fundamental decency and goodness of the American people: how they work hard, how they care for their families; they're resilient and buoyant; how they're inventive and entrepreneurial. And it's because of all that the country has changed in many ways as much as Sasha has changed since I was last here. When we were here for the convention, we were in a free fall. The economy was actually contracting faster, we now know, in '08 than it did at the outset of the Great Depression. We were losing 800,000 jobs a month.

What we've now seen is 52 straight months of job growth, 10 million jobs created. We've seen the unemployment rate drop faster than any time in the last 30 years. Employment growth actually in this first 6 months has been the fastest since 1999. Housing market has steadily improved, and the stock market and people's 401(k)s restored. Financial system stabilized.

On energy, we produce three times as much wind energy as we did when I came into office, ten times as much solar energy as when I came into office. We have reduced our carbon emissions faster than any other developed country in the world; make greater investments in green energy than any administration in history. We're actually now producing more than we import for the first time in over a couple of decades.

The high school dropout rate gone down; Latino dropout rate actually has been cut in half. College attendance rate at an alltime high. Uninsured keeps going down because of the Affordable Care Act, and health care inflation is actually going up slower than any time in the last 50 years.

We've been able to bring troops home and make sure that our veterans are able to get the kind of education they need to succeed in this new marketplace. Exports are up, farm incomes are up. Things have changed over these last 5 years. There are very few measures by which we are not fundamentally better off than we were when I took office.

But the reason we're here, the reason every race across the country is going to be challenging, including this one, and the reason that your support is going to be so important is that despite the decency of the American people, despite the fact that we have made progress, everybody senses, everybody understands that we've still got some fundamental challenges that have not yet been addressed, and Washington is not addressing them. And it makes people cynical, and it makes people frustrated.

And when I talked to folks last night eating pizza or see them and have a chat with them shooting pool, they all tell me the same thing: We're doing okay, we're making it, but it feels like at the end of every month, no matter how hard we work, it's still kind of a struggle. And when you look at it from a macroeconomic perspective, it's true. The economy is growing, corporate profits soaring, productivity up, but wages and incomes have flatlined. So although our job growth is as good as anything we've seen since 1999, a lot of people's incomes are the same as they were in 1999, at the same time as costs for college or other necessities have gone up.

So everything I do, everything Mark does, everything that Michael Bennet does, our agenda is how do we make sure that we are providing ladders of opportunity to people who are willing to work hard, and for folks who are in the middle class, how are we making sure that they can have some basic security and get ahead if they're working hard, if they're doing the right thing.

That's why we're fighting for raising the minimum wage. That's why we think that equal pay for equal work is fundamental. That's why we think that creating workplace flexibility is so critical. That's why trying to make sure that we've got high-quality, accessible, quality pre-K is so critical. That's why making sure that families are getting help when it comes to childcare or a college education is so important. That's why redesigning our high schools to give young people more opportunity in this 21st-century economy and making sure we've got outstanding job training for people who have to start second careers are in place.

Everything we do, our entire agenda, is designed around a very simple premise, which is, if you are willing to work hard—it shouldn't matter what you look like, where you come from, who you love—you can succeed, you can make it. That's what Mark is fighting for every single day.

And the challenge we have is that the other side is—the only thing they seem to be fighting for is for power or their patrons or on behalf of an economic idea, an economic theory that has been proven wrong time and time and time again. This has been, since the Republicans took over the House, the least productive Congress, I don't know when, perhaps in history. Their single accomplishment was shutting down the Government and threatening the full faith and credit of the United States of America.

They've said no to minimum wage. They've said no to fair pay legislation. They've said no to unemployment insurance extensions. They've said no to basic things like infrastructure, rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our airports, things that used to be bipartisan.

And so, understandably, people get frustrated, and they get cynical. They should be frustrated, but they shouldn't be cynical. If nothing else, the main message I want to leave you today is the same one that I said in the park. Cynicism passes for wisdom these days. I think it's a sorry kind of wisdom. It's easy being cynical and doesn't get you anything. Cynicism doesn't get a man to the Moon. Cynicism didn't expand civil rights to people. Cynicism didn't make us an economic superpower. Hope is a better choice. But it's got to be a hope that is backed by action and hope that is backed by organizing and hope that's backed by effort. And it's got to be hope that is supported by outstanding Members of Congress who are there for the right reasons and who are serious.

And Mark Udall is a serious person who is trying to do the right thing and who has the values that we share. He is not an ideologue. He doesn't agree with me on everything. But he believes in the core idea that I think should be what Democrats are all about, this idea that if you work hard, you should be able to make it. And he's there on behalf of working families all across Colorado. And that's worth supporting.

I'll just close by saying 2008 was sort of lightning in a bottle. The convention was pretty fun. *[Laughter]* It was exciting, and the weather was good. But one challenge that I always offered to Democrats is, we do have one congenital disease, which is we're not very good during off-year elections. We don't think it's flashy enough, I don't know. There aren't enough celebrities involved? I mean, I don't know what's going on, but a lot of times, we don't vote at the same rates. We don't pay attention.

Our positions on every major issue enjoys majority support across the country: immigration reform, supported by a majority of Americans; minimum wage, supported by a majority of Americans; equal pay for equal work, supported by the majority of Americans; being good stewards of the environment and dealing with climate change in a serious way, supported by the majority of Americans. We have the support of the majority. It's just the majority doesn't always vote.

So the one thing I want to urge everybody here is to feel the same urgency about this race—about Mark's race, about all the Senate races, about the State treasurer's race, about the Romanoff race—feel that same urgency as you feel about my race back in 2008. Because, ultimately, this is not about one person, it's not about a handful of people; it's about all of us. And we've got to be invested in this. And I know all of you are, and I appreciate you very, very much for that.

All right, let me take a couple of questions. We're going to get the press out of here.
[Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. at the Westin Denver Downtown hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar and his wife Esperanza "Hope" Salazar; Margaret L. Fox, wife, and Tess Udall, daughter, of Sen. Mark Udall; wage worker Alex Dooley, college student Elizabeth Cooper, small-business owners Carolyn Reed and her husband David Johnson, and teacher Leslie Gresham, who had all written letters to the President about issues affecting the middle class; and Gov. John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee fundraisers :: Denver, CO, lunch.

Locations: Denver, CO.

Names: Bennet, Michael F.; Cooper, Elizabeth; Dooley, Alex; Fox, Margaret L.; Gresham, Leslie; Hart, Gary W.; Hickenlooper, John W.; Johnson, David; Markey, Betsy; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Peña, Federico F.; Reed, Carolyn; Ritter, Bill, Jr.; Romanoff, Andrew; Salazar, Esperanza "Hope"; Salazar, Kenneth L.; Udall, Mark; Udall, Tess; Webb, Wellington E.

Subjects: Colorado : Democratic Party events; Colorado : Governor; Colorado : President's visits; Democratic Party : Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Improvement; Education : Early childhood education programs; Education : High school dropout rate and prevention programs; Education : Vocational and technical education programs; Elections : 2014 congressional elections; Elections : Voter participation; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Environment : Carbon emissions; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Labor issues : Minimum wage; Labor issues : Workplace flexibility, improvement efforts; Veterans : Job training and education assistance.

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