

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

Remarks at an Organizing for Action Dinner

April 23, 2015

Thank you, Jennifer! Well, I've got nothing to add to that. [*Laughter*] Except just to say thank you.

I got a chance to see all of you backstage and take pictures with you, and some of you have been able basically to record my progressive graying. [*Laughter*] You've got, like, a picture from each year showing how I get older, and Michelle, like Dorian Gray, continues to just stay exactly the same. [*Laughter*] It's a little spooky. [*Laughter*]

But I'm going to be very brief on the front end so that I can just spend some time talking with all of you. Obviously, we've had a very consequential stretch since I last saw all of you. We have had some tough stuff, like losing in the midterm, but we've had some really significant accomplishments, from a climate deal that promises to lead the world globally in making sure that this planet is working for future generations to an initiative on comprehensive immigration reform that says we want Congress to work with us, but we can't wait when we've got so many families out there who are prepared to come out of the shadows and earn a legal path so that they can do right by this country; to making sure that Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon without having to resort to war; to the work we've done to extend the Children's Health Insurance Program and start making Medicare more efficient, something we actually got done with Congress, which was a big achievement; to just getting confirmed somebody who is going to be the outstanding next Attorney General of the United States of America.

So we've been busy. [*Laughter*] And I just have to tell all of you that the reason I am so energized and excited and wake up every morning ready to tackle all the problems that are in my inbox is because I know all across the country there are folks like Jennifer, who don't get a big spotlight, who aren't in the newspapers, but because of their story, because of their values, because of their love for a dad and seeing him tear up because he was able to accomplish something he didn't think was possible, because there are tons of folks like that all across the country, I always feel confident about what this country can accomplish. I feel confident there is not a problem out there we can't solve.

And I've now been at this long enough to know that you're going to have some ups and you're going to have some downs. And there are going to be times when the pundits have written you off. But if you remain true to that north star, which was the basis of OFA and the basis for my campaigns—that confidence that when ordinary people come together, they can change this country for the better—when we're true to that, I don't worry about the future. I feel confident about it.

And the reason I've been able to do it is because I've had some folks in this room who have shared those values, through thick and through thin, from the start. And some of you come from places where it's really easy to be an Obama supporter, and some of you come from places that it's really hard to be an Obama supporter. [*Laughter*] But all of you share with me a belief in people like Jennifer.

And what OFA has been able to accomplish so that now it's no longer about reelecting me—it never technically was, but—[*laughter*]—or moving our agenda forward—but I just wanted to make that point. [*Laughter*] But the degree to which now you've got chapters all

across the country that are working on local issues—we can't get minimum wage moved through Congress? Let's make sure that a city council passes a minimum wage law. Congress isn't prepared to do a comprehensive childcare, early childhood education bill? Let's find a Governor who wants to do it; we'll work with him. That kind of grassroots, local, boots-on-the-ground, focused, relentless energy—that's changing this country just as much as anything we do here in Washington.

And probably the most important thing that we're doing is, we are seeing—and I see it every day—just this successive wave of young leadership that just keeps on coming up. And it's a little scary now that—I mean, it's bad enough that Malia is going to be going to college next fall, but now I've got all these folks who are running through this process, and now, suddenly, they're just doing incredible things. So there are concrete things we've accomplished. There are people who have health care who wouldn't have it if we hadn't done what we're doing here. There are people who are going to college who wouldn't have been going to college if we hadn't done what we did here. There are young people who would still be living in the shadows, but who are now going to school or in our military and serving this country. If it wasn't for what we had done here, they wouldn't have had those opportunities.

But we've got more work to do. And I just hope you guys feel as inspired as I do about that work, because despite the gray hair, I've got a lot more energy—[laughter]—and a lot more work that needs to be done. And I can only do it with you.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:53 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton Washington, DC hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jennifer Warner, director of organizing, Organizing for Action, who introduced the President; and Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 24. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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