

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Potomac, Maryland

November 4, 2015

The President. Hello, everybody! It's good to see you! It is good to see you. Well, thank you so much. You just doing a little dance over there? That's a nice little dance. Well, it is just wonderful to be here. First of all, I just want to——

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. I do.

Please give David and June a big round of applause. We took a couple pictures with their gorgeous family before we came out, and I was hearing about David and how, when he was still in school, he started a beer store and just kept on putting money back into the business. And a few decades later, now is one of the largest, if not the largest, wine retailer in the country. An example of American success. And then, I was listening to him backstage, and I thought, you know, we could run him for something. [*Laughter*] I mean, he's got the slightly raspy voice and—[*laughter*]—I was having visions of him. So, David, just keep that in mind. June, I'm sorry—[*laughter*]—but we may have to do something with that.

But thank you so much for the incredible hospitality in your beautiful home.

John Delaney, your outstanding Congressman, is one of the cohosts here tonight. He actually—unlike some people—is voting tonight. [*Laughter*] And so we wanted to make sure that we give him acknowledgment and a big round of applause because he's doing a great job.

So I was reminded—and this is a little scary—I was reminded that today is actually the seventh anniversary of my election as President of the United States. Seven years ago today. And clearly, the gray hair testifies—[*laughter*]—to all 7 years.

Audience member. You look really good.

The President. Oh, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I need to hear that sometimes. [*Laughter*] Guys have a little vanity themselves.

But it makes me think about where we were 7 years ago. We were on the way to losing 800,000 jobs a month those first few months that I took office. David probably remembers what was happening in his business. I suspect it was being impacted like everybody else's. The stock market had collapsed. The financial system had locked up not just here in the United States, but internationally. People were losing their homes. People were seeing their pensions diminished. And frankly, nobody knew where the bottom was.

And because of you and your neighbors and your friends and your coworkers, we were able to systematically work our way out of this hole. Because of the resilience of the American people, we've now seen 13 million-plus jobs created over the last 5½ years. People's 401(k)s have been restored. Housing values are on the way back. Our auto industry, which was flatlining, has fully recovered, and we're selling more cars than ever before. And we've seen a growth in manufacturing that is unmatched since the 1990s.

We've cut imports of foreign oil in half. We have doubled the production of clean energy. We have started to drive down emissions. Graduation rates are up, college attendance up. "Don't ask, don't tell" is no more.

There is almost no economic measure by which we are not doing better today than we were that day 7 years ago that I took office. And it makes you wonder what it is that the Republicans are talking about. *[Laughter]* Because in this alternative reality that they have constructed, when you listen to the Presidential candidates they—oh, goodness. Do people have chairs? Well, feel free to sit down. I'm sorry. *[Laughter]* I couldn't tell from here. Yes, sit down. Everybody has had a—*[applause]*.

So according to this alternative reality that they have created, everything was great until I took office. *[Laughter]* And those were the golden years when we were losing 800,000 jobs, and millions of people were losing their homes, and we were in the middle of two wars, and I came in and just screwed everything up. *[Laughter]*

Now, there's a reason they've got to resort to this alternative reality. It's not enough that they spent the entire 7 years obstructing. It's not enough that they spent those 7 years focused not on how they could work together to pull us out of crisis, but rather focus on how they might defeat me politically. The reason they have to construct an alternative reality is because the same ideas that got us in that hole in the first place are the same ideas that they're promoting today.

This is not a situation in which, as was true with Democrats after we lost a successive series of Presidential elections where Bill Clinton and others pulled back and reflected, what do we have to do differently; what are the new ideas; how do we make sure that we're focused on the middle class; how do we adapt our traditional concerns around the poor and the vulnerable and make them compatible with growth and competitiveness. That's not what took place. You could take the speech of any one of the current Republican candidates and put it side-by-side with what Mitt Romney was arguing in 2012 and what John McCain was arguing in 2008 and what George Bush was arguing in 2000 and 2004, and it would be the same prescription.

They're offering the same thing: tax cuts for folks at the very top who don't need tax cuts; cuts in critical investments like education and research and development and infrastructure that help us grow; cuts to Medicare and Medicaid and programs that mark us as an advanced society because we care for the vulnerable and the infirm and our seniors; a politics that divides and says some are less worthy of our attention than others. The platform is almost identical.

And since the American people are pretty confident that that recipe doesn't work because we've tried it repeatedly and it hasn't worked, they've got to jigger reality to fit their theories, as opposed to adapting their theories to fit the facts.

So our response is, number one, to remind people that there's a lot of good stuff going on in America right now. It's a good thing that 17 million people have health insurance today that didn't have it before I took office. That's a good thing. It's a good thing that we cut the deficit by two-thirds since I signed Obamacare and health care costs have gone up at a slower rate than any time in the last 50 years. That's a good thing.

It's a good thing that jobs are coming back in manufacturing here in America. That's a good thing. It's a good thing that we have been able to bring over 180,000 of our men and women in uniform back from Iraq and Afghanistan so that they can be with their families. That's a good thing.

But it's not enough for us just to settle for what has been done. We also have to describe a vision for where we need to go. And the good news is, is that Democrats across the board, believing in fact and believing in evidence, actually have a vision of how we create an inclusive economy in which growth and competitiveness isn't just generated from the top down, but from the bottom up and from the middle out; a vision that says we've got to make sure that every child in Maryland and every child in America has a great education and can afford to go to college; a vision that says we're going to rebuild our roads and our bridges and our infrastructure to make it state-of-the-art so we're competitive for decades to come.

A vision that says we invest in research and development so we maintain the innovation economy that's been the hallmark of America for generations. A vision that says we're going to make sure that Medicare and Social Security are there not just for this generation, but for future generations. A vision that says everybody should be able to have access to the security of health care for themselves and their families and they shouldn't go bankrupt if they get sick.

A vision that says everybody deserves to be treated with respect and dignity and equality under the law and that it's a good thing that you are able to marry the person you love, that it's a good thing that we are a nation of immigrants and we're going to make sure that we give the children of immigrants the chance to earn their citizenship here in this United States, because that makes us a better country and a stronger country.

We've got a vision that says that the measure of our strength internationally is not simply by how many countries we're occupying or how many missiles we're firing, but the strength of our diplomacy and the strength of our commitment to human rights, and our belief that we've got to cooperate with other countries together to solve massive problems like terrorism, but also like climate change.

That we've got to pay attention to the struggles that middle class families are going through, and we've got to start looking at what's happening with wages and stagnant incomes and the difficulty people have saving and sending their kids to college; and that our tax laws should be designed to reward hard work, and we should have a minimum wage in this country so that if you're working full time, you're not in poverty.

And if families are working, women should definitely be getting paid the same that men are getting paid for doing the same work. And they should have family and sick leave, because it's hard to work and also keep your family intact. And these days, we've got two-earner households not frequently by choice, but by necessity. And all the hard work of raising families, and Lord knows, watching Michelle, I know how hard it can be. Something like family leave or sick leave is not a luxury, it's not something that we should somehow think is antibusiness. It is what allows extraordinarily talented people to be in the workforce and still do right by their families. And over the long run, we know that employees are going to be more productive and miss fewer days and be more committed and our economy will grow better.

So we've got a vision about where we need to go. And now we've got to sell it. Because, look, it is true that so often the other side is presenting an alternative reality, but what is also true is that we have a splintered media in which that alternative reality is delivered to people all across this country nonstop, every day. There's a lot of noise, there's a lot of misinformation. Basic facts are constantly contested very effectively.

So I may tell you that the deficit has gone down by two-thirds since I took office, but if you ask the average person on the street, they are absolutely positive that the deficit has skyrocketed because of the liberal Obama agenda.

Audience member. Not everybody.

The President. Well, you're right, not everybody. But I'm just saying if you ask folks, have your taxes gone up, I mean, I can show that Federal taxes for middle class families have actually gone down in many circumstances. They certainly haven't gone up. They've gone up for folks in my income bracket. But that is not believed by a lot of folks.

And that's not because they don't want to know. It's just there's a lot of noise out there and not everybody is listening to the same radio stations or watching the same television stations. And so people have a different perception of what's true and what's not. And what they know, what they feel is, is that they're working really hard and they're not getting ahead as fast as they would expect. And they worry about the future of their kids and their grandkids and whether they're going to be able to live out their American Dream. That's what they know. And so there's a dissatisfaction, and there's a cynicism about Government.

And if you tell folks, well, the reason that Government doesn't work is not because Obama or the Democrats in Congress are stubborn, wild-eyed leftists, but it's because the agenda of the Republicans in Congress have shifted so far to the right that they can't compromise on anything, although they did compromise recently on getting a budget, which was great progress. And I appreciate them for that.

But most folks, they're too busy to follow the ins and outs of filibusters and what's happening in the Senate. So all they know, is nothing works up there, a plague on both their houses. And so then they stop voting. And they give up on the system. And when we don't vote, oftentimes we lose. Because the majority agrees with us on things like minimum wage. The majority agrees with us on investing in education and job training and so forth. But if they don't think it's going to get done and they just stay home, or they figure, you know what, neither side is going to be looking out for my interests, so I might as well buy into whatever social issue or issue of the day comes up as opposed to really paying attention to economic arguments that will give me some relief—that's happened too often.

I say all this not to discourage you. I say all this because we should not be complacent. We've got a great record of accomplishment over the last 7 years. We have the right agenda for America to move America forward over the next 7, 10, 20 years. But we have to go out there and sell it.

We've got to have what Dr. King used to call the fierce urgency of now. Because the stakes are enormous in this upcoming election. And what that means is, is that the kind of engagement and involvement and participation that so many of you displayed 7, 8 years ago when I was running, you've got to have that same sense of engagement and enthusiasm and passion this time out.

We can't afford complacency. I always have to remind people that when I ran in 2008, I didn't say, "Yes, I can." I said, "Yes, we can." We. A President is important. I won't lie. I've got a big plane. *[Laughter]* Helicopters. Although, it's leases, and my lease is about to run out. *[Laughter]* I'm trying to see if we can establish a frequent flier program—*[laughter]*—because I've put in over a million miles on that plane and I'm figuring that should allow me, even with some blackout dates, use a few times a year. But apparently, that's not been the practice. *[Laughter]*

So Presidents are important. They can make a difference. They can help set the agenda. But Presidents without a Congress that's supportive of that agenda and cooperative and thinking about the common good is not going to get done what needs to get done. And a

Congress without the support of citizens who are fighting and scratching and clawing for the things that matter to them and their communities and to ordinary families, that means Congress isn't going to be able to do what it needs to do.

Justice Brandeis said, "The most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen." I believe that. And in a little over a year's time, I will get on that plane for the last time, but I am going to be right alongside you as a fellow citizen. And my work will not be done, just like your work is not done. And that means that together we will continue to make sure that my successor is a Democratic President and that we win back the Senate, we win back the House, and we move America the way it needs to move, in the right direction for every person, for every child.

I believe that. That's the politics we all bought into: a politics of hope, not a politics of fear. Let's go out and make it happen.

Thank you so much, everybody. Love you. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. at the residence of David and June Trone. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraisers :: Potomac, MD.

Locations: Potomac, MD.

Names: Bush, George W.; Clinton, William J.; Delaney, John K.; McCain, John S., III; Obama, Michelle; Romney, W. Mitt; Trone, David; Trone, June.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Global competitiveness; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Improvement; Civil rights : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Civil rights : Wage equality; Congress : Bipartisanship; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : High school graduation rate; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: College opportunity, expansion efforts; Elections : 2008 Presidential and congressional elections; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Elections : Voter participation; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job training and assistance programs; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: U.S. production; Energy : Carbon dioxide emissions, reduction; Energy : Domestic sources; Environment : Climate change; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Immigration and naturalization : American "melting pot"; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Labor issues : Minimum wage; Labor issues : Paid family and sick leave; Maryland : Democratic Party events; Maryland : President's visits; Science and technology : Research and development; Social Security and retirement : Social Security program; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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