

Remarks at a Florida Democratic Party Reception in Miami, Florida August 18, 2010

The President. Hey! Hello, Florida! Hello, Miami! It is good to be back. It is good to be back in Miami. I was just in Florida, and it is true that Sasha outscored me on the first hole. [Laughter] I took her, I think, on the third. It was tight the whole way, though. [Laughter] But it is wonderful to see all of you. Looking out at this crowd, I know how many of you worked so hard on my campaign, have been—[*ap- plause*—worked hard on behalf of Democrats for years here in Florida, and are going to be working hard on behalf of the great ticket that we're going to be having this year.

There are a number of people that I want to acknowledge. Obviously, first of all, you have got a wonderful senior Senator right here in Florida, who's working hard every day, give Bill Nelson a big round of applause. An outstanding congressional delegation: Ron Klein is here; Alan Grayson is here; Ted Deutch is here; Debbie Wasserman Schultz is here; soon-to-be Member of Congress Joe Garcia, running in Florida's 25th. Running for Florida attorney general, Dan Gelber is here—State senator. Also running for Florida attorney general, Dave Aronberg—also State senator—is here. We've got Scott Maddox, who's running for agricultural commissioner for the State. And we've got Matti Bower, mayor of Miami Beach, in the house.

So as I said, it's just great to be with friends. And you were with me when we were up; you were with me when we were down. If it weren't for you, I would not be standing here as President of the United States. And as your President, it is my honor to stand in support of the next Governor of the great State of Florida, Alex Sink.

At a difficult time like this, you need somebody in Tallahassee like Alex. She combines the sensibility of a successful businesswoman with the tenacity of a consumer watchdog, which is what she's been for the last 4 years as Florida's CFO. She's cut waste; she's eliminated unnecessary contracts; she's saved the State tens of millions of dollars. She's protected countless seniors and homeowners from being taken advan-

tage of by predatory lenders. She's put this State's entire checkbook online so you know exactly how your tax dollars are being spent. And now she's running to be the economic ambassador for this State, with a plan to attract new companies and new jobs and new opportunities to the Sunshine State.

So Alex knows what it takes to change business as usual in Tallahassee. She's not afraid to take on the status quo. She's done it before; she's going to do it again. So I want all of you to do me a favor. I know everybody here, I'm preaching to the choir. [Laughter] But I need you to talk to your friends, I need you to talk to your neighbors, I need you to send out e-mail blasts, I need you to raise money, I need you to walk and knock on doors, whatever it takes to make sure that Alex Sink is the next Governor of Florida. We need to move forward in this State.

And let me also say something about the next Senator from the State of Florida, Kendrick Meek. Now, Kendrick has been a champion of middle class families and somebody who has not been afraid to stand up to the status quo and special interests. So we need that kind of fighter in the United States Senate. I need you to help him get there.

We need leaders like Alex and Kendrick in this country because we are facing an incredibly challenging time. Eighteen months ago, I took office after nearly a decade of economic policies that produced sluggish growth and falling incomes and falling wages and took a record surplus to a record deficit. And these policies culminated in the worst recession of our lifetimes. In the last 6 months of 2008, 3 million Americans lost their jobs. The month I was sworn in, 800,000 more Americans lost their jobs; the month after that, 600,000; the month after that, 600,000. Before we could even get our economic policies in place, we had already seen devastation across this country.

And behind these numbers, behind these statistics, there's a story of heartache and frustration: a factory worker who was just a few years

shy of retirement suddenly seeing his plant closed and not knowing where to turn; or a single mom who sends out application after application, but doesn't get a call back and wonders how she's going to pay the bills; or a college graduate who worked hard, got a degree, and all they've got to show for it is a mountain of debt; and then some kids planning to go to college decided they couldn't afford it because their family needed their help.

I hear these stories every day. I read them in letters every night. The struggles and the hopes of these Americans are why I ran for office in the first place. That's why I am going to work as hard as I can for as long as it takes to turn this economy around. That's why I ran for office. That's why Alex is here. That's our goal.

Now, Florida, we're not there yet. We are not there yet. We know that. It took us close to a decade to dig ourselves into this hole; it's going to take some time to dig ourselves out of it.

Audience member. Eight years! [*Laughter*]

The President. It takes time to bring back 8 million jobs. That's the hard truth. Somebody tells you different, they're probably running for office. [*Laughter*]

But here's what I can tell you: After 18 months, I have never been more confident that we are headed in the right direction. We are doing what's needed to move forward. We are rebuilding this economy not just for the short term—we had to rescue the economy short term, but we're also building the economy for the long run, for our children and our grandchildren.

We did not become the most prosperous country in the world by rewarding greed and recklessness of the sort that helped cause this financial crisis. We did not come this far by letting special interests run wild in Washington, writing their own rules. We did not get here by just looking after ourselves and not looking after our neighbors. We got here by rewarding the values of hard work and responsibility and by investing in our people and making sure that economic growth happened from the bottom up—middle class families and small-business owners. We did it by outworking and outedu-

cating and outcompeting every nation on Earth. That's who we are. That's who we need to be.

This is a serious time. Right now countries like China and India and South Korea, Germany, they are fighting as hard as they can for the jobs of the future. They are trying to outcompete us on things like clean energy. They're trying to outcompete us on education and how many engineers they produce. And frankly, in some cases, we've been slipping. We used to be number 1 in the number of college graduates; we now rank number 12.

Now, let me tell you, Florida, the United States of America, we do not play for second place. We play for first place. We've got to rebuild this economy stronger than it was before. And at the center of that agenda are three powerful words: Made in America. We've got to start making things here in the United States. Instead of giving tax breaks to companies that ship our jobs overseas, we've got to cut taxes for companies that create jobs right here in the United States of America. We've got to give tax cuts to small-business owners and tax cuts to clean energy companies and tax cuts to middle class families, which is what we did. Ninety-five percent of American workers got a tax cut under my administration. That was the right thing to do.

And we've got to have an energy strategy in this country. Instead of prolonging an addiction to oil that endangers everything from our security to our coastlines, we're jump-starting a homegrown clean energy industry in this country. I don't want to see solar panels and wind turbines and advanced batteries that go into electric cars—I don't want them manufactured elsewhere. I want them manufactured right here in the United States of America, by American workers.

We've got to invest in 21st-century infrastructure. That means new bridges and new roads, but it also means faster Internet, high-speed railroad, projects that will lay the foundation for long-term economic growth, but also produce hundreds of thousands of new private sector jobs. And we are helping old industries like the American auto industry get back on its feet and retool for the 21st century.

Now, you will remember, a while back, this was an industry—the auto industry—that had lost hundreds of thousands of jobs in the year before I took office. And we had to make a tough decision about whether to help them out or walk away, which might have cost another million jobs. And a lot of folks said we should walk away. We decided, no, we’re going to take a different approach. Instead of continuing to give bailouts to the auto companies and asking nothing in return, we said, we are going to make sure you restructure so you can compete over the long haul. And we got all the stakeholders together and worked hard, helped GM through bankruptcy, helped Chrysler through bankruptcy. And today, all three automakers are operating at a profit for the first time in years. They’ve had the strongest job growth in more than 10 years. GM just announced it’s going public again.

I visited a Chrysler plant in Detroit a few weeks back, and this was a plant that would have shut down had we not moved forward. And now they’re producing these outstanding cars. And 14 workers had just won the lottery at this plant. *[Laughter]* Now, instead of cashing out, quitting their jobs, most of them stayed, because they love their work. They’re proud of what they do. The guy who bought the winning ticket, he bought one of the cars that he helps assemble, for his wife. And then he bought flags for his hometown, because he loves his country and he loves his workers and he loves the company he works for. And that symbolizes something. It sends a message that sometimes the naysayers in Washington don’t understand: Do not bet against the American worker. Do not bet against American businesses. Do not bet against the American people. Don’t bet against American ingenuity. We are coming back, and we’re coming back strong.

But to come back strong, to rebuild for the long run, we’ve got work. We’ve got to ensure that our workers can compete with any workers on Earth. And that’s why we’re reforming our education system based on what works for kids, not what works for the status quo. We eliminated billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies to the big banks that were acting as middlemen on the

college loan program. And as a consequence of this, we saved tens of billions of dollars that are now making college educations more affordable for millions of more students.

To lower the costs to families and businesses, we passed health insurance reform that will finally make coverage affordable and stop insurance companies from jacking up your premiums or refusing to cover you before you’re sick—because you’re sick.

To make sure that everybody is participating in our economy, I signed into law legislation that makes sure we’ve got equal pay for equal work, because we want our women getting paid just like men are getting paid on the workforce.

To keep faith with the brave men and women who risk their lives for ours and to help build the middle class like the greatest generation built itself up, we are increasing access to health care and benefits and education for our veterans and their families. And we’re keeping the promise I made when I began campaigning for the Presidency. By the end of this month, we’ll have removed 100,000 troops from Iraq and our combat mission will be over.

To ensure that a financial crisis like this one doesn’t happen again, we passed financial reform that provides new accountability and tough oversight of Wall Street. It’s going to stop credit card companies from charging hidden fees or unfair rate hikes. It’s going to end the era of Wall Street bailouts once and for all.

And these reforms—all these reforms taken together are going to make America more competitive in the 21st century. They move us forward. And on each of these reforms, we reached out to Democrats and Republicans for ideas and for support. But I have to tell you, in just about every instance, almost every Republican in Congress said no: no on help for small businesses, no on middle class tax cuts, no on clean energy jobs, no on making college more affordable, no on Wall Street reform.

You remember our campaign slogan, “Yes, we can”? This year, their campaign slogan is, “No, we can’t.” *[Laughter]* It’s pretty inspiring, huh? *[Laughter]* You know, you wake up in the morning and you hear “No!”—that just puts a little pep in your step. *[Laughter]*

Why do they keep on saying no? Well, part of it is, is that they just can't give up on the bankrupt economic policies that they have been peddling for much of the last decade. I mean, this agenda is pretty straightforward. And I give them credit, you know, they keep on coming back with it: You cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires, you cut rules for special interests, you cut working folks loose to fend for themselves. So if you don't have a job or you can't afford college or you don't have health insurance or you can't get health insurance for your kid, tough luck, you're on your own.

Now, the advantage of this economic philosophy is it's simple. [Laughter] The disadvantage of this philosophy is it doesn't work out real well. I mean, think about—we tried this for 8 years, and here's what it gave us: It gave us the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and it took us from record surpluses to record deficits.

These guys now, they're all running on, well, Democrats are the spending party. Think about this. We had record surpluses. When I arrived in the White House, I had a \$1.3 trillion deficit wrapped in a bow waiting for me. [Laughter] So yes, we had to spend money to get us out of what could have been a depression. So we spent money on high-speed rail and we spent money on clean energy and we spent money making sure teachers and cops and firefighters weren't laid off. What did they have to show for the \$1.3 trillion deficit that they delivered to us?

Audience members. War.

Audience members. Two wars.

Audience member. Bad President. [Laughter]

The President. All right, we've got a lot of options here. [Laughter] But it's not a real attractive list. [Laughter] So when these guys get on their high horse about spending, it's like, hold on a second.

Now, I'm bringing this up not to relitigate the past. I just don't want to relive the past. [Laughter] It was hard enough—it's been hard enough trying to rescue this economy the first time. I don't want to have to do it a second time. I mean, it would be one thing if Republicans, they all said to themselves, gosh, you know, what we did really didn't work out, so let's go off

and let's meditate a little bit—[laughter]—and see where we went wrong, come up with some new ideas, come up with a new philosophy, acknowledge the mistakes that we made, promise to do things differently. If that was their message, that would be plausible.

And I would embrace it. I would say, great, you've got new ideas? Come on, let's work together. Let's figure out how we can move the country forward. But that's not what they're saying. One of their leaders was asked what would he do if they took over Congress again, and he said—I'm quoting here—"We're going to pursue the exact same agenda as before Obama took office," the exact same agenda.

So basically, what they're really betting on—I mean, their whole campaign strategy is that all of you have come down with a case of amnesia. [Laughter] They are banking on the fact that you'll forget what their agenda did to this country over 8 years.

Imagine the economy is a car. And they're driving along, and I don't know what they're doing. They're not paying much attention to the road. Maybe they're on their BlackBerry. I don't know. [Laughter] They're talking on the phone—something. But they drive the economy into the ditch. And so now me and Bill Nelson and the congressional delegation here and all of us, we got to put on our boots, and we climb down into the ditch, and it's muddy down there and hot, bugs. [Laughter] We're pushing, we're shoving, trying to get this car out of the ditch. Republicans, they're standing there, watching us—[laughter]—sipping on a Slurpee or something. [Laughter] They're like—we say, "You guys want to come down and help push?" "No, no, that's okay. Push harder, though." [Laughter] "You're not pushing right." [Laughter] "If we were pushing, we'd be doing it differently." [Laughter]

Finally—finally—after all this work, we get the car back up on level ground. We're ready to move forward. Suddenly, these guys tap us on the shoulder. We turn around, they say, "We want the keys back." [Laughter] You can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive. We don't want to go back into the ditch.

I don't know if any of you have thought of this, but when you want your car going forward, what do you do?

Audience members. "D"!

The President. You put it into "D." When you want to go reverse, what do you do?

Audience members. "R"!

The President. Put it into "R." We don't want to go backwards, we want to go forwards. And that's why we're going to vote for Alex Sink. We need to go forward. That's what this election is about, moving forward. America always moves forward.

If you want to know what will happen if the other party takes over Congress, all you've got to do is take a look at what they've done the last 18 months. On issue after issue, they've sided with special interests over the middle class. They voted to give tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas. They voted to give insurance companies the power to deny you coverage if you've had a preexisting condition.

The top Republican on the Energy Committee, the guy who would be in charge of energy policy in this country if they take over—after the oil spill happened, he apologized, not to the people of Florida, he apologized to BP—*[laughter]*—said he was so sorry that the President forced them to put a \$20 billion trust fund together so that fishermen and small-business owners and hotel owners would be compensated; called it a "shakedown," called it a "Chicago shakedown." That's—*[laughter]*. Are you serious? *[Laughter]*

On Wall Street reform, I mean, think about this: The worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, and they want to go back to doing the same things. How can that be? *[Laughter]* How can that be? The economy was almost brought to its knees. And we put together a very sensible, mainstream approach for making sure we wouldn't have taxpayer bailouts, making sure that consumers were protected. We kept on reaching out to them: Work with us. Wouldn't do it, because the special interests in Washington didn't want them to do it.

That's what's at stake in this election. If we give them the keys back, they will drive this economy right back into the ditch. And riding

shotgun will be every special interest under the Sun.

And let me be clear about how we're going to move our economy forward. The key to moving this economy forward is going to be the private sector. Government is not going to be the primary driver of job creation in this country. We want businesses to succeed. The free market is the greatest instrument of wealth production in our history. But—*[applause]*—so if you're a responsible business owner, I want to do everything I can to help you grow and prosper and hire more employees. But I don't think it's anti-business to say we should make sure an oil rig is safe before you start drilling. I don't think it's antibusiness to say Wall Street banks should play by the same rules as everybody else. I don't think it's antibusiness to say that insurance companies should deny people care just because they get sick, to make sure that we say to insurance companies, you got to treat people fairly. That's not being antibusiness; that's just being commonsense.

We can't go back to an attitude where whatever is good for me is good enough. We've got to start asking, what's good for America? What's best for all our businesses? What's best for all our people? What's best for the next generation, not just the next election? How do we move this country forward as one people and as one Nation?

So, Florida, I know times are tough. And when times are tough, it can be easy to give in to cynicism, it can be easy to give in to fear. Sometimes we set our sights lower, we settle for the status quo. And that's what the other side is counting on in this election. They're not offering new plans. They're not offering new ideas. They're offering cynicism, and they're offering fear. They're offering distractions and wedge issues.

You know, during the course of the last 18 months, there have been times where I've taken positions that surprise people in Washington. All the pundits, they say, boy, you know, what he's doing, it doesn't poll well. *[Laughter]* I know it doesn't poll well. I've got pollsters. *[Laughter]* But you didn't send me to Washington to do what was popular. You sent me to do

what was right. That's who we are as a country. We are Americans. We do not give up. We do not quit. We do not fear the future, we shape the future.

And if you'll join Alex Sink and if you'll join Kendrick Meeks and you'll join me to build a future where all our kids are getting educated and small businesses are flourishing because of their ideas and their ingenuity and we're creating clean energy jobs all across America, if you'll join me in building a future that thinks about more than just politics, but thinks about how are we going to meet this solemn obligation we have to those who are coming after us, I'm ab-

olutely positive that the 21st century is going to be the American century, just like the 20th.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. at the Fontainebleau Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William Shanteau, a Chrysler Jefferson North Assembly Plant worker who purchased the winning June Powerball jackpot ticket in Curtice, OH, and his wife Lisa; and Rep. Pete Sessions, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee; and Rep. Joseph L. Barton.

Remarks on Job Promotion Legislation *August 19, 2010*

Good morning, everybody. For the last several months, I have been urging Congress to pass a jobs bill that will do two big things for small businesses: cut their taxes and make loans more available.

I have been adamant about this because small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They create two out of every three new jobs in this country. And while a lot of big businesses and big banks have started recovering from this recession, small businesses and community banks that loan to small businesses have been lagging behind. They need help. And if we want this economy to create more jobs more quickly, we need to help them.

A report yesterday from the Labor Department underscores why this is so critical. In the final few months of last year, small businesses with fewer than 50 employees accounted for more than 60 percent of the job losses in America—more than 60 percent. These are the businesses that usually create most of the jobs in this country. And this report, combined with this morning's news that unemployment claims rose again, compels us to act. It compels us to stand with the small-business men and women who are trying to grow their companies and make payroll and hire new workers.

The jobs bill that is stalled in Congress would completely eliminate taxes on key investments

in small businesses. It would allow small-business owners to write off more expenses. And it would make it easier for community banks to do more lending to small businesses, while allowing small firms to take out larger SBA loans with fewer fees, which countless entrepreneurs have told me would make a big difference in their companies. I'd also like to point out this legislation is fully paid for and will not add one single dime to our deficit.

So this is a bill that makes sense, and normally we would expect Democrats and Republicans to join together. Unfortunately, a partisan minority in the Senate so far has refused to allow this jobs bill to come up for a vote.

Now, I recognize that there are times when Democrats and Republicans have legitimate differences rooted in different views about what's best for this country. There are times when good people disagree in good faith. But this is not one of those times. This small-business jobs bill is based on ideas both Democrat and Republican. In fact, many provisions in the bill were actually authored by Republican Senators. It has been praised as being good for small business by groups like the Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

A majority of Senators are in favor of the bill and yet the obstruction continues. It's obstruction