

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate Richard Blumenthal in Stamford, Connecticut
September 16, 2010

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, hello, Stamford. It is good to be back in Connecticut, and it is an honor to stand here with your attorney general and the next United States Senator from Connecticut, Dick Blumenthal.

I also want to acknowledge your candidate for Governor, Dan Malloy, who is here, or he may have slipped out right before—there he is. Not sure—when you're campaigning, you can't be in one place too long. [Laughter]

And I also want to just say thank you to Cynthia and the kids for lending Dick to Connecticut and to the country. I know it is hard to be the spouse of a candidate and the spouse of an attorney general, and it's going to be tough being the spouse of a United States Senator. I promised that I would not let Michelle talk to Cynthia before the election. [Laughter] It's hard work. But we are extraordinarily grateful. And the fact that David and Matthew and Claire and Mike are doing so well is a testament I know Dick agrees with Mom. So please give her a big round of applause.

Now, Connecticut, let's face it, this decision in this election should be a no-brainer. [Laughter] Right? I mean, it should be. Should be a no-brainer. Here you've got a man who's been fighting for the people of Connecticut since the day he walked into the attorney general's office. He's got the record to prove it. He's taken on the tobacco industry and helped stop those companies from targeting our kids. He's taken on utility companies to try to beat back electricity rate increases and skyrocketing costs of heating oil. He's taken on the auto industry to help keep family dealerships open that have been around for almost a century.

There is no—there's no fight too big or too small for Dick Blumenthal to take on. He was there to help a mother get her insurance company to pay for her baby's special formula. He was there to help a family rebuild after their home was destroyed by fire. He's there at county fairs and Rotary Club meetings and PTA

meetings, talking with people of this State, listening to your concerns.

This is the kind of leader you want representing you. Somebody you know. Somebody who shares your values. Somebody who doesn't just show up and try to get a victory by writing a big check and flooding the airwaves with negative ads. Now, I have to say, Dick say—said his opponent may have more money. Dick, she has more money than you. [Laughter] I mean, it's—[laughter]—just in case there's any confusion. [Laughter]

And I understand she has promised a smack-down. [Laughter] Right? This is what she said. And look, there's no doubt, I can see how somebody who's been in professional wrestling would think that they're right at home at the United States Senate—[laughter]—if they were watching some of the behavior that's been going on. [Laughter]

But the truth is—and Dick understands this—public service is not a game. At this moment, we are facing challenges we haven't seen since the Great Depression. And facing serious challenges requires serious leaders: leaders who are willing to take on the status quo, leaders who are willing to take on special interests, leaders who are willing to fight for our people and our future. And Dick Blumenthal is that leader. And that's why I need all of you to make him your next United States Senator. That's the choice in this election.

I want to give you a sense of the contexts of this election, what's at stake. See, for the last decade, there was a very specific philosophy that reigned in Washington: You cut taxes, especially for millionaires and billionaires. You cut regulations for special interests. You cut back on investments in education and clean energy and research and technology.

The idea was that if we put blind faith in the market, if we let corporations play by their own rules, if we left everybody else to fend for themselves, somehow America would automatically grow and would prosper.

And over the last 10 years, that philosophy has not worked out well. It didn't work for middle class families who saw their incomes go down while their costs of everything from school tuition to health care go up. It didn't work for an economy that experienced the slowest job growth since World War II; this was before the financial crisis. It didn't work when a record surplus turned into a record deficit. It didn't work when the recklessness of some on Wall Street led to the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

So I ran for President because I had a different idea about how this country was built. And it was an idea rooted in my own family's story. My parents, my grandparents, they never had much. They worked tirelessly so that I might have a better life. They believed in the American values of self-reliance and individual responsibility, and they instilled those values in their children.

But they also believed in a country that rewards hard work, a country that rewards responsibility, a country where we look after one another.

They believed in the America that gave my grandfather the chance to go to college because of the GI bill, an America that gave my grandparents a chance to buy a home because of the Federal Housing Authority, an America where a rising tide really does lift all boats, from the CEO to the newest guy on the assembly line.

That's the America I believe in. That's the America Dick Blumenthal believes in. We don't think that government has all the answers to our problems. We don't think government's main role is to create jobs or prosperity. We believe government should be lean and it should be efficient.

But in the words of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, we also believe that government should do for the people what they can't do as well for themselves. And that means it should invest in our common future.

It means the powerful—special interests, corporations—that they need to live up to their responsibilities. It means government should help make the middle class more secure and give ladders for people to climb into that middle

class. That's what we believe. That's the future that we see.

We see a future where we encourage American innovation and American ingenuity. And that's why we want to end tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas and give those tax breaks to companies that are investing in research and development and hiring right here in the United States of America.

That's why we're investing in research and technology and a homegrown clean energy industry, because I don't want to see new solar panels or electric cars or wind turbines, advanced batteries manufactured in Europe or Asia. I want to see them made right here in America, with American workers.

We see an America where every citizen has the skills and training to compete with any worker in the world. Today I had, down in Washington, a meeting with a hundred CEOs who are now partnering with our Department of Education and our National Science Foundation to improve math and science training in schools, because we need more engineers and more scientists. That's how we're going to keep our cutting edge.

And that's why we've set a goal to once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. We used to be number 1; we're now around number 12. We're going to get back to number one by the end of this next decade.

And that's why we're revitalizing our community colleges and reforming our education system based on what works, not what perpetuates the status quo. That's why we're fighting to make permanent our new college tax credit. This is a tax credit that will mean \$10,000 in tuition relief for each child going to 4 years of college.

So we see an America where a growing middle class is the beating heart of a growing economy. That's why I kept my promise and gave a middle class tax cut to 95 percent of working Americans. That's why we passed health insurance reform that stops insurance companies from jacking up your premiums or dropping coverage because you're sick or have a preexisting condition. That's why we passed financial

reform to end taxpayer-funded bailouts, reform that will stop credit card companies and mortgage lenders and Wall Street banks from taking advantage of the American people. We want them to compete. We want a thriving financial services area. We want to compete on service, on good products and good prices.

That's why we're trying to make it easier for workers to save for retirement and fighting the efforts of some in the other party to privatize Social Security, because as long as I'm President, nobody is going to take the retirement savings of a generation of Americans and bet it on the market.

That's the America that we see. That's the America we believe in. That's the choice in this election.

Now, obviously, we've been through a incredibly difficult time as a nation. I never imagined that when I walked into the White House, preventing a second depression would be at the top of my to-do list. And even though we've done that, even though the economy is growing again and we're adding private sector jobs again, there is no doubt that because the hole was so deep, progress has been painfully slow.

Millions of Americans remain unemployed. Millions more can barely pay the bills. Hundreds of thousands of families have lost their homes. And behind each of these numbers is a story of heartache and struggle, and I read about that heartache and struggle in letters that I receive every single night and whenever I'm traveling around the country.

So I know that people are frustrated and they're angry and they're anxious about the future. And I also know that in a political campaign, the easiest thing for the other side to do is to try to ride that anger and fear all the way to election day, especially when you got millions of dollars that you can burn on negative ads.

That's what's happening right now. Look, let's face it, it would be one thing if Dick's opponent and other Republican candidates had looked back on the last decade and said: "You know what, our policies really didn't work very well, did they? They kind of screwed up." And they go—they went away, they meditated. [Laughter] They contemplated. And then they

finally said: "You know, everything we did ended up in this terrible recession. Let's try something new." And they came back, and they said: "We're going to propose something different. This time we think we've got the answer."

But that's not what they're doing. They're not offering any new ideas. I would challenge anybody here to name a single new idea that they're putting forward. They don't have one. They're not offering new policies. The chair of the Republican campaign committee said that if they take over Congress, they will pursue the exact same agenda as they did before I took office. Now, keep in mind, we lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I took office. And they'd pursue what they say are the exact same policies.

So here's what it comes down to. These folks spent a decade driving our economy into a ditch. And as soon as we took office, we put on our boots. We climbed down into the ditch. It was muddy down there. [Laughter] It was dusty, bugs. [Laughter] And we're pushing on the car, and we're trying to get it out and slipping and sliding. And the whole time, the Republicans are standing there, sipping on a Slurpee—[laughter]—just watching us, saying: "You're not pushing hard enough. You're not pushing the right way."

And we tell them: "Come on down here. Help. We could use a hand." "No, that's okay." And so finally—finally—after 2 years of toil, we get this car back on the road, and we can see the way forward. And we get a tap on our shoulder, and we turn around, and it's the Republicans. [Laughter] And they say, "Can we have the keys back?" [Laughter]

No, you can't have the keys back! [Laughter] You don't know how to drive! You don't know how to drive. You can't have the keys. You don't know how to drive.

All those—it's not just them, either. All those special interests, they're all lining up—"Yes, we're going to ride shotgun." [Laughter]

We can't give them the keys back. Have you ever noticed, by the way, that if you want to go forward in a car, you put your car in "D"? [Laughter] And if you want to go backwards, you put it in "R"? [Laughter] We'd end up right

back in the ditch. It's true. You think that's a coincidence. [Laughter] It's not.

If we gave them the keys back, they've told exactly what they plan to do. They want to go back to the days when credit card companies can jack up your rates without reason and insurance companies can deny you coverage just because you got sick. They want to stand by and do nothing while States are forced to lay off teachers and firefighters and cops, because, in the words of the Republican leader of the House, those are just, quote, "government jobs," apparently not worth saving.

They want to give more tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas instead of giving them to companies that are investing here in the United States. They want to borrow \$700 billion to give a tax break worth an average of \$100,000 to every millionaire and billionaire in America.

Now, these are the people who lecture us on fiscal responsibility, the same people who refused to pay for two wars, two tax cuts for some of the wealthiest Americans, and left me a—as a welcoming present—a \$1.3 trillion deficit when I took office. And now they want to spend another \$700 billion that 98 percent of Americans will never see.

That's their agenda. That's the sum total of their agenda. That's what they're offering the American people, a future that looks just like the past, one where special interests get free rein to play by their own rules and where middle class families are left to fend for themselves.

Now, that's not a future I accept for the United States of America. That is not a future that Dick Blumenthal accepts for the United States of America.

This is a tough election season. People are hurting, and they are understandably frustrated. And a lot of them are scared, and a lot of them are anxious. And that means that even when people don't have ideas, if they've got enough money behind them, they may be able to convince some folks that, you know what, just cast a protest vote, throw the bums out. That's a mentality that has an appeal. And you can't blame folks for feeling that way sometime. But that's not a future for our country, a country that's

more divided, that's more unequal, that's less dynamic, where we're falling behind in everything from investment in infrastructure to investment in R&D. That's not a vision for the future.

And if that's not a future you accept for this Nation, if that's not the future you want for your kids and for your grandkids, then we are asking you for help in this election.

Because if you don't think the stakes are large—and I want you to consider this—right now, all across the country, special interests are planning and running millions of dollars of attack ads against Democratic candidates. Because last year, there was a Supreme Court decision called *Citizens United*. They're allowed to spend as much as they want without ever revealing who's paying for the ads. That's exactly what they're doing—millions of dollars. And the groups are benign sounding: Americans for Prosperity. Who's against that? [Laughter] Or Committee for Truth in Politics. Or Americans for Apple Pie, Moms for Motherhood—I made those last two up. [Laughter]

None of them will disclose who's paying for these ads. You don't know if it's a Wall Street bank. You don't know if it's a big oil company. You don't know if it's an insurance company. You don't even know if it's a foreign-controlled entity.

In some races, they are spending more money than the candidates. Not here, because here the candidate's spending a lot of money. [Laughter]

They're spending more money than the parties. They want to take Congress back and return to the days where lobbyists wrote the laws. It is the most insidious power grab since the monopolies of the Gilded Age. That's happening right now. So there's a lot of talk about populist anger and grassroots, but that's not what's driving a lot of these elections.

We tried to fix this, but the leaders of the other party wouldn't even allow it to come up for a vote. They want to keep the public in the dark. They want to serve the special interests that served them so well over the last 19 months.

We will not let them. We are not about to allow a corporate takeover of our democracy. We're not about to go back to the days when special interests took advantage of Main Street families. We're not going to go back to the days when insurance companies wrote the rules that let you languish without health care because you had a preexisting condition. We're not going to go back to the exact same agenda we had before I took office.

A lot has changed since that last election, but what hasn't changed is the choice facing this country. It is still fear versus hope. It is still the past versus the future. It is still a choice between sliding backwards and moving forward. That is what this election's about. That's the choice you will face in November.

So I need you to knock on some doors for Dick Blumenthal. I need you to talk to your neighbors about Dick Blumenthal. I need you to make phone calls for Dick Blumenthal. We need you to write some more checks for Dick Blumenthal. We need you to do this for candi-

dates all across the country, because the only way we'll match their millions of dollars is if we've got millions of people making their voices heard.

And none of this will be easy. It's going to be hard. But you didn't elect me to do what was easy. And you're not going to elect Dick to do what was easy. You elect us to do what is right. So help me get Dick elected. And let's keep on moving forward, Connecticut.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at the Stamford Marriott Hotel & Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Thomaston, CT, resident Laura Austin and her son Skyler; Connecticut senatorial candidate Linda E. McMahon; Rep. Pete Sessions, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee; and House Republican Leader John A. Boehner. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Greenwich, Connecticut *September 16, 2010*

Well, listen, Richard and Ellen, I'm so grateful to you guys for opening up this extraordinary home.

And just a couple of quick acknowledgments. Obviously, we've got races all across the country that are important, but there are very few races that are more important to me than the race for U.S. Senate here, and Dick Blumenthal, I think, is just an outstanding candidate who is going to be a terrific U.S. Senator. We've got Dan Malloy, who is going to be the next Governor of Connecticut. And we've got somebody who is probably the only person who is putting in more miles than me, Tim Kaine.

It is great to be here with some new friends, but also some old friends. Richard and Ellen were some of my earliest supporters. They actually supported me when I ran for United States Senate, before people could pronounce my

name. [*Laughter*] And so for them to open up their house like this is just terrific.

I'm not going to give a long speech because I want to take the opportunity to sit with each of you and hear what you're thinking, answer your questions. But let me just say generally, we came into office back in January of 2009 at a historic time: the worst financial crisis that we've seen since the Great Depression, on the verge of a Great Depression, in the midst of two wars. And so the challenges that we've confronted over these last 2 years have been extraordinary. And we've got a long way to go. This country received a body blow, and it was already having difficulties competitively. It was already falling behind educationally. We had a health care system that was broken, a middle class that hadn't seen its incomes or wages go up at the same time as their costs were skyrocket-