

have for this country. When you hear the American people, they are so extraordinarily decent and there's a goodness at the heart of this country. That makes me confident that we will get through these times and we are going to get to where we need to go.

So thanks to all of you for helping us get to where we need to go. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:19 p.m. at the residence of Ralph and Wing Cheung de la Torre. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Setti Warren of Newton, MA.

Remarks at a Reception for Governor Theodore Strickland of Ohio in Chagrin Falls, Ohio

October 17, 2010

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. I've got a lot of thank yous. First of all, to Carole and David Carr, thank you so much for your extraordinary hospitality. Please give them a big round of applause. To John and Carolyn Climaco, who are also cohosts, thank you so much for this great event.

We're mainly here for this guy, but there are a couple other folks I want to make mention of. Yvette McGee Brown is going to be an outstanding Lieutenant Governor.

Current Lieutenant Governor, soon to be United States Senator, Lee Fisher is in the house. A champion of working people each and every day, Senator Sherrod Brown is here. He's around here somewhere. There he is, back there. He's grabbing some of the big shrimp back there. *[Laughter]*

We've got an outstanding congressional delegation, and I want every single one of them back with me: Marcia Fudge, Betty Sutton, John Bocchieri, Tim Ryan.

I love this Ohio delegation. They have the courage of their convictions. I mean, they have—they get beat up. It's tough being a Member of Congress these days. Ted remembers.

Gov. Strickland. Right.

The President. And yet day in, day out, they consistently think what's best for the country, not what's best for my reelection—until 2 weeks before the reelection. *[Laughter]*

So right now I want to make sure everybody else is thinking about putting them back where they belong, in Congress.

I want to say a little something about Michelle. It is not true that more importantly I'm President of the United States. More importantly, I am Michelle Obama's husband and Malia and Sasha's father. And Michelle has put up with me through thick and thin, and I am grateful for her each and every day.

And it's fun having her along on this road trip. *[Laughter]* Usually, I'm all by myself, listening to my iPod. We had a wonderful conversation on the way here, and she was telling me what I should do. *[Laughter]* It's true. *[Applause]* It's true. You think I'm joking; I'm not. *[Laughter]* I have witnesses.

It is great to be back in Ohio, and it is great to be back in the Cleveland area. And it's a great honor to be helping somebody who I truly believe is one of the best Governors in this country, Ted Strickland. I truly believe that. They believe it too. *[Applause]* They believe it too. They believe it too.

Now, we all understand Ted took office during an enormously difficult time for Ohio. It was difficult even before this terrible financial crisis struck. Ohio had been hit harder than most States by the loss of manufacturing, jobs moving overseas. And then when the recession hit in 2007, 2008, times got even tougher. But from the day that he took office, Ted hasn't wasted a minute in fighting to make sure that he turned this economy around. Under Ted's watch, Ohio has invested in high-growth industries and new infrastructure. You've provided job training and new skills to more than 150,000 workers. There are over 65,000 more students in college today in Ohio because of the steps that Ted has taken.

He's cut redtape. He's kept taxes low so that businesses locate here in Ohio. And he's a fighter. He hasn't just been concerned about the next election, he's been thinking about the next generation. And his work is not yet done.

So I implore you to do everything you can over these final 2 weeks to make sure that we've got Ted Strickland in for another 4 years. It is absolutely critical. [Applause] It is absolutely critical.

When you have somebody of high character, who hasn't forgotten where he comes from and understands the essence of the American Dream, you make sure that guy gets back into office. And that requires work, because there is a lot of money being spent on the other side to try to defeat Ted. And there are a lot of special interests who would be more than happy to replace him. And the way we make up for that is by effort, by knocking on doors and making phone calls and talking to friends and talking to neighbors.

And I know everybody here has contributed to Ted's campaign. Go out and rustle up some more, because he's going to need some help in these last 2 weeks.

Now, I want to just speak a little bit about the broader political context, because obviously, this is a tough time for Democrats here in Ohio, but it's a tough time all across the country. We have gone through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And so when times are that difficult, elections are going to be difficult, and understandably so.

You know, the 6 months before I took office, we lost 4 million jobs across the country—a lot of those were in Ohio—4 million jobs in the 6 months prior to me talking office. We then lost 750,000 jobs the month I was sworn in, 600,000 jobs the month after that, 600,000 jobs the month after that.

But it wasn't just the immediate crisis that has been weighing on people. It's the fact that for the previous decade, the middle class had been losing ground. That's not something I'm making up. The statistics are there, and they're clear. From 2001 to 2009, the average middle class family lost 5 percent of their income—lost 5 percent. We had the most sluggish job growth

since World War II between 2001 and 2009. Slower, by the way, than it's been over the course of this last year. At the same time, costs of everything were skyrocketing; costs of health care, costs of sending your child to college.

And so the bills were piling up for a lot of families at a time when salaries and wages weren't going up. And a lot of families just barely stayed afloat by working the extra job, maxing out on their credit cards, taking out home equity loans. And when this crisis hit, all those efforts to barely stay above water became that much more difficult.

So my first job when I got into office, my very first job and the task of all the Members of Congress here, was to stop the bleeding and to prevent this economy from plunging into a second Great Depression. And we did it. And it wasn't always popular, the decisions that we made. Those decisions weren't always popular. There were a whole bunch of folks in Washington who said let the car companies go under, regardless of the impact it would have on States like Ohio. There were a lot of folks who said we don't need to worry about unemployment insurance for folks who had been laid off and were now experiencing long-term unemployment. There were a whole lot of arguments about doing nothing. And we said that's not an option, we can't play politics here.

And so we stood up. All these Members of Congress here stood up. Ted Strickland stood up. And we gave it everything we had. And as a consequence, an economy that was contracting is now growing again. An economy that was shedding millions of jobs, we've seen 9 consecutive months of private sector job growth—9 consecutive months.

But we've still got a lot of work to do. And part of what's so challenging is when I was first sworn in, the hope was that we'd have partners on the other side of the aisle that, despite some philosophical disagreements, would recognize the critical challenges we were facing and would decide, at least for a while, to put politics aside. That was our hope. Because although we are proud Democrats, we are prouder to be American, and we understood that everybody

had to join together—[*applause*]—that everybody had to join together to make a difference.

Unfortunately, the Republican leaders in Washington and some of the Republican leaders in Ohio, they made a different decision. They were focused on the election. And they said to themselves, you know what, we screwed up so bad, the economy is in such a mess, that it's probably going to take a while to fully recover. And so rather than roll up our sleeves and help, we're going to be better off standing on the sidelines and letting the Democrats deal with these problems. Because people are going to be angry, and people are going to be frustrated. People are going to be disheartened. And if things aren't working, then it's Democrats who will end up suffering the political consequences.

That was the decision they made. That's not the decision Ted Strickland made. That's not the decision I made. Because there are some things that are more important than politics. And you didn't send me to Washington, you didn't send Ted to the statehouse, to do what was easy. You sent us to do what was right. And that's what we've tried to do over these last several months: do what was right.

Now—so make no mistake, the stakes at this point could not be higher. The stakes could not be higher. The chair of the Republican campaign committee said a while back—he was asked, what exactly would you propose to do if you ended up retaking power in Washington? He said, well, we're going to pursue the exact same agenda as before Obama came into power.

And they've got the same answer here in Ohio. And we know what that philosophy is. You give tax cuts mostly to millionaires and billionaires, folks who don't need it and weren't even asking for it. You cut regulations for special interests so that the financial system is unregulated, so that those who are polluting are unregulated, so that credit card companies are unregulated or mortgage brokers are unregulated. That's the essence of their agenda. And then you cut the middle class loose. You let them fend for themselves.

You call it the ownership society, but basically, what it means is you are on your own. If you

don't have health care, tough luck, you're on your own. If you can't find a job, tough luck, you're on your own. If you're a child who showed the poor judgment of not choosing the right parents—[*laughter*—so you're born in a poor neighborhood, tough luck, pull up—pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. You're on your own.

That's the philosophy that they have been peddling for decades. And it's not as if we haven't tried it. This is not an abstract argument that I'm having with the Republicans—because we did. We tried it for 8 years. And it resulted in the worst economic crisis in our history.

And what they're counting on right now is that all of you have forgotten. They are counting on amnesia. That is the essence of their campaign strategy. They're counting on you having forgotten.

If they take over Congress, the other side has promised to roll back health care, so that insurance companies can go back to denying coverage for folks who have gotten sick. They've already said they are going to cut back education funding by 20 percent to help pay for tax cuts that would only impact the top 2 percent of the country. We want to give tax cuts to middle class folks, the 98 percent. They're holding those tax cuts hostage for the top 2 percent. And to help pay for them, they want to cut education funding by 20 percent.

They're going to be making the same choices here in Ohio if Ted Strickland doesn't get elected because we are going to be in tough fiscal times. We're going to have to make tough decisions. And we're going to have to decide what is most important. And when you hear the national Republicans say the single most important economic agenda item that they have is providing \$700 billion worth of tax cuts, an average of \$100,000 to millionaires and billionaires at the same time as we're cutting student loans for kids to go to college or help for community colleges that can help bridge people who need to upgrade their skills to find that new job for the future, that is what this election is about. That's the choice in this election.

Here's how I've been putting it as I travel around the country. The Republicans drove the

car into the ditch. And it was a pretty deep ditch. And so me and Ted and these Members of Congress, we put on our boots, and we went down into the ditch, doing the responsible thing. Let's get the car out of the ditch. And it was hot down there, muddy, bugs. [Laughter]

But we kept on pushing because we knew that that next generation of Americans is going to depend on us getting this car out of the ditch. So we push, and we push. Every once in a while we'd look up, and the Republicans would be standing there, fanning themselves, sipping on a Slurpee. [Laughter]

And every once—and we'd say, "Why don't you come down and help?" They'd say, "No, that's all right, but you're not pushing hard enough." [Laughter] "You're not pushing the right way."

That's okay. We decide we're going to push. We push, we push. Finally, we get this car up on level ground. Finally, we have this car pointing in the right direction. It's a little beat up, needs to go to the body shop, needs a tuneup. But we're moving in the right direction.

Suddenly, we get this tap on the shoulder. Who is it? It's the Republicans. They say, "Excuse me, we'd like the keys back." [Laughter] Well, you can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive! [Applause] You don't know how to drive! You can't have them back. [Applause] You can't have them back. You can't do it.

You can ride with us if you want. [Laughter] But you all have to be in the backseat. [Laughter] You've noticed when you want to go forward, what do you do with your car? You put it in "D." [Laughter] You want to go backwards you put it in "R." [Laughter] We want to go forward, Ohio. We don't want to go backwards. We've tried that. [Applause] We've tried that.

Look, Ted and I have a different idea. Maybe it has to do with our backgrounds, because neither of us were born into fame or wealth or power. We came from working people, folks who worked hard to get into the middle class. We remember the trajectory of our own families. Michelle remembers the trajectory of her family. And so we've got a different idea about how this country should be working.

We don't think that government can solve all our problems. We think government has to be lean and efficient. That's why Ted has consistently made tough decisions to streamline Ohio government, to make sure that it works. But in the words of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, who'd have a great deal of trouble getting a nomination in the Republican Party right now. [Laughter] You know that's true. [Laughter] He said that government should leave to the people—let them do what they can do best for themselves. But government should also be there to do things that the people can't do so well for themselves.

There are some things we've got to do together: build an infrastructure, investing in clean energy, making sure our kids get the education that they need. The notion that I am my brother's keeper and I am my sister's keeper and that we are going to rise or fall together, that you are not on your own, that's what we believe.

We believe in an America that rewards hard work and responsibility, but also one where we look after one another. We believe in an America that prizes innovation and ingenuity. And that's why Ted has made such a push on clean energy. That's why we're seeing advanced battery manufacturing and solar panels and wind turbines. We don't want those jobs going to Europe or Asia.

We want the new electric car. We want the solar panel. We want that built right here in the United States of America with American workers. And I know that's what our Members of Congress want as well. That's the choice in this election.

For that same reason, we do not accept the notion of cutting education spending. You think China is cutting education spending right now or South Korea or Germany? Those countries aren't playing for second place. They are playing for first. And the United States of America doesn't play for second place either. We've got to invest in our young people.

That's why with the help of these Members of Congress, we completely transformed our student loan program so we've got tens of billions of dollars more going to millions of

students all across the country so that they can afford their education. That's why we passed an American opportunity tax credit that provides up to \$10,000 for young people to go to college.

And you combined that with the efforts Ted's made at the State level. That's why Ohio has been able to move forward on the education front. And we can't start moving backwards. That's the choice that we're making in this election. That's what this election is all about.

We see an America where the middle class is growing and opportunity is shared. And the only limit to your success is how hard you're willing to try. And we believe in an America that makes sure that it treats our seniors with the dignity and the respect that they deserve, which is why when I hear some folks in the other party still talking about privatization of Social Security, we say, not on my watch, because we're not going to allow a generation's savings to go get wasted on Wall Street.

We want to make sure that insurance companies are giving you a fair deal, that if you've been paying your premiums, that they're not dropping you suddenly when you get sick, and that you can still get health insurance even if your child has a preexisting condition. And if you're a young person graduated from college, that you can stay on your parent's policy until you can finally get a job that offers health insurance.

We want to make sure that credit card companies are treating you fairly and not jacking up your rates unnecessarily. We want to make sure that mortgage brokers aren't steering you into predatory loans. We do this not because we think that government has all the answers, but rather that the free market works best when it's got some basic rules of the road and consumers are protected and you're getting a fair deal.

We're promoting fair dealing all across America, and businesses are competing based on the best product and the best service and the best price. There's nothing antibusiness about that. That's the essence of how America got built.

We want to build our infrastructure. We used to have the best infrastructure in the world. And

now suddenly, you've got countries in Asia that boast better trains and better airports. What happened? What happened to our sense of imagination, our sense of destiny?

That's what Ted and I and these Members of Congress, that's what we're fighting for. That's the choice in this election, not a small, cramped vision of what America should be, where each of us just worry about ourselves, but a big, large vision, a generous vision about what America can be. That's what's at stake in this election.

But look, I can give the most magnificent speeches, and Michelle can go travel around the country and campaign, and we can have the greatest candidates and an outstanding Governor with a great track record. None of this means anything if you don't believe, if you don't commit.

I know it's a long time since election night 2 years ago and Inauguration Day, and Beyonce singing and Bono. *[Laughter]* And everybody was having a fine old time. And because things have been so tough, because there are families out there still hanging on a thread, because you know family members who maybe are still looking for a job, because the news has been so tough, and frankly, because you have been inundated with millions of dollars of negative advertising day in, day out, I know that there are times where probably it's hard to recapture that sense of possibility.

It's hard sometimes to say, "Yes, we can." You start thinking, well, maybe, I don't know. *[Laughter]* It's not as inspiring a slogan.

But I said during the campaign, this has never been easy. This has never been easy. The idea of America has never been easy. The notion of 13 Colonies coming together and overthrowing the greatest empire in the world and then drafting a document that says we find these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, endowed with certain inalienable rights, that's hard.

And then having to overcome the stain of slavery and figuring out how we are going to get everybody included, and how are we going to give women the right to vote, and how are we going to make sure that workers aren't taken advan-

tage of? And how are we going to grow this economy so that it works for everybody? And then after two world wars and veterans coming back, how do we make sure they get an education so that they can live out this idea of America, that you can make it if you try?

Every step of the way has been hard. And if our parents and our grandparents and our great-grandparents, if they hadn't had that stick-to-it-ness, if they had just gotten disheartened because some folks got grumpy and said some mean things about them and got cynical and told them you couldn't do it, we would not be here.

And now it's our turn. So yes, it's hard. That's okay. It's supposed to be hard because nothing worthwhile is easy. Ted Strickland understands that. These Members of Congress understand that. I want all of you to understand that. I want you to knock on some doors, make some phone calls, call in some chips, get organized, get mobilized. Because if you do, we're going to reelect Ted Strickland as Governor of Ohio.

We're going to get all these Members of Congress back into Congress. I'm going to keep on working for you. I'm going to keep on fighting for you. We are going to grow this middle class, grow this economy, and make sure the American Dream is there for the next generation.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:01 p.m. at the residence of David and Carole Carr. In his remarks, he referred to John R. Climaco, founding partner, Climaco, Wilcox, Peca, Tarantino & Garofoli Co., LPA, and his wife Carolyn; Yvette McGee Brown, founder and president, Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Nationwide Children's Hospital; Rep. Pete Sessions, in his capacity as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee; and musicians Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. "Bono" Hewson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Columbus, Ohio October 17, 2010

The President. O—H!

Audience members. I—O!

The President. O—H!

Audience members. I—O!

The President. O—H!

Audience members. I—O!

The President. Oh, what do you think about Michelle Obama? [Applause] She's kind of cute, isn't she?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Yes, indeed. It is good to be back in Columbus. Thank you so much. I am so proud to be here with Governor Ted Strickland, one of the finest Governors in this country; Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher; Yvette McGee Brown; Michael Coleman; an outstanding congressional delegation—Mary Jo Kilroy, Tim Ryan, Marcia Fudge, John Boccieri; outstanding former Senator and astronaut, John Glenn; the Central State University Drumline in the

house; and my friend John Legend; and about 35,000 of my closest friends.

It is good to be here with all of you Buckeyes. Now, let me just say, I am sorry about last night. [Laughter] But one thing I know about Buckeyes is, y'all don't quit. You get up, you keep fighting, you keep believing, and that's what we need from you right now.

We need you fired up. Because in a little more than 2 weeks, you can set the direction of this State and the direction of this country for not just the next 2 years, but the next 5 years, the next 10 years, the next 20 years. Just like you did in 2008, you can defy the conventional wisdom, the kind that says you can't overcome the cynicism of our politics, you can't overcome the special interests and the big money, you can't elect a skinny guy with a funny name, Barack Obama—[laughter]—you can't tackle our biggest challenges. Everybody said, no, you can't. And in 2008, you showed them, yes, we can.