

Remarks at a Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate Mark B. Dayton in Minneapolis, Minnesota
October 23, 2010

The President. Hello, Minnesota! Hello, Gophers! Oh, it is good to be back in Minnesota! And it's an honor to be standing here next to your next Governor, Mark Dayton.

Let me just make mention of the other wonderful public servants who are here. Former Vice President Walter Mondale is in the house. Your terrific pair of Senators, Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken, are here; an outstanding congressional delegation—Keith Ellison, Betty McCollum, Jim Oberstar.

All the great candidates who are on the DFL ticket are here today, and we're thrilled to see them. And obviously, I am very honored to be here with Mark, because I served with Mark in the United States Senate. And so I know this man. And I know that he's been fighting for the people of this State his entire career. You know what kind of leader he is. You know what kind of fighter he is. Everybody else in this race might be talking about change. Here's the only candidate who can actually deliver change, who's actually delivered change before.

The only candidate who's helped grow this State's economy. The only candidate who's put people back to work. The only candidate who's saved taxpayer dollars by cutting waste and abuse. So you know Mark Dayton. He's got a track record. He's the only candidate in this race who will stand up for the middle class, who's got a plan to balance the budget without sacrificing our children's education. A candidate who has a plan to create jobs and help small-business owners grow and to thrive.

The point is, Mark Dayton has spent his life fighting for Minnesota, and now I need all of you to fight for Mark Dayton so we can keep this State moving forward.

Well, it looks like you're kind of fired up. And I need you fired up because in just 10 days, you have the chance not just to set the direction of this State, but also help to determine the direction of this country, not just for the next 2 years, but the next 5 years, the next 10 years, the next 20 years.

And just like you did in 2008, you have the chance to defy the conventional wisdom, because right now the conventional wisdom is that you can't overcome the cynicism of politics, that you can't overcome all the special interest money that Mark was talking about, that you can't tackle big challenges, that the political system just can't digest it. The same way that they said in 2008 that you can't elect a skinny guy with a funny name to the Presidency of the United States of America. And so, in 2008, you said, "Yes, we can." In 2010, you've got to say, "Yes, we can."

Audience members. Yes, we can! Yes, we can! Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can.

Look, there is no doubt that this is going to be a difficult election. And it's because we've been through an incredibly difficult time for our nation. For most of the last decade, the middle class in America was getting pounded.

I'll give you a few statistics. Between 2001 and 2009, when Republicans were in charge, the middle class saw their incomes go down by 5 percent during that period. That's not according to me; that's according to the Wall Street Journal. Between that same period we had the slowest, most sluggish job growth of any time since World War II. So this was a lost decade for middle class families. Costs of everything from health care to getting a college education were skyrocketing. Jobs were disappearing overseas. Too many parents had to say to their kids, you know, we might not be able to afford to send you to college. Too many families had to pass up going to the doctor when they got sick because they couldn't afford it, too many Americans having two, three jobs and still not being able to make ends meet.

And then all of this culminated in the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. I want everybody to think back to when I was first sworn in. We had lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I took office. We lost 750,000 the month I took

the oath, 600,000 the month after that, 600,000 more the month after that. We lost almost 8 million jobs, almost all of them lost before any of our economic policies could be put into place.

And when I arrived in Washington, my hope was that we could put politics aside for a moment to meet this once-in-a-generation challenge. My hope was we could stop the division and the bickering and the partisanship that had dominated Washington and that we could come together to solve problems, because although we are proud Democrats, we are prouder to be Americans, Minnesota. And I believe there are a lot of Republicans out there that felt the same way.

But when we got to Washington, the Republican leaders in Congress, they had a different idea. Their basic theory was they looked around and said, boy, we really made a big mess, we really screwed up. It's going to take a long time to get those 8 million jobs back. People are going to be angry and frustrated. It's better if we refuse to cooperate, we say no to everything, we try to gum up the works in Congress, and we may be able to deflect the blame come the next election. We'll just pretend like we had nothing to do it, and we'll point our fingers at the Democrats. In other words, the other side was betting on amnesia. [Laughter] They're betting that you'll forget who caused this mess in the first place.

But, Minneapolis, it is up to you to show them that you have not forgotten. It's up to you to remember that this election is a choice between the policies that got us into this mess and the policies that are leading us out of this mess. It's a choice between the past and the future, a choice between hope and fear, a choice between falling backwards and moving forwards. And I don't know about you, but I want to move forward. I don't want to go backward.

And if you don't think this is a choice, if you think somehow there's a new and improved Republican Party out there, let me be clear: The chair of the Republican campaign committee was asked, well, what are you going to do if you take over Congress? He said, we'll pursue the

exact same agenda as we did before Obama took office.

I mean, it's not as if they went off into the desert, they realized, boy, we really screwed up, and they went and meditated for a while and came up with some new ideas. All they've got is the same old stuff that they were peddling over the last decade: cut taxes mostly for millionaires and billionaires, cut rules for special interests, and then cut middle class families to fend for themselves. So if you're out of a job, tough luck, you're on your own. If you don't have health care, their philosophy says, tough luck, you are on your own. You're a young person trying to afford a college education, too bad, pull yourself up by your own bootstraps; you're on your own. This same agenda turned a record surplus into record deficits, allowed Wall Street to run wild and nearly destroyed our economy.

And I make these points not because I want to reargue the past. I just don't want to relive the past. We can't afford it. We can't afford it. We tried their way. It's not as if we didn't try it. We tried it for 8 years, and it didn't work. And you know the true sign of madness is if you do the same thing over and over again and expect a different result. We've tried what they're doing, and it didn't work. And we wouldn't get a different result if we went back to it. So we've got to move forward, not back.

I know that Al Franken talked to you a little bit about the analogy of a car being driven into the ditch, although I guess Al kind of embellished it a little bit. He said there were alligators down there—[laughter]—I didn't see the alligators. But it is true the car went into the ditch. [Laughter] And it is true that me and Al and Amy and Mark and others, we had to climb down into the ditch. And it is hot down there and dirty.

And we've been pushing that car, pushing it, pushing it, pushing it. The whole time the Republicans have been standing on the sidelines. [Laughter] They've been looking down, fanning themselves, sipping on a Slurpee—[laughter]—kicking dirt down into the ditch, kicking dirt in our faces. But we kept on pushing.

Finally we got this car up on level ground. And yes, it's a little beat up. It needs to go to the

body shop. It's got some dents. It needs a tune-up. But it's pointing in the right direction. And now we've got the Republicans tapping us on the shoulder, saying, we want the keys back.

You can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive. You can ride with us if you want, but you got to sit in the backseat. [Laughter] We're going to put middle class America in the front seat. We're looking out for them.

I mean, you have noticed, when you want to go forward, what do you do with your car? You put it in "D." If you want to go backwards, what do you do? You put it in "R." [Laughter] I don't want to go backwards. I'm going forwards, with all of you.

Minnesota, because of the steps we've taken, we no longer face the possibility of a second depression. The economy is growing again. We've seen 9 straight months of private sector job growth. But we've still got a long way to go. There are a lot of folks hurting out there, a lot of people hanging by a thread. There's still families who have members who are desperate for a job. There are still a lot of folks who are still worried about losing their home. That's what keeps me up at night. That's what keeps Mark up at night. That's what keeps us fighting.

Because we've got a different idea about what the future should hold for America, and it's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built. We understand government can't solve every problem. We know government has to be lean and mean. We know that everybody who pays taxes expects efficiency. They don't want to see their tax dollars wasted.

But in the words of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln—who, by the way, could not win the nomination of the Republican Party these days—[laughter]—we also believe that a government should do for the people what they cannot do better for themselves. We believe in an America that rewards hard work and responsibility and individual initiative, but also an America that invests in its people and its future, an America that invests in the education of our children, in the skills of our workers. We believe in an America in which we look after one another, where I say, I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. That's our vi-

sion. That's the America that I believe in and that Mark believes in and that you believe in. That's the choice in this election.

If you give the other side the keys, the other side will keep giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas. Mark and I, we want to give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in Minnesota, right here in the United States, in small businesses and American manufacturers. We want to invest in clean energy companies, because I don't want solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars built in Europe or built in Asia. I want them built right here in America, with American workers. That's the choice in this election.

If we give them the keys, here's their big economic idea. This is their big job plan, is to cut taxes for the top 2 percent. It will cost \$700 billion. It will be an average \$100,000 check for millionaires and billionaires; 98 percent of folks would not see any of this money from this tax break. And to pay for it we'd have to borrow money from China. Oh, and by the way, we'd also have to cut education spending by 20 percent.

Now, why on Earth do we think that would be good for our future? Do you think that China is cutting education spending by 20 percent?

Audience members. No!

The President. Is South Korea or India or Germany, are they cutting education by 20 percent?

Audience members. No!

The President. They're not playing for second place. They understand that our competitiveness will be determined by how well we educate our workers for tomorrow. And America doesn't play for second place either. We play for first place.

That's why Amy, that's why Al, that's why we worked together—Keith, Patty—that's why we came together to make sure that we took tens of billions of dollars that were going to banks in unwarranted subsidies, and we sent that money where it should be going, to you. We are financing millions of young people's college educations more effectively now: higher Pell grants, better student loans, a \$10,000 tax credit for every young person going to college. Those are

the kinds of choices we're making. And that's the choice in this election.

That's why, when it comes to tax cuts, we gave 95 percent of working families a tax cut. We gave the tax cuts to families that needed them, not folks who didn't need them, because we know you're the ones that need relief. That's the choice in this election.

We give the other side the keys back and they, I promise you, will have those special interests sitting shotgun. The chair of one of the other party's committees has already promised that one of the first orders of business is to repeal Wall Street reform. Now, think about this. We just had the worst financial crisis since the 1930s, and one of their orders of business would be to eliminate protections for consumers, eliminate protections for taxpayers, go back to a system that resulted in us having to save the entire economy and take these drastic measures.

Why would we do that? Why would we do that? Why would we go back to the point where credit card companies could jack up your interest rates without any notice and could institute hidden fees? Why would we go back to the health care policies that they believe in, where insurance companies could drop your insurance when you get sick? Why would we do—why would we put those folks back in the driver's seat?

Let me tell you about health care reform. Because of health care reform, everybody here who is under 26 can stay on their parents' health care even if they don't have health insurance. Because of that reform, insurance companies can't drop somebody because they've got a pre-existing condition. Because of health care reform, millions of small businesses are getting tax credits so they can afford to provide health insurance to their employees. That is their agenda, to repeal that?

Let me tell you something. We believe in making sure people don't get ripped off when they sign up for a mortgage. We believe in making sure that credit card companies treat you fairly. We believe taxpayers shouldn't ever be forced to pay for Wall Street's mistakes. We believe that insurance companies should cover you when you've been paying your premiums.

That's what we believe. That's the choice in this election. That's why you've got to elect Mark Dayton Governor, because he believes it too.

Whether you care about protecting Social Security or you care about protecting our environment, whether you care about having an energy policy that can start freeing ourselves from dependence on foreign oil or you believe in a foreign policy that fosters cooperation among other nations, there is a choice in this election. We know what we're fighting for.

But right now the same special interests that we've battled on your behalf, they're fighting back hard. Mark mentioned that they are spending millions of dollars. They want to roll back the clock. And they are pouring millions of dollars through a network of phony front groups, flooding the airwaves with misleading attack ads, smearing fine public servants like Mark.

And thanks to a gigantic loophole, these special interests can spend unlimited amounts without even disclosing where the money is coming from. We don't know where it's coming from. We don't know if it's from the oil industry. We don't know if it's from banks. We don't know if it's insurance companies. Could be coming overseas; we don't know. They won't tell you. They don't want you to know. They won't stand behind what they do. This isn't just a threat to Democrats. This is a threat to our democracy.

Minnesota has always had a tradition of clean, fair elections, a tradition of good government, and the only way to uphold that tradition, the only way to match their millions of dollars is with millions of voices, millions of voices who are ready to finish what we started in 2008.

And that's where all of you come in. That's why all of you have got to get out, all of you have to vote. If you are not registered to vote yet, you can walk in right now, you can register anytime between now and election day. There is no excuse. Because if everybody who fought for change in 2008 votes in 2010, then Mark will win his election.

A lot of you got involved in 2008 because you believed we were at a defining moment; that it was a time when the decisions we make now

would have an impact across the decades, would impact our children and our grandchildren for decades to come. That's the reason you knocked on doors and you made phone calls and you—some of you cast your vote for the very first time—because you believed that in America, citizens who want to make their country better can make a difference.

And you know what, I told you then—2 years ago I told you that change is not easy; power does not give up without a fight. And I understand that some of you since election night and Inauguration Day—when it was a lot of fun; Beyonce was singing and Bono, and everybody had their “Hope” posters, and everything looked like it might be easy. And I warned folks then, this won't be easy. Power concedes nothing without a fight.

And so for the last 2 years, we have been grinding it out. We passed health care reform, but it was a hard fight. We passed Wall Street reform, but it was a hard fight. And now maybe some people are feeling discouraged, thinking, boy, this is harder than I expected. And maybe all that work that I did in 2008, maybe it didn't make as much of a difference as I had hoped.

But I want everybody here to understand: Don't let anybody tell you that what you did has not made a difference, that the fight isn't worth it. Because of you—because of you—there's somebody in Minnesota right now that, instead of going bankrupt, is able to get treatment for their cancer. Because of you, there's a young person who's going to be able to go to college. Because of you, some small business has stayed open in the depths of a recession. Because of you, there are 100,000 brave young men and women who we've brought home from Iraq. Because of you—because of you.

So don't let them tell you that change isn't possible. It's just hard, that's all. And that's okay. We've got to earn it. We're just in the first quarter. We've got a lot more quarters to play.

You know, this country was founded on a tough, difficult idea. Thirteen Colonies deciding to break off from the most powerful empire on Earth, and then drafting a document, a Declaration of Independence that embodied ideas that had never been tried before: “We hold

these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” That's not an easy idea. And it had to be fought for, inch by inch, year by year.

Slowly, slaves were freed. Slowly, women got the right to vote. Slowly, workers got the right to organize.

Imagine if our grandparents and our great-grandparents and our great-great-grandparents had said, oh, this is too hard. Folks are saying mean things about us. I'm not sure if we can ever get to the Promised Land. We wouldn't be here today. But they understood that we are tested when we stand up in the face of difficulty, when we stand up in the face of uncertainty, when we're unafraid to push forward. Because we know we're doing it not just for ourselves, but for future generations.

That's how we came through war and depression. That's why we have civil rights and women's rights and workers' rights. That's why we've been able to clean up our air and clean up our water. That's why we've been able to end combat operations in one war.

The journey we began together was never about putting me in the White House; it was about building a movement for change that endures. It's about understanding that in America anything is possible if we're willing to work for it and fight for it and, most of all, believe in it.

So I need you to keep fighting. I need you to keep working. And I need you to keep believing. And if you knock on some doors again, if you make some phone calls again, if you talk to your neighbors again, if you go to vote again, then I promise you we won't just win this election, we won't just have Mark as Governor, but you and I together, we are going to restore the American Dream for future generations.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:42 p.m. at the University of Minnesota. In his remarks, he referred to musicians Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. “Bono” Hewson.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Minneapolis
October 23, 2010

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat, have a seat. You're going to make me blush. [Laughter] I am thrilled to see all of you here today. And let me, first of all, say that Minnesota has one of the finest congressional delegations of any in the country. I am grateful to your two wonderful Senators who I've gotten a chance to know over the last several years: Amy Klobuchar, who I served with—hey, Amy, how are you? And Al Franken, who we were very happy to see arrive in Washington. The outstanding Members of the House—Keith Ellison, Betty McCollum, Jim Oberstar, and Tim Walz—all who are here; we're thrilled to have them.

The great congressional candidates who are with us here today, we are proud of you. And Mark Dayton, who I had a chance to serve with as Senator. He was dedicated, he had a heart as big as this room, and he is going to be just an outstanding Governor for this State. So we are proud of you.

And what can I say about Nancy Pelosi, who will go down in history as one of the finest Speakers in the history of the United States of America? She is—Nancy is just so elegant and beautiful, and people just don't realize she is tough. [Laughter] She is tough. And she has to be tough, because we are in a very difficult political cycle.

And so I just want to give you a sense of—oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know you were here—a guy who has his own tough job—Chris Van Hollen, the head of the DCCC, who's doing great work each and every day. Almost missed Chris. Chris is working like a dog, so I want to make sure everybody knows what wonderful work he's doing.

Chris will tell you this is a difficult political environment we're in right now. And it's because we've gone through as tough a couple of years as this country has ever seen, certainly the toughest couple years since the 1930s. And Nancy alluded to it, but just to give people a sense of perspective here: We lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I was sworn in, 4 million

jobs in the 6 months before I was sworn in. We lost 750,000 jobs the month I was sworn in, 600,000 the month after that, 600,000 the month after that. Almost all of the 8 million jobs that would ultimately be lost during this recession were lost before any of the Democrats' economic policies were able to be put into place. Before the Recovery Act could really take root, before some of the other steps that we took in terms of small-business loans, tax cuts, could take seed.

And so we saw a massive hole. And that in and of itself would be sufficient to make this a difficult political environment, but what makes it worse is that crisis was really a culmination of what some have called the lost decade. Between 2001 and 2009, we had the slowest job growth in any time since World War II. Between 2001 and 2009, we actually saw the middle class lose 5 percent of their income—5 percent of their income. This is at a time when the costs of health care, the costs of a college education were all skyrocketing. People were watching manufacturing ship out to other countries.

And so you had a sense already, before the crisis on Wall Street, that we had not prepared ourselves for the future; that we had left too many challenges untended to; that our politics in Washington had become simply a mechanism for special interests to advance their narrow causes, but that we had lost the capacity to do big things and to finally tackle some of those structural issues that were impeding us from creating the kind of future that we want for our children and our grandchildren.

So we had a big job when we first came in. And our first job was obviously to stop the bleeding, and we did that. An economy that was shrinking is now growing again. An economy that was shedding hundreds of thousands of jobs every month, we've now seen 9 months of consecutive job growth in the public sector—in the private sector. That's in addition to all the jobs that we've saved for teachers and firefighters and social workers and police