

Oct. 25 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2010

So that's what we're working for. That's the guiding principle behind all of my administration's activities, is how do we make sure that the economy is growing and that the middle class is growing, because that's the beating heart of this economy. What you do here is a great example of what we've got to be able to do all across this country.

We're proud of you, and I thank you so much for letting us join you here today and seeing the

wonderful success that you've been able to accomplish.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:53 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mark J. Krauss, president, and Raymond J. Velino, general manager, American Cord & Webbing Co., Inc.; and Helene Krauss, wife of Mr. Krauss, and their children Bari, Sloane, Jordan, and Alex Krauss.

## Statement on National Work and Family Month October 25, 2010

National Work and Family Month serves as a reminder to all of us, especially working caregivers, their families, and their employers, that while we have made great strides as a nation to adopt more flexible policies in the workplace, there's more we can do. Millions of Americans continue to struggle day in and day out to balance work and family life, to juggle their job responsibilities with caring for a child, an elderly relative, or a loved one with a disability. This is something Michelle and I understand; it wasn't too long ago that we were both working full-time outside the home while raising two young daughters.

There are steps we can all take to help—implementing practices like telework, paid leave, and alternative work schedules—and my administration is committed to doing its part to help advance these practices across the country. And within the Federal Government, we have followed the lead of many private sector companies when it comes to increasing workplace flexibility. Because at the end of the day, attracting and retaining employees who are more productive and engaged through flexible workplace policies is not just good for business or for our economy, it's good for our families and our future.

## Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Reception in Providence, Rhode Island October 25, 2010

*The President.* Hello, Rhode Island! Thank you so much. Thank you. Are you fired up?

*Audience members.* Wool!

*The President.* It is good to be back in Rhode Island. It is good to be here for an outstanding soon-to-be Member of Congress, Dave Cicil-line.

Now, you already have some great Members of Congress, and so I just want to make quick mention of them. Your senior Senator, one of the finest Senators that I know, Jack Reed is in the house; his great partner, junior Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. A dear friend, Patrick Kennedy, is here. Outstanding legislator Jim Langevin is here. And somebody who's working

so hard to maintain a Democratic majority across the country, the head of the DCCC, Chris Van Hollen, is here. Thank you, Chris. And all of you are here. And I'm really happy about that.

Now, Providence, 1 week from tomorrow, you have the chance to set the direction not just for this State, but for this country, not just for the next 2 years, but for the next two decades. And just like you did in 2008, you have the chance to defy the conventional wisdom.

Now, you remember in 2008, everybody looks back and says, oh, that was easy. No, it wasn't easy. [*Laughter*] In retrospect it looked easy. But at the time, everybody said, you can't

overcome the cynicism in our politics. You can't overcome all the special interest money. You can't take on the biggest challenges that we face. You certainly can't elect a skinny guy named Barack Obama. And you said, "Yes, we can." And a week from tomorrow, we have a chance to say "Yes, we can" again. We've got a chance to say "Yes, we can" again.

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

*The President.* Yes, we can! [Laughter]

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

*The President.* Look, there is no doubt that this is going to be a difficult election. I'm confident that David is going to win. I feel good about it.

But look, this is going to be a difficult election because we've been through an incredibly difficult time as a nation. For most of the last decade, middle class families have just barely been treading water.

I want to give you a couple of statistics. Between 2001 and 2009, we had the slowest job growth of any time since World War II. In fact, job growth was slower during those 8 years than it has been over the last year.

Between that same period, 2001 to 2009, middle class families, on average, lost 5 percent of their income. Think about that. This is at a time when health care costs skyrocketed, college tuition off the charts, more jobs being shipped overseas, families just barely keeping up, working two jobs, three jobs to pay the mortgage, to pay the bills. Too many parents were saying to their kids, I'm not sure we can afford college; too many families saying, we can't afford to see a doctor when we get sick. It's just too expensive.

And then all these problems that had been building up for a decade culminated in the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. In the 6 months before I took office, we lost 4 million jobs in America—in 6 months. We lost 750,000 the month I took office, 600,000 the month after that, 600,000 the month after that. We lost almost 8 million jobs before any of the economic policies the Democrats had a chance to put

into place could take effect—almost 8 million jobs.

Now, our hope was that because of the magnitude of the crisis, that me and Jack and Sheldon, Jim, others, Patrick—our hope was that finally we'd be able to come together with the Republicans and start solving problems instead of playing politics. We figured this is a once-in-a-generation challenge, and so let's see if we can put the bickering aside and the gamesmanship that had dominated Washington for way too long, because, although we're proud to be Democrats, we are prouder to be Americans.

And there are a lot of Republicans that, I think, felt the same way. But Republican leaders in Congress, they made a different decision. Their basic strategy was, you know what, we really screwed up. This is such a big mess. We've lost so many jobs. The economy is so bad that it's going to take a while to fix all these problems. And if we're there helping, then, gosh, who knows, they might realize that we're to blame. So we're better off just standing on the sidelines and saying no to everything. And people are going to get angry and frustrated. And they may forget that, in fact, we were the folks in power when this crisis occurred. And we'll be able to point our fingers and pretend we had nothing to do with it.

That was their tactic. That was their strategy. In other words, their main electoral strategy, their political strategy was amnesia. [Laughter] They are banking on you forgetting who caused this mess in the first place. But, Providence, it is up to you to let them know we have not forgotten. We have not forgotten.

We have not forgotten, and it's up to you to remember that this is a choice in the election between the politics that got us into this mess and the politics that are getting us out: between hope and fear, between the past and the future, between moving forward and moving backwards. And I don't know about you, but I want to move forward. David, I want to move forward. I want to move forward.

Look, if they win this election, the chair of the Republican campaign committee has already promised to pursue—and I'm quoting

here—"the exact same agenda" as they pursued before I took office.

And we know what that agenda is. It does have the virtue of simplicity. [Laughter] You cut taxes, mostly for millionaires and billionaires, you cut rules for special interests, and then you cut middle class families to fend for themselves.

So if you're a family that doesn't have health care, tough luck, you're on your own. If you're a young person who can't afford to go to college, too bad, you're on your own. If you've lost your job, you need a little help with unemployment insurance, you need a little help with some job training, tough luck, you're on your own.

And this is all done under the guise, under the banner of fiscal conservatism, except it turns out that this same agenda turned record surpluses under a Democratic President and converted them into record deficits that allowed Wall Street to run wild that nearly destroyed our economy.

Now, I bring all this up not because I want to reargue the past. I bring it up because I don't want to relive the past. It's not as if, Providence, we haven't tried what they're peddling. We tried it for 8 years. It didn't work. We can't go back.

*Audience member.* We can't go back. [Laughter]

*The President.* We can't go back. Look, I've been using this analogy as I travel the country. Imagine the Republicans driving the economy into a ditch. And it's a deep ditch. It's a big ditch. And somehow they walked away from the accident, and we put on our boots and we rappelled down into the ditch—me and Jack and Sheldon and Jim and Patrick. We've been pushing, pushing, trying to get that car out of the ditch.

And meanwhile, the Republicans are standing there, sipping on a Slurpee—[laughter]—fanning themselves. We're hot and sweaty and pushing, and they're kicking dirt into the ditch—[laughter]—getting it into our faces. But that's okay. We said—every once in a while we'd ask them, do you want to come down and help? They'd say, no, but you're not pushing the right way though; push harder.

Finally, we get this car out of the ditch, and it's banged up. It needs some bodywork, needs a tuneup. But it's pointing in the right direction. The engine is turning and it's ready to go. And we suddenly get this tap on our shoulders. We look back, who is it? The Republicans. And they're saying, excuse me, we want the keys back. You can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive! You can't have them back; can't do it. Not after we've worked this hard.

We can't have special interests sitting shotgun. [Laughter] You know, we got to have middle class families up in front. We can't—we don't mind the Republicans joining us. They can come for the ride, but they got to sit in back. [Laughter]

Look, these 2 years have been incredibly difficult. And not every decision we've made has always been popular, but they've been the right things to do, because you sent me there not to do what was easy, but do what was right. That's why you sent me there.

And 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 private sector job growth for 9 months in a row. I just had a chance to visit with some of the elected officials at a wonderful small business here that is representative of small businesses all across the country. They survived the recession, and they're now ready to grow and expand.

And we've passed tax cuts and provided them additional financing so they can hire more workers. But you know what? We've still got a long way to go. We know we do. There are a lot of people hurting out there. There are a lot of folks who have been looking for work for months and still can't find it, a lot of families still hanging on by a thread.

That's what keeps me up at night. That's what keeps David up at night. That's what we're focused on, because we've got a different idea about what the future should look like. And it's an idea rooted in our own families, our own backgrounds, about our understanding about how this country was built.

I didn't come from money. I didn't have a famous, well-connected family. And I was raised by my parents to believe—and my grandparents

to believe in self-reliance. We know government doesn't have all the answers to our problems. We know our young people—if our schools are going to succeed—our young people have to work hard in school. Parents have to do a good job parenting.

We believe government should be lean and efficient and that each of us should take responsibility for contributing to our community. 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 better for themselves.

So we believe in hard work and responsibility and individual initiative. But we also believe in an America that invests in its future, invests in its people, in the education of our children, in the skills of our workers.

We believe in a country where we look out for one another, where I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. That's the America I know. That's the choice in this election. That's the choice in this election.

If we give the other side the keys to the car, you know what they're going to do? They're going to keep on giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas. I believe in tax breaks for companies like the one that I just visited, companies that are investing here in the United States, small businesses, American manufacturers, clean energy companies.

I don't want solar panels and electric cars made in Europe or Asia. I want them made right here in the United States with American workers. That's the choice in this election.

I think a lot of Americans right now, what they're asking—they're seeing all the negative ads on TV. What they really want to know is, what's your plan to move America forward; what's your plan to put people back to work?

And we've put forward plans to rebuild our infrastructure. We used to have the best infrastructure in the world. But we don't now. We've got to invest in that. We've got to invest in research and development. We want to make sure that we're giving incentives to companies to push their investments forward into next year so that we can jump-start the economy and help move it forward. Very concrete plans about how

we're going to invest in education so every one of our young people have the skills to compete in this new global economy.

You know what the other side's big idea is? And I'm not exaggerating, they've got one idea. And their idea is to cut taxes for the top 2 percent wealthiest Americans—would mean an average \$100,000 check to millionaires and billionaires; it would cost \$700 billion that we do not have. We'd have to borrow it from China. And when you ask them, "Well, how else are you going to pay for it other than just borrowing?" they say, "Well, we'll cut some programs." It turns out part of what they're proposing is a cut of 20 percent in our education budget.

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Now, think about this. Do you think, at a time when education will probably make more of a difference in terms of how well our economy performs than any other single indicator, that we should be cutting education by 20 percent? Do you think China is cutting it by 20 percent? You think Germany and South Korea are cutting education by 20 percent? Of course not, because they're not playing for second place. They're playing for first place. And we need to play for first place. That's what we do in the United States of America.

That's why, with the help of a Democratic Congress, we took tens of billions of dollars that were being put into unwarranted subsidies for banks in the student loan program. We said, let's not do that. Let's have the money go where it belongs, to the students. And we now have millions more young people who are able to get student loans and Pell grants, higher levels of grants, a \$10,000 tuition relief credit for each student. That's our agenda for economic growth. That's what's going to make a difference.

That's why when we talk about tax cuts, we want to give permanent tax relief to middle class families. They need the relief. That's the choice in this election.

Look—and let me just say, they've already said, the other side has already said, we're going to roll back regulations and put special interests back in charge in Washington. This is not me making it up. The person who would take over

the energy committee in the House of Representatives is the guy who apologized to BP when we said, you've got to pay for all the small businesses and families that have been—and fishermen that have been hurt by the oil spill.

That's the head of the energy company [committee]. Another one of their members has already promised that one of their first orders of business would be to repeal Wall Street reform. Now, we just went through the worst financial crisis in our history, and we finally now have some rules of the road that are going to say no taxpayer bailouts; you got to have higher capital requirements. We're going to make sure that we've got tough overseers that protect consumers from everything from predatory mortgages to unwarranted credit card fees. And their main agenda is rolling these rules back? Why? Why would we do that?

We can't let that happen, Providence. Look, we believe in making sure that people don't get ripped off when they sign up for a mortgage. We believe credit card companies shouldn't be able to jack up your rates without notice. We believe that insurance companies, if you're paying your premiums, they actually have to pay when you get sick. They can't drop your health insurance when you get sick.

We think it's a good idea that young people should be able to stay on their parents' health insurance until they're 26 years old. We think it's a good idea that senior citizens see that doughnut hole closed so that they can actually afford their prescription drug coverage. Those are ideas that we believe can move America forward.

That's the choice in this election. We believe Social Security should never be privatized, not as long as I'm President. We're not going to take the retirement savings of a generation of Americans and hand it over to Wall Street. That's the choice in the election. That's what we're fighting for.

But understand, the other side is fighting back. The same special interests we've been battling on your behalf over the last 2 years, they are fighting back hard. And they are now

using these phony front groups to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars in negative ads all across the country, distorting the records of Democrats. And you know what? They are not even willing to disclose where the money is coming from. You don't know. Could be from insurance companies, could be from oil companies, could be from Wall Street banks. You don't know.

This is all the consequence of a Supreme Court decision, so don't let anybody tell you that the Supreme Court doesn't matter. That's why I put Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan there. We need to have some Supreme Court Justices who are looking out for you.

But because of this campaign finance loophole, you've got hundreds of billions of dollars. It's not just a threat to Democrats. It's a threat to our democracy. I mean, imagine if you can—if special interests can just spend as much money as they want and you don't know who they are. They've got these innocent sounding names: Americans for Prosperity or Moms for Motherhood. [Laughter] No, I made the last one up. [Laughter] But you don't know.

And that cheapens our discourse. It hurts our democracy. And there's only one way to fight back against those millions of dollars, and that's with the millions of voices of people like you. It's all of you saying—[applause]—it's all of you being willing to finish what we started in 2008.

I've got to have you come out in droves and vote in this election. You've got to come out and vote. And look, if everybody who voted in 2008 votes in 2010, we are confident we will win this election.

And a lot of you—[applause]—a lot of you got involved in 2008, some of you for the very first time, because you understood that we're at a crossroads in our history, that the decisions we make now don't just affect us, they affect our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. That's why some of you knocked on doors. That's why some of you made phone calls. That's why many of you stood in line to cast your ballots.

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\* White House correction.

And it turns out, you know what, actually delivering change is very hard. I warned you. [Laughter] I said it was going to be hard. And so over the last 2 years, we've been grinding it out. And sometimes I know it gets frustrating. Some of you may get discouraged. You say, gosh, we have these bigger majorities, and things are being filibustered, and there's all this nastiness on TV. And maybe you just can't change politics.

But I want everybody to understand we're just in the first quarter. We got a whole game to play. We've got a whole game to play. We've got a whole game to play.

And I want everybody here to understand that because I've had good teammates, like the folks you sent here from Rhode Island, we have made a huge difference. Don't let anybody tell you we haven't made a difference.

Because of you, there's somebody here in Rhode Island somewhere who is going to be able to get their treatment for cancer without having to give up their house or go bankrupt. Because of you, there are folks—small businesses right here in New Hampshire—who are able to keep their doors open in the depths of recession.

Because of you, there are young people right here in Rhode Island who are going to be able to go to college and otherwise couldn't go to college. Because of you, there are 100,000 young men and women who are returning home from Iraq—because of you. Because of the things that you did in 2008, we have made huge changes.

So don't let people tell you you're not making a difference. Yes, it's hard. But it's always been

hard. The history of America has been hard, starting with a revolution to found this country. The idea of America is hard, based on a document and ideas that had never been tried before: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

That's a hard idea. And we had to overcome slavery. We had to fight for women's rights. And we had to fight for workers' rights. But each successive generation hasn't shied away just because it's hard. We kept on going. We kept moving forward.

And that's why we're here today. And we want 20 years from now, 30 years from now, 100 years ago—100 years from now, we want people to be able to look back and say, you know what, this generation did the same thing. That same spirit that got us through war and depression, that helped to perfect this Union, that same spirit is alive and well in 2010.

That's what I need all of you to show me. And if you do, I promise you David is going to Congress. And we will continue to help rebuild the American Dream for all people.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:03 p.m. at the Rhode Island Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor David N. Cicilline of Providence, RI.

## Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Providence

October 25, 2010

*The President.* Thank you so much. I was back in the kitchen making sure everything was going okay. [Laughter] It smells really good.

So first of all, I just want to thank Johnnie and Buff and the whole Chace family for opening up this spectacular home. And we are so grateful for your hospitality.

I want to make sure to recognize a couple of folks that are here. Obviously, Chris Van Hollen, this guy is the hardest working man in politics right now. [Laughter] He is having to run around all across the country, working so hard on our behalf. And we are really proud of what he's accomplished against daunting odds. I