

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. Nobody was sure whether it was going to work.

We had to overcome slavery. And folks had to work for women’s suffrage. They had to work and fight for workers’ rights. Then they had to struggle some more to make sure that fascism was defeated and a depression was overcome.

And at each and every junction, success wasn’t guaranteed. And there were setbacks. And there were people who said, maybe this won’t work. There were naysayers.

Imagine if our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents had listened to the cynics 50 years ago or a hundred years ago or 200 years ago. We wouldn’t be here today.

The only reason we are here is because they faced down their doubts. They faced down their fears. They pushed forward in the face of difficulty. They pushed forward in the face of uncertainty. That’s why we came through war and depression and why we have civil rights and women’s rights and workers’ rights.

That’s why, because we have veterans who are willing to fight for what they believed in. We need that spirit today. We need that spirit today. I need that here in Connecticut, Bridgeport.

I promise you—and I promise you this: If you bring that spirit over the next few days, if you are knocking on doors, if you are making phone calls, if you’re going to barbershops and the beauty shops and talking to your friends and talking to your neighbors, if all the young people who came out in 2008 say “Yes, we can” again, I promise you, we will not just win an election. We are going to restore this economy. We are going to rebuild our middle class. We are going to deliver the American Dream to the next generation and the generation after that and the generation after that, all the way into the distant future.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:19 p.m. in the Arena at Harbor Yard. In his remarks, he referred to House Republican Leader John A. Boehner; Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell; and musicians Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. “Bono” Hewson.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Chicago, Illinois October 30, 2010

The President. Hello, Chicago! It’s good to be home. It is good to be home. You all organized some good weather for me too. Thank you.

I should mention to the national press that the weather’s not always like this—[*laughter*]—in late October, early November. But it is a spectacular night, and you guys look beautiful. Thank you so much. Thank you.

I want to make sure that everybody knows the outstanding elected officials who are here. First of all, the current Governor and the next Governor of the great State of Illinois, Pat Quinn is in the house. One of the finest mayors in the history of America, Richard Daley is here. My—the senior Senator and great friend of mine from the great State of Illinois, Dick Durbin is in the house. The junior Senator who has served this State for so many years, Roland

Burr is here. A couple of wonderful Members of Congress, Jan Schakowsky and Bobby Rush are in the house. Senate President John Cullerton is here. Attorney General Lisa Madigan is here. Secretary of State Jesse White is here.

The alderwoman—we’re in Chicago, you got to talk about your alderwoman—[*laughter*]—Leslie Hairston is in the house. Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor and my great friend, Sheila Simon is here; another wonderful friend, nominee for treasurer, Robin Kelly; outstanding young public servant, nominee for comptroller, David Miller. Alderman and Democratic nominee for Cook County Board president and my alderwoman, Toni Preckwinkle is here. I want to thank Common for doing such a great job in the opening—Chicago boy. [*Laughter*] And treasurer and soon-to-be Senator from

the great State of Illinois, Alexi Giannoulis is here.

Are you—so you're fired up and ready to go? How about you? Are you fired up and ready to go? I can't think of—I can't—

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Thank you. Look, I can't think of anything better than being with a hometown crowd that is fired up. Plus, I'm going to sleep in my own bed tonight.

Now, Chicago, in 3 days, you have the chance to set the direction of this State and this country for years to come. And just like you did in 2008, you can defy the conventional wisdom, the kind that says you can't overcome cynicism in politics, you can't overcome the special interests, you can't overcome the big money, you can't overcome all the negativity, you can't overcome the big challenges any more, you can't elect a skinny guy with a funny name to the U.S. Senate or the Presidency. In 3 days, you've got the chance to once again say what?

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. Look, there is no doubt that this is a tough election. It's tough here in Illinois. It's tough all across the country. And the reason it's tough is because we've been through an incredibly difficult time as a nation. It didn't just start a year ago. It didn't just start 2 years ago. For the last decade, for the last 10 years, the middle class has been getting a tough time.

Between 2001 and 2009, the wage—the incomes of the average middle class family went down 5 percent. Between 2001 and 2009, job growth was slower than any time since World War II, so families were seeing their incomes go down even as their costs for health care, their costs for college education, their costs for groceries were all going up.

Folks were having to keep two, three jobs just to keep up. Meanwhile, too many jobs were disappearing overseas. And all this culminated in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression and the worst economic crisis since the 1930s.

So families that were already worried, already having a tough time, already having to skip going to the doctor because they didn't have insurance, or already having to say to their

kids, maybe you can't go to college this year because we don't have the money—things got even worse.

We lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I took the oath of office, 750,000 the month I took the oath, 600,000 the month after that, 600,000 the month after that. We'd lost almost 8 million jobs before any of our economic policies had a chance to take effect.

Now, when I got to Washington, my hope was that we could bring both parties together, that we could put politics aside to meet this once-in-a-generation challenge. That was my hope, because although we are proud to be Democrats, we are prouder to be Americans.

And I believe and—I believed then and I still believe now that there are a lot of Republicans around the country who feel the same way and a lot of Independents around the country who feel the same way.

But the Republican leaders in Washington, they made a different decision. Rather than roll up their sleeves and get to work, they looked around and they said, boy, we made a really big mess. We made such a big mess that it's going to take everything just to try to solve it. And it may not be solved in a couple of years. So many folks have already lost their jobs. So many businesses have already closed. We might be better off just sitting on our hands, sitting on the sidelines, and just going after Obama and saying no to every single thing he proposes, and then maybe the Democrats will get the blame when people get angry and frustrated for the lack of progress.

In other words, the other side, their political strategy was that all of you would get amnesia. [*Laughter*] That was their strategy. They're betting that everybody around the country would forget who caused this mess in the first place.

So, Chicago, it's up to you to let them know that we have not forgotten. We don't have amnesia. 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 starting to lead us out of this mess.

If the other side wins this election, the chair of a Republican campaign committee promised the exact same agenda that we had before I took

office. Now, we know what that agenda was. We know what that agenda is. They want to cut taxes, mostly for millionaires and billionaires. They want to cut the rules for special interests. They want to cut middle class families loose to fend for themselves.

So if you're out of work, tough luck, you're on your own. If you don't have health insurance or the—your insurance company drops you when you get sick, too bad, you're on your own. You're a young person trying to make it to college, but you don't have a lot of money, too bad. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps; you're on your own. It's the same agenda that turned record surpluses into record deficits, that allowed Wall Street to run wild, that nearly destroyed our economy.

So I bring this up—I wanted to just go down memory lane there for a moment not to reargue the past, but because we don't want to relive the past. We've been there before. We've tried what they're selling, and we're not buying it. We're not going back.

Around the country I've been trying to describe it this way. Imagine the American economy is a car. And the Republicans were at the wheel, and they drove it into a ditch. And it's a steep ditch; it's a deep ditch. And somehow they walked away.

But we had to go down there. So me and all the Democrats, we put on our boots, and we rappelled down into the ditch. [Laughter] It was muddy down there and hot. We're sweating, pushing on the car. Feet are slipping. Bugs are swarming.

We looked up, and the Republicans are up there, and we call them down, but they say, no, we're not going to help. They're just sipping on a Slurpee—[laughter]—fanning themselves. They're saying, you're not pushing hard enough; you're not pushing the right way. But they won't come down to help. In fact, they're kind of kicking dirt down into us—down into the ditch. [Laughter]

But that's okay. We know what our job is, and we kept on pushing, we kept on pushing, we kept on pushing until finally, we've got that car on level ground. Finally, we got the car back on

the road. Finally, we got that car pointing in the right direction.

And suddenly, we had this tap on our shoulder, and we look back, and who is it? It's the Republicans. And they're saying, excuse me, we'd like the keys back. And we've got to say to them, I'm sorry, you can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive! You don't know how to drive. You can ride with us. [Laughter] But we're driving, and we're going to have the middle class sitting right beside us because they're the folks that we're fighting for.

Look, 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.

But we've still got a long way to go. We've still got a lot of work to do. All across this State, from Carbondale to Elgin to Quincy to Chicago, folks are hurting. There are too many folks without jobs. Some families are hanging on by a thread.

That's what keeps me up at night. That's what keeps Pat up at night. It's what keeps Alexi up at night. That's what keeps us fighting, because we know that we've still got a long way to go.

See, we've got a different idea about what the future should hold for families across Illinois and across this country. And it's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built.

You know, we—you think about our stories. Pat came from humble beginnings, Alexi from an immigrant family. Me, you guys know my background. We didn't come to the scene with a silver spoon in our mouths here. Our families worked hard, and they knew that government doesn't have all the answers to our problems. We believe government has to be lean and efficient. We believe that free enterprise is the greatest engine for prosperity ever known to man.

But in the words of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, we also believe that government should and must do for the people what they cannot do by themselves individually. We believe in America that rewards hard work and responsibility for everybody and creates

ladders of opportunity. We believe in a country where we look after one another, where we say, I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. That's the America we believe in. That's the America we know. That's the choice in this election.

We believe in an America that invests in its future and in its people. We believe in an America that's built to compete in the 21st century. We know the jobs and businesses of tomorrow will end up in the countries that have the best educational system, the best infrastructure, the strongest commitment to research and technology. I want that nation to be the United States of America.

There's no reason why China should have the fastest railroads or Singapore have better airports. We're the nation that built the transcontinental railroad right through Chicago. We're the nation that built the Interstate Highway System right through Chicago.

Today, we're seeing America put folks to work, thousands of people building new roads and railways and runways, because that's what America is about—we build; an America where we build an infrastructure for the 21st century, putting people back to work, doing the work that needs to be done.

We see an America where we invest in home-grown innovation and ingenuity; where we export goods, we don't just import goods; where we create jobs here at home; where we make it easier for somebody with a good idea to start a business or patent an invention. We don't want to keep on giving tax breaks to corporations that ship jobs overseas. We want to give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in Illinois, right here in the Midwest, all across America, investing in small businesses and American manufacturers and clean energy companies. We don't want solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars made in Asia or in Europe. We want them made here in America by American workers. That's the choice in this election.

We see an America where every citizen has the skills and the training to compete with any worker in the world. We can't allow other countries to outpace us when it comes to math and science and our college graduation rates. We

used to be number one in college graduation rates. We used to be number one in math and number one in science. And now we're 9th in college graduation rates, 21st in math, 25th in science. That's not acceptable. And that's why we, over the last 2 years, made historic investments in education. That's why we set a goal: By 2020, we are going to be number one again in the proportion of college graduates.

And we didn't just talk about it. We put our money where our mouth was. And we stopped providing subsidies to the big banks and poured tens of billions of dollars into student loans and Pell grants to make college more affordable for students all across this country.

Millions of young people are seeing college more affordable because of the actions we took. And now we've got the other side saying that to pay for a \$700 billion tax cut that would go to the top 2 percent—the wealthiest 2 percent—they want to cut education by 20 percent.

That makes no sense. It makes no sense. Do you think China is cutting back education spending by 20 percent?

Audience members. No!

The President. Do you think Germany is cutting back education spending by 20 percent?

Audience members. No!

The President. Those countries aren't playing for second place. And we don't play for second place. This is the United States of America. We play for first place. That's the choice in this election. That's what this election's all about.

That's why we have to continue to provide assistance to young people going to college. That's why we have to renew the tax credit we've instituted—\$10,000 per young person who is going to college for 4 years—so that they're not loaded down with a mountain of debt and they can aspire to anything that their imagination leads them to. That's what this election is about.

Look, this election is also about not leaving a mountain of debt for the next generation. The other side talks a good game about deficits, except you will recall that the last time they were in charge, they took record surpluses from a Democratic President and left record deficits that I inherited.

And so when we make decisions about deficits, we're not going to do it on the shoulders—on the backs of students or seniors or veterans or the vulnerable. We're going to make sure that we do it in a sensible way that shares sacrifices. We're going to go after those deficits, but we're going to do it in a way that's fair and reflects the need to grow this economy over the long term. And that's what this election is about. And this election is making sure that we don't turn the keys back to the special interests in Washington.

You know, when we passed health care reform, let me tell you something: We did that because all across this country there were folks—hard-working folks—who paid their insurance premiums and then suddenly found insurance companies dropping them when they got sick, or folks who were working hard and wanted to get insurance, but had a preexisting condition and couldn't get it.

And so we said, anybody in America, anybody in America who is working hard, who's doing the right thing, they shouldn't go bankrupt when they get sick. And so we passed a law that made sure that insurance companies could no longer drop you when you got sick.

We passed a law that said everybody under the age of 26 could stay on their parents' health insurance. We passed a law to make sure that 30 million folks can get affordable, accessible insurance, and we did it in a way that will reduce our deficit by over a trillion dollars. And now the other side says they want to roll that back.

The same thing is true for financial reform. We just went through the worst crisis since the 1930s. And so we passed a bill that says you can't be cheated by your credit card company; they can't jack up your rates for no reason; that we're not going to have taxpayer bailouts again. And they said their number-one priority, they want to roll this back.

So look, we've got a lot of work to do, not only to move the country forward, but to make sure that the progress we've made continues. And we need to work together, Democrats and Republicans, to get it done.

But I've got to tell you, the other side, right now they're feeling kind of cocky, and they

don't see it that way. The Republican leader of the House says that, quote, "this is not a time for compromise." The Republican leader of the Senate said that his main goal over the next 2 years, his number-one priority, is to beat me in the next election.

I mean, keep in mind, he didn't say his number-one priority was put more people back to work, help more small businesses succeed. It wasn't to reduce the deficit. His top priority was to win the next election. We haven't even finished this election yet.

But that's the kind of cynicism we're fighting. That's the kind of politics that we decided to change in this country, the kind of politics that puts scoring points ahead of solving problems. And that's where you come in.

And I want to speak not just to Chicago; I want to speak to everybody in Illinois. The only way to fight this cynicism, the only way to match the millions of dollars of special interests' money, all that money that's being poured in as attack ads against Alexi, against Pat, the only way to do it is with your voices, the millions of voices who are ready to finish what we started in 2008.

We need you to get out and vote. But we need you more than that. We need you to work to help get everybody out to vote, because if everybody who fought for change in 2008 shows up in 2010, we will win this election.

And you know, a lot of you got involved in 2008 because you believed we were at a defining moment in our history. A lot of you believed that this was a time when the decisions we made about the challenges we face wouldn't just affect us, they'd affect our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren.

That's why you knocked on those doors. That's why you made those phone calls. That's why you cast, in some cases, your votes for the very first time, because you understood what was at stake.

And now, 2 years later, I know that some of the excitement that we had in Grant Park, you know, that fades away. Some of the excitement—

Audience members. No!

The President. —some of the excitement of Inauguration Day—you know, Beyonce was

singing—[laughter]—and Bono was up there, and everybody was feeling good—I know that good feeling starts slipping away. And you talk to your friends who are out of work, you see somebody lose their home, and it gets you discouraged. And then you see all these TV ads and all the talking heads on TV, and everything just feels negative. And maybe some of you, maybe you stop believing. Maybe you lose faith.

But I want everybody here to understand, don't let anybody tell you that this fight hasn't been worth it. Don't let them tell you that you haven't already made a difference. Because of you, there's a woman somewhere in Illinois who doesn't have to choose between losing her home and treating her cancer. Because of you, somewhere here in Illinois there's a parent who can look their child in the eye and say: "You are going to go to college. We can afford it." Because of you, somewhere in Illinois there's a small-business owner who is able to keep their doors open and keep all the families that were supported by jobs at that business—keep that company going. Because of you, somewhere in Illinois there is an outstanding veteran, one of the hundreds of thousand brave men and women who are no longer at war in Iraq because of you.

So don't let folks tell you that change isn't possible. Don't let that get you down. I know things are hard sometimes, but you know what, this country was founded on hard.

You know, this country started 13 Colonies, who folks said didn't have a chance against the British Empire. And then they drafted this document with 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 and liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

But even after they drafted those documents, it was still hard. And we had to abolish slavery. And we had to win women the right to vote. And we had to win workers the right to organize. We had to battle through depression and the war against fascism and the divisions in our own country to perfect this Union. And we ha-

ven't gotten there yet, but at every stage we've made progress because somebody stood up.

And when one person stood up, then suddenly 10 people stood up, and then maybe a thousand people stood up, and then maybe a hundred thousand stood up, and then maybe a million stood up. That's what happens with change. It's infectious. And that's the spirit we need today.

You know, in the introductions, I think some people mentioned a dear friend of mine who passed this past weekend. Bishop Brazier had a church right down the street. Michelle and I used to go to church at Apostolic sometime. And here's somebody who knew me when I was a young lawyer, had just moved to Chicago. And I remember when I was making the decision to run for President, I called him, and I said: "You know, Bishop, I'm really not sure this is possible. I don't know if I'm going to make it, but I think it's worth trying." And he says, "I don't know what God has in store for you, Barack." But he did say, "You won't know either unless you try."

And that idea is what has motivated so many people across the decades. That idea is the quintessentially American idea that this journey is never easy, but we've got to try.

And the journey we began together 2 years ago was not about putting me in the White House; it was about building a movement for change that endures. It was about realizing that in the United States of America, anything is possible if we're willing to work for it, if we're willing to fight for it, if we're willing to believe in it.

So, Chicago, I need you to keep on fighting. Illinois, I need you to keep on believing. I need you to knock on some doors. I need you to talk to your neighbors. I need you to get out and vote in this election, because if you do, if you're willing to step up, if you're willing to try, we won't just win this election, Pat won't just win this election, Alexi won't just win this election, but we will restore our economy, we will rebuild the middle class, and we will reclaim the American Dream for another generation and generations to come.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:13 p.m. at Midway Plaisance Park. In his remarks, he referred to musicians Lonnie R. “Common” Lynn, Jr., Beyonce G. Knowles, and Paul D. “Bono” Hew-

son; and Bishop Arthur M. Brazier, former pastor, Apostolic Church of God, who died on October 22. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 31.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Cleveland, Ohio October 31, 2010

The President. Hello, Cleveland! Thank you! Are you fired up? It is good to be back in Cleveland, good to be back in Ohio. And it's great to be with a crowd that looks like it's fired up and ready to go.

A few people I want to just thank because they are doing outstanding work each and every day: the Cleveland mayor, Frank Johnson—Frank Jackson. Thank you so much. Thank you, Frank. My dear friend Attorney General Rich Cordray; State Treasurer Kevin Boyce; some of the finest Members of Congress that we have, Senator Sherrod Brown is in the house; Congressman Dennis Kucinich; Congresswoman Betty Sutton; one of my favorite Members of Congress who couldn't be here because he just had a baby yesterday. Not—his wife had a baby. [Laughter] He is an outstanding young man, and we expect to send him back to Congress, John Boccieri. New baby girl is named Emma, by the way.

I want to thank President Ronald Berkman here at Cleveland State University. I want to thank Common for his wonderful performance. I want to thank—Congresswoman Betty Sutton is in the house, I believe. Is she here? Where is Betty? Hey, Betty. [Laughter] And most of all, folks who are going to be leading Ohio for many years to come—Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher, who's going to be going to Washington, and one of the finest Governors in this country, Ted Strickland, and First Lady Frances Strickland.

We are here for Ted, and we're here for Lee and all the members of the congressional delegation.

Audience member. Marcia Fudge!

The President. Marcia Fudge—Marcia Fudge, of course. But I didn't—for some reason, Marcia wasn't on the list. Is Marcia here? Where is Marcia? We love Marcia—it's just she

wasn't here, that's all. I love Marcia. That's my girl. [Laughter] We were acknowledging those folks who were in the crowd, but we love Marcia. And Marcia is going to do a great job.

Look, Joe Biden and I have been traveling all across the country, and there are a lot of places where we're doing a lot of great work, but there are very few places where we are doing as much good work as we were doing right here in Ohio. And, Cleveland, in just 2 days—in just 2 days—you've got the chance—

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

The President. I can't hear you. Did you say, yes, we can?

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

The President. In 2 days, you have the chance to set the direction of this country and this State for many years to come. Just like you did in 2008, you can defy the conventional wisdom. The kind of conventional wisdom, the stale wisdom that says you can't overcome cynicism in our politics; that says, no, you can't overcome all the special interests and the special interest money; that says, no, you can't tackle the biggest challenges in this country.

In 2 days, you've got the chance to once again say, yes, we can.

Now, Cleveland, there is no doubt that this is a difficult election. And that's because we've gone through an incredibly difficult time as a nation. And nobody knows that more than the folks in Cleveland and the folks in Ohio.

For most of the last decade, middle class families have been struggling. This didn't just start a year ago; it didn't just start 2 years ago. Between 2001 and 2009, the average middle class family saw their incomes across the country go down by 5 percent, when the other side