

determination, the same hard work, the same devotion to excellence, I'm confident we're not only going to lift up our schools, we will produce the best educated people in the world, our economy will grow, our country will pros-

per, and a new and better day will come for the American people.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator C. William Nelson and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in Miami

March 4, 2011

Audience member. Fired up!

The President. Fired up! Hello, Miami!

Audience member. Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can. I am so pleased to be here in the Sunshine State. First of all, part of the reason I'm happy to be here is because I've got a great friend, you've got a great friend, one of the finest Senators in the United States Senate, Bill Nelson is here.

And although she comes from far away, you should know that she is working for working people and veterans and teachers and students all across the country: We are so proud of Patty Murray of the great State of Washington. Give Patty Murray a big round of applause.

And in addition, one of the newest Members of Congress, Frederica Wilson is here. Where's that hat? Where's that hat? There she is.

It is nice to be back in sunny Florida. I wish I could stay for the weekend.

Audience members. Stay! Stay! Stay!

The President. You think? You think?

Audience member. Yes, you can! [Laughter]

The President. You know I want to stay, but if Michelle found out that I stayed in Miami—[laughter]—and didn't bring her along, I'd be in trouble. So I've got to go home tonight. But I have the sneaking suspicion I'm going to be back down here one or two times over the next couple years.

Now, I realize this is a Democratic event. And there are going to be times when we're among family, we're among Democrats, where we want to talk about being Democrats. But today I want to talk to you a little bit about being an American. I want to talk about those things that bring us together, as opposed to the things that drive us apart.

And I just came from visiting the students and teachers at Miami Central High School, the Rockets. State champions in football. I saw some of the football team; they were huge. [Laughter] What are you all feeding these people down here? [Laughter] I mean, they were big.

But I was there with former Governor Jeb Bush.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, now. [Laughter] I know this is not a name you often hear at Florida Democratic fundraisers. [Laughter] But even though Governor Bush and I disagree on a range of issues, we agree on the importance of education to America and the need to reform our schools. And what we saw together at Miami Central was pretty inspiring. I mean, keep in mind, more than a decade ago this is a school that scored a D on State exams in its first 5 years, an F in its second 5 years. One of the buildings was called the Fish Bowl because it would always flood. And only a third of the students said they felt safe at school.

And for years, there's been a fight in Washington about how do you fix schools like this. And there are thousands of them across the country. And there are some folks in our party that said, "Well, all you need is just to put more money in there." And then there were others who said, "It's all about trying to blame the teachers, money didn't matter." And then there were others who just thought, "You know what, a situation like Miami Central is hopeless; we should just give up on those kids and focus on places where you've got a stronger foundation."

But then something happened. It was fascinating to watch—as I was talking to community members and parents and teachers—suddenly, everybody decided, you know what, we're not going to allow the school to fail any longer. And so you had parents and alumni who rushed in and started setting up mentorship programs. And you had teachers who decided, you know what, we are going to buckle down and raise our game. And you had a new principal who said, I've got high expectations for everybody. And then you had business leaders and community members who started putting in money and setting up after-school programs and Saturday programs and all kinds of extracurricular activities. And you had students who said, we are not going to allow this school to close.

And so they started making sure that there were outstanding school leaders and outstanding teachers in every classroom. They brought in math and science coaches to support their teachers. They started a parent academy to make sure that parents were actively engaged in their child's education, because we all know that responsibility begins at home.

All this happened because the community wasn't afraid of reform. And now, although Miami Central is still facing its share of challenges, over the past 5 years their performance has skyrocketed. I wanted to make sure I get this right: increased their math scores by more than 60 percent; their writing performance by more than 40 percent; graduation rates went from 36 percent to 63 percent. Right? This is a 90-percent minority school in a low-income area performing in a high level and on their way to perform even higher.

And I tell this story because making this kind of progress isn't easy, but it's proof that it's possible. It's proof that it's possible. It's still possible for us to tackle tough problems in a constructive way. We don't have to be calling each other names. It doesn't have to be an ideological battle each and every time. Every once in a while common sense can prevail. We can make some decisions not on behalf of power or money or self-interest, but because it's the right thing to do. Every once in a while that

can still happen. Every once in a while it's still possible to do big things by working together.

Now, part of the reason we're all here is because we intend to win the next election. We believe in our vision for the future. There's nothing wrong with wanting to win. [Laughter] We wouldn't be involved if we didn't think we had better ideas.

But each of us who wants to serve the public also has a responsibility that goes beyond winning elections. We have a responsibility to future generations. And that's especially true during challenging times.

In a world that's more competitive and more connected than ever before, the biggest contest we face is not between Democrats and Republicans, it's between the United States and our workers and our businesses and our economy and our competitors around the world. If we want the new jobs, if we want the new businesses investing right here in the United States of America, then we've got to make sure that America is the best place to do business. That means we've got to have the best schools and the best trained workers. We've got to have a commitment to science and technology and invest in basic research. We need the best roads and the best runways. And yes, we could use some faster trains and Internet connections. That, by the way, has bipartisan support, I understand, here in the great State of Florida. Just a little editorial there. [Laughter] But we need it to move people, goods, and information as fast as possible. We've got to outeducate, we've got to outinnovate, we've got to outbuild, we've got to outthrustle our competitors.

Now, there are folks in Washington who are saying we can't afford to make these investments because of the tough fiscal situation that we're in. Look, we understand the tough situation we're in. Patty, Bill, they understand the tough fiscal situation we're in. And if I recall, the last time we had a balanced budget, who was President?

Audience members. Clinton!

The President. All right, okay. I mean, I just wanted to—[laughter].

So we understand fiscal responsibility. We've got to get serious about our deficits. I said so

when I was running for President, and I say so today. That's why I introduced a budget that would freeze domestic spending for 5 years. It would bring annual domestic spending down to the lowest level since Dwight Eisenhower was President. That means since most of you were not alive—[laughter]—most of you. [Laughter] I'm not naming names. [Laughter] It will bring our deficit down by more than \$1 trillion over the next decade—\$1 trillion dollars.

So I am absolutely committed to working to get our deficit under control. I don't want to be facing Malia and Sasha 20 years from now, my grandchildren, and them saying, "Gosh, Dad, you really didn't take care of business." [Laughter] "We're feeling bad about all this debt that we're having to pay off because you weren't on the job." I know Bill feels the same way; Patty feels exactly the same way. I am willing to cut whatever spending we can't afford. What I'm not willing to do is to cut back on the basic investments that are going to allow us to win the future. I'm not willing to do that. I'm not willing to cut back on education. I'm not willing to cut back on science and technology and innovation. I'm not willing to cut back on infrastructure. We need those things to win the future of America.

You know, folks talk about if we don't rein in our deficits, then we'll mortgage our future. They're right about that. But there's more than one way to mortgage your future. If we're shortchanging our commitment to education, our commitment to those kids that I met at Miami Central, then we're mortgaging our future. If we're sacrificing our commitment to research and development, the product—the results of which led to GPS and led to the Internet and led to computer chips—if we're not making those investments, we are mortgaging our future.

If we refuse to invest in our crumbling roads and bridges and the ports and airports; if we settle for a world where China now suddenly has the fastest trains, Singapore has a nicer airport—what happened? America used to have the best stuff. We used to have the best roads, the best bridges, the best ports, the best airports. We don't oftentimes in a lot of places.

But we can. It's a matter of us making good decisions and investing in our future. There's more than one way to mortgage our future. And I refuse to let that happen.

And here's the other point: These investments have traditionally been nonpartisan. I mean, think about it. My favorite Republican, Abraham Lincoln, he happens to be from my home State, but he was a pretty good President, last I checked. He was a guy who invested in the interstate—in the intercontinental railroad and in land-grant colleges and in the National Academy of Sciences in the middle of the Civil War. That's how important he thought these investments were. This is at a time when he was scrambling to figure out how to finance a war that might split the Union, and yet he was still making these investments. That's how important it was.

When Dwight Eisenhower decided, after having won—helped to win World War II and came back as President, obviously, this was a guy who was pretty concerned about the well-being of America, had made quite a bit of sacrifice. What did he decide to do? He said, part of what we have to do is we've got to invest in the Interstate Highway System, and we've got to invest in math and science all across this country. Because he understood that's how you win the future.

I believe we can find common ground. I believe that we can have a government that lives within its means without sacrificing that future for our kids. And to do that we're going to have to compromise. Each side is going to have to give a little bit. Everybody is not going to get everything they want. And I have to say that to Democrats sometimes. [Laughter] I know everybody gets frustrated sometimes. Over the last couple of years, well, you know, yes, you got health care done, but I don't know, I had this provision in there that didn't quite make it; or yes, we were able to make sure that we ended "don't ask, don't tell," but what took you so long? You know who you are.

Audience member. It's okay, we're good now, so sorry. [Laughter]

The President. But here's the thing. The American people want us to work together.

They want us to make progress. I'm proud that Democrats and Republicans joined forces in December to cut taxes for every American on their payroll taxes and allowed businesses to accelerate investment, because we need to spur growth. And we're starting to see the results. This last jobs report that just came out today: 220,000 new jobs; unemployment rate down below 9 percent, the lowest it's been in 2 years. We're moving in the right direction. But part of that was because we were able to make some commonsense decisions. And you've got a couple of commonsense people up here. These are folks who understand our job is to get stuff done for the American people.

Now, we know there's a lot more work to do. There are still millions of Americans who don't have work. Here in Florida there are hundreds of thousands of folks who are still worried about losing their home. And obviously, the housing market really got socked here in Florida. So we've got more work to do. But we have an opportunity to keep building on our momentum. And the only way we're going to do that is by working together, just like we did last December. And that's the spirit we need right now.

In the coming months, we're going to have a choice. We can allow ourselves to be consumed by the same kind of small-bore politics that's held us back before. We can allow gridlock and stalemate to prevail. We can focus on what the other side is saying about the other. [Laughter] Or we can focus on what they're saying about me. [Laughter]

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I know you do. [Laughter]

Or instead, we can focus on what it takes to win the future. For as difficult as these times may be, the good news is that the future of America still looks bright.

I've seen it in the eyes of the students at Miami Central. I saw it in a small-town company in Wisconsin that's putting hundreds of people to work making energy-efficient lighting. I've seen it up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This is as remote a place as you can be; 20,000

people in this town of Marquette, Michigan, up in the Upper Peninsula, above Canada. It kind of—you know, Michigan kind of goes up. And because the school had set up the Internet system, a wireless system, and then allowed businesses to use it, you've got the local family-owned department store that is selling two-thirds of its goods online and is now one of the 5,000 fastest growing companies in America because of investments that were made in the Internet.

I went out to Pacific Northwest to Intel out in Oregon, and I watched us making magical progress in terms of computer chips, chips that were this big that used to require an entire mainframe the size of this room to contain the same amount of information. That's being created right here in the United States of America.

We still have the best universities on Earth. We've got the best workers, the most productive workers on Earth. We've got the most entrepreneurial spirit on Earth.

We are constantly willing to adapt and change. We've got the greatest freedoms on Earth. We've got the diversity that is the hallmark of this 21st century. And no place represents that more than the Sunshine State.

So we've got what it takes to create more jobs. We've got what it takes to create more businesses. We know what it takes to win the future. We've just got to have the political will to make it happen.

We've got to be fired up. We've got to be ready to go. And so if you are willing to stand with us, if you're willing to stand with Bill Nelson and Frederica and Patty, if you're willing to stand with Barack Obama one more time, I've got no doubt that we will win the future and that future will be bright.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:44 p.m. at the Fountainebleau Resort. In his remarks, he referred to David Rodriguez, former principal, Miami Central High School in Miami, FL; and former President William J. Clinton.