

## Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Boston, Massachusetts

*March 8, 2011*

Thank you, Boston! Yes, we can! Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Ed Markey, thanks for your extraordinary service, and thanks for the very kind introduction. There are a few other people I want to make sure to introduce. First of all, our chief host, the outstanding mayor of this great city of Boston, Tom Menino. We've got Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray in the house as well. State Senate President Therese Murray is here; the DCCC chairman, Steve Israel; somebody who has been just an extraordinary partner for me over the last several years, somebody who's going to go down as one of the greatest Speakers in our history, Nancy Pelosi. And also, I've just got to point out, even though she's going to blush and wave me off, a dear friend, somebody who I've just come to love, Vicki Kennedy is here. And thank you to the museum for this spectacular setting.

We have had quite a wild ride over the last 2 years. Many of you were early supporters of Nancy's, early supporters of mine. Back in 2008, we were absolutely convinced that the country was moving in the wrong direction, and we had a vision to make it right.

And when I first was sworn into office, I think a lot of us still did not fully understand the magnitude of the difficulties that this country was going to be going through. We lost 4 million jobs in the 6 months before I was sworn into office and another 4 million before any of our economic policies had a chance to be put into place. And so when the rubble had cleared, when the dust had settled, this country was going through as tough a time economically, as tough a time financially, as any period since the 1930s. And it meant that we had to make a series of quick decisions and oftentimes very unpopular decisions. And in that circumstance, there would have been an enormous temptation to resort to the expedient, to look at the polls, to put your finger out to the wind, and to put political security over America's long-term security.

And nowhere was that more true than in the House of Representatives. All right? I mean, this museum is filled with artifacts of America's history. And as many of you know, the theory has always been, the Senate is the saucer that cools the passions of the polity, and the House of Representatives, well, it's boiling hot all the time. And because when you're running for the House of Representatives you get a 2-year term, you are very vulnerable to the spikes, the ups and downs of politics at any given moment.

And that's why when I say I think Nancy's going to go down as one of our finest Speakers, when I say publicly thank you to an Ed Markey or a Steve Israel, I mean what I say. Because over the last 2 years, not only were we able to yank this economy out of a recession, not only were we able to get the economy growing again so that over the last 15 months, we've seen the private sector add jobs, not only were we able to help States and cities—and I think Mayor Menino will swear by the fact that all the work we did with the Recovery Act made a huge difference in terms of putting people back to work here in Boston and in the region on construction jobs and making sure that teachers weren't laid off and police officers and cops were still doing their jobs—but under Nancy's leadership, we were able to achieve historic health care legislation that over the next 10, 15, 20 years will end up benefiting millions of families all across the country and give them the kind of security that they could never imagine without it.

We were able to get "don't ask, don't tell" repealed. We were able to expand our investments in clean energy. We were able to make sure that we had the largest investment in infrastructure since Dwight Eisenhower. We were able to make sure that we had the largest investment in education. We expanded Pell grants to provide access to our kids—for our kids to their college educations.

So we didn't just rescue the economy, we put it on a stronger footing for the future. And

along the way, we saved the auto industry and a few other things. *[Laughter]*

On foreign policy, we kept a promise to end combat in Iraq. And by the end of this year, our troops will be coming home. We put a plan in place to make sure that we begin transitioning in Afghanistan so that Afghans take the lead and that our young people are not the only ones carrying the burden of freedom in that region.

A busy docket, a lot on our plate, but leaders like Steve and Ed and Nancy were able to make that happen.

Now, here's the good news: Because of these historic efforts, we are now turning the corner. We saw last week's job report. We saw today confidence among small businesses the highest level that it's been in 3 years. We can feel in pockets across the country the economy getting stronger. Not as strong as it needs to be—there's still millions of folks out there who are out of work, hundreds of thousands of people who are worried about losing their homes—but you can feel a sense of growing optimism, at least in the short term.

But Steve, Ed, Nancy, they didn't run, they didn't make all the sacrifices that they've made just for the short term, because we had problems even before this financial crisis. We're looking towards the long term. And it's the long-term battle for the heart and soul of this country that we're going to be fighting over the next couple of years.

I just came from a wonderful school with Mayor Menino, TechBoston in Dorchester. And what a spectacular turnaround we're—we've seen in this school. I mean, you've got kids from a tough neighborhood who were working on—what was it?—a spectrophotometry. And they were doing experiments in light spectrums, and they were explaining this and that and the other, and we were nodding our heads pretending like we understood what they were talking about. *[Laughter]*

Eighty-five percent of these kids are now intending to go to college. And the reason for this change is, first, a wonderful founder and principal of this school, who's recruited these

extraordinary teachers. The Gates Foundation chipped in. You've got companies from around the region that have gotten involved. They're focusing entirely on math and science and technology, although I was also in an AP Government class, where they were asking me about a wide range of Supreme Court decisions.

You could not be more impressed with the quality of these kids and the quality of the teaching, and you walked in the classroom and you could just feel, this is a place where kids are learning.

Now, money alone was not enough to make that happen. So it's absolutely critical, if we're going to change our schools so that our kids can compete in the 21st century, that we're reforming those schools as well. And we can't just settle on the status quo.

But money made a difference. Every kid in that school has a laptop, and when we went into that science lab, they were all on Google Science because, as they explained to me, a lot of the Internet information is not accurate, and so they've got to go to this particular site in order to get the best information. And those laptops cost money. These kids are—have a longer school year and longer days. Each class is 60 minutes long so that they can absorb all the information that they need—that they need. And some of them stay in school in July and August to make sure that they're keeping up. That costs money.

So we as a country are going to have a series of decisions that we've got to make not just over the next 2 years, but over the next 10 years, over the next 20 years, about what our priorities are, what our values are. Now, we've been living beyond our means as a country for too long, and we're going to have to make some tough decisions about getting rid of programs that don't work, about revamping Government. Some of that will be painful. There will be some occasions where Democratic constituencies aren't happy with us because we're having to rationalize Government. But it's necessary.

But we've got to make sure that in that process of living within our means and driving down the deficit and driving down the debt,

that we continue to invest in the American Dream, that we continue to invest in our kids, that we make sure that every young person in America is going to get the best quality education, are going to be going to college, are going to be able to get a good job at the end of it.

We're going to have to make an investment to make sure that research and development, the cutting-edge technologies that drive our economy, continue to happen right here in Boston. You go over to MIT, you go over to Harvard, and they'll be the first ones to tell you, if we don't have Federal research grants, a lot of the work we do is not going to happen. And if it's not happening there, then all those biotech firms, all those medical advances aren't going to be taking place here or along Route 128.

We're going to have to invest in infrastructure. I've been preaching this, and I know that I'm preaching to the choir when I talk to the mayor. We used to have the best stuff: best airports, best roads, best bridges, best ports. We don't anymore. Anybody who's gone through Beijing airport or ridden on a train in Europe, you know that we don't have the best infrastructure. We're way behind countries like South Korea in broadband and wireless. That's not a recipe for the future.

And so part of our argument, part of why it is so important for Nancy and Ed and Steve to have you as allies over the next several years—this is not a matter of power, it's not a matter of who's up and who's down in Washington. This has to do with whether the decisions we make now ensure the American Dream is strong and vibrant for the next generation and the generation after that. That's what's at stake.

I do not want us to look back 20 years from now and say, you know what, this is—this was the moment when we started thinking small instead of thinking big; when we started to turn on each other instead of coming together; where we decided, you know what, there's only so much, and so the job of politics is making sure that the haves have—keep their stuff and keep the have-nots at bay. That's not an America that I envision for Malia and Sasha. That's not the America that you envision for your kids

and your grandkids. And so we're going to have a lot of work to do.

Now, let me say this: I was with—after—while I was at TechBoston, what we've been doing is going around the country and organizing forums with young people. And we had college Democrats and college Republicans and other college leaders, because we just want them to be involved. My theory is, you get young people involved in civic life, you get young people involved in politics, something good's going to come out of it. That's my belief.

And what was interesting, first of all, was how smart and civil they were to each other. So I was thinking about maybe sending them up to—[laughter]—Capitol Hill to see if we could learn some things. But somebody asked me, how do we reinvigorate the population, the voter, after 2 very tough years, 2½ very tough years? How are we going to get them involved in the 2012 cycle when a lot of folks maybe feel disillusioned after the midterm elections? How do we recapture that magic that got so many young people involved for the very first time in 2008? And I had a series of suggestions. I said, look, if you want to get voters involved, the first thing you need to do is listen, not talk, and find out what people care about and what they're thinking about. And so much of what we call apathy is actually people just not caring about the things we think they should care about, and so we need to pay a little attention to how they're thinking. But the other thing I said to these young people is, part of the reason folks get disillusioned is because we think somehow that compromise means you're unprincipled.

We've lost that sense in our—that in a vibrant, robust democracy like this, there are going to be some vigorous arguments, and sometimes you're not going to get 100 percent of what you want. In fact, you're probably never going to get 100 percent of what you want; you're going to get 80 percent of what you want or 70 percent of what you want. And so because this is a room dominated by Democrats, I want everybody to understand that Ed, Steve, Nancy, just as they did over the last 2 years, over the next 2 years, there are going to be times where we've got to try to find com-

mon ground to solve problems. Not everything is a fight. Not everything has to be a battle to the death. There have to be times when we step back for a moment and we say, you know what, we're thinking as Americans and not as partisans.

And that too is going to be, I think, a formula for our success in 2012. Because when I'm proudest of our party it's because I think our party is a practical party. I think it's a party of common sense. It's a party whose origins are with working people, who are thinking in practical, commonsense ways. And so on a whole range of issues, I think there's nothing—there's no weakness in us trying to reach out and seeing if we can find common ground.

Now, there are going to be times where we can't. I was born in Hawaii, what can I say? [Laughter] I mean, I just—I can't change those facts. [Laughter] And in these budget battles, I mean, there are going to be some things that we will not do because we think it's wrong for the country, and we're going to have some big fights about it.

But I want to make sure everybody understands here that the choices we make now are so important for the country that we're going to have to, wherever we can, try to build consensus and make decisions based not necessarily just on short-term politics, but also what's good for the country long term. And I think that when we do that, ultimately, that will be good politics. And when people look back on this era of politics, I hope that, just as they do

when they visit this museum and they see these portraits, they say, you know what, here were a group of leaders who weren't just thinking short term, but were thinking long term in this long, extraordinary experiment we've had with democracy.

So let me just close by saying this: I could not be more confident about the future of this country. And part of the reason that I'm so confident are those kids that I met at TechBoston and those college students that I met in that roundtable. But part of the reason that I couldn't be more confident is because of you.

I know a lot of the people in this room and the extraordinary contributions you've made in your own communities, starting businesses, helping on a whole range of civic efforts, and it gives me confidence to know that you are behind the DCCC and you're behind Nancy Pelosi and you're behind me. Because if we've got you behind us, I promise you we're going to keep this thing going not just for the next 2 years, but the next 2 years after that, the next 2 years after that, and we're going to be leading America into a bright and prosperous future.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:33 p.m. at the Museum of Fine Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Victoria Reggie Kennedy, wife of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; and Mary E. Skipper, principal, TechBoston Academy in Boston, MA. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 9.

## Remarks on the Nomination of Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke To Be Ambassador to China

March 9, 2011

*The President.* Good morning, everybody. As many people know, our current Ambassador to China, Jon Huntsman, has decided to step down from his current job. During his tenure, Jon has been an outstanding advocate for this administration and for this country. He made a real sacrifice in moving his family out of the State that they loved and has helped to strengthen our critical relationship with the

Chinese Government and the Chinese people. And so I am very grateful for his service.

In replacing Ambassador Huntsman, I can think of nobody who is more qualified than Gary Locke. More than 100 years ago, Gary's grandfather left China on a steamboat bound for America, where he worked as a domestic servant in Washington State. A century later, his grandson will return to China as America's top diplomat.