

Let me make it plain: We cannot cut education. We can't cut the things that will make America more competitive.

I mean, think about what happens in your own family when somebody loses a job or has an illness and you need to cut back. What do you do? You start by skipping that vacation you'd been planning, or you see what's on TV instead of going to the movies. Maybe you start packing your own lunch. There are a whole bunch of things that you might do. The last thing you're going to do is to dip into your child's college savings. That's too important. You're not going to give that up.

Well, what's true for your family is true for the American family. It's the same principle. A budget that sacrifices our commitment to education would be a budget that's sacrificing our country's future. That would be a budget that sacrifices our children's future, and I will not let it happen.

So yes, I'm determined to cut our deficits. But I refuse to do it by telling students here, who are so full of promise, that we're not willing to invest in your future. I'm not willing to tell these young people right here that their education isn't a priority.

I'm talking about students like Katherine Diaz, who says, "I think I should have the opportunity to be who I want to be." And it turns out that Katherine wants to either be a professional violinist or the first woman President of the United States. [Laughter] So she's still—Katherine's still—she's not sure yet. [Laughter] She

might do both. You could do it one at a time: professional violinist, President. [Laughter]

Or I'm talking about Roberto Claire. Where's Roberto? There's Roberto, right here. He says, "With good schools and good teachers, we can grow up to be anything we want." So—[applause]. It turns out Roberto wants to be the first Hispanic President of the United States. [Laughter] So you guys will have to work out, sort of, the sequence. [Laughter]

Roberto, Katherine, the millions of students like them across the country, they need us to offer them the best education possible, not only because that's how they'll succeed, not only because that's how we'll outcompete countries around the world, but because that's what we do. That's who we are. That's what America's about.

We are a place that believes every child, no matter where they come from, can grow up to be anything they want, where Katherine or Roberto or a skinny kid with a funny name named Barack Obama—[laughter]—can grow up to be President of the United States. That's who we are. That's the commitment we make to the next generation.

And I'm confident that if we fix No Child Left Behind, if we continue to reform American education, continue to invest in our children's future, that's the America we'll always be.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen of Denmark

March 14, 2011

*President Obama.* Well, thank you very much, everybody. Michelle and I both have very fond memories of the extraordinary hospitality that was shown to us when we traveled to Denmark in the first 2 years of my Presidency.

It is wonderful to be able to return the favor to my good friend Prime Minister Rasmussen. There are many Rasmussens in Denmark, but

Lars Lokke and I have had a chance to work in international forums together on a wide range of issues, and I've got extraordinary respect for his leadership.

We discussed a wide range of issues here today. Of special importance has been our appreciation of the sacrifices that have been made by Danish troops in Afghanistan and the

extraordinary leadership that Denmark has shown as part of ISAF.

Denmark is not a large country, but proportional to its population, it's made as significant an effort and made as many sacrifices as anybody in helping to stabilize Afghanistan and now help to effectuate a transition to Afghan leadership. And Danish soldiers are fighting in some of the toughest areas, without caveat. We have discussed how 2011 is going to be a year of transition, and under Prime Minister Rasmussen's leadership, he has been able to build a consensus within Denmark about how that transition would proceed that I think is a model for all our allies and participants in Afghanistan.

So we are very grateful for the excellent work that he has done personally, and obviously, most grateful for the sacrifices of Danish troops in helping to underwrite the security of all of us.

We also discussed the situation in the Middle East. And Prime Minister Rasmussen has been a leader in Europe in making sure that we applied tough sanctions against the Qadhafi regime in Libya. We both share the view that Mr. Qadhafi has lost legitimacy and he needs to leave and that we, as an international community, have to speak firmly against any violence that's directed at civilians; that we have to make sure to provide humanitarian assistance, both inside of Libya as well as along the border regions, where so many people have left; and that it's going to be very important for us to look at a wide range of options that continue to tighten the noose around Mr. Qadhafi and apply additional pressure. And so we will be continuing to coordinate closely, both through NATO as well as the United Nations and other international fora, to look at every single option that's available to us in bringing about a better outcome for the Libyan people.

We discussed our close cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, and I appreciate the leadership that Prime Minister Rasmussen has shown on that front. We have worked effectively together on a wide range of issues, and Denmark, again, despite being a small country, is one that obviously has been concerned about terrorist activity within its borders. And so we

will continue to strengthen our counterterrorism efforts there.

And we also had a wide-ranging discussion about energy. Denmark is a leader on clean energy and alternative energy. Prime Minister Rasmussen has just put forward a very ambitious and impressive program for complete reliance on clean and alternative energies by 2050, in part, as he points out, because even if you don't believe in climate change—and we both do—it's still the right thing to do for energy independence and it's still the right thing in terms of producing new jobs and new technologies for the future.

Finally, we discussed the situation in Japan. And obviously, I want to reiterate how heartbroken we are by the images of the devastation there. I know Prime Minister Rasmussen agrees that this is an international tragedy. And although Japan is a highly advanced economy and technologically equipped to rebuild at this moment of crisis, it's important that all of us join together in providing any help and assistance that we can in the days and months to come.

And so I'm in close contact with Prime Minister Kan, and our teams are in close cooperation, as is our military in the region. And we expect to continue that cooperation until we have some stabilization of the situation there.

But, Prime Minister Rasmussen, once again, thank you for all the help that you've provided to the United States, all the leadership that you've provided internationally. Denmark is a country that, in American terms, punches above its weight and does an outstanding job on a wide range of issues. We're so glad of our strong relationship and friendship between our two countries, and we're very appreciative that you took the time to visit us.

*Prime Minister Rasmussen.* Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for your warm welcome, your great hospitality.

As you just said, and I truly believe it's the truth, Denmark and the U.S. are close friends, long-term allies. We share values, we share interests, and the bonds are not only strong between our two governments, but between our two peoples.

Afghanistan is the key priority, and I was pleased to inform the President about the recent decision taken in Denmark, which proves that we are in this with a long-term perspective. We want the mission done. Two thousand eleven is an important year, where we have to start transition. I just informed the President that I paid a visit to our troops in Afghanistan just 2 weeks ago. I talked to Governor Mangal in Helmand Province, and he emphasized that we have to do more in order to get rid of the negative impact from narcotic in terms of lack of development, lack of governance, lack of security.

I have decided to increase our assistance to alternative crops in Afghanistan, and we're working closely together in that regard in Afghanistan.

We condemn the violent repression to the Libyan people. European leaders gathered last Friday, sent a very strong signal to Qadhafi. He should be history. He has lost his legitimacy, as you just mentioned. And I think it's important that the international society examine all options to protect the Libyan people.

Fortunately, change is going on in other countries in Middle East and North Africa as

well, and we had an opportunity to discuss especially the very positive transition in Egypt and Tunisia.

We agreed that one field for close cooperation should be job creation. What is important now is that the young generation of those countries have always given a hope for a brighter future. And I think there is a huge potential for close cooperation in that field; for instance, in the area of IT, where I think we should establish a close cooperation.

And as you mentioned, we discussed a full range of other issues as well. As I said, we share values. We are working together in counterterrorism, piracy, where we had to increase our cooperation. So I think our meeting here today reflects the fact that we have a common desire for taking our responsibility in order to create a future with peace and prosperity. So thank you very much, Mr. President.

*President Obama.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:34 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser March 16, 2011

*The President.* Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. You're making me blush. [Laughter]

*Audience member.* We love you!

*The President.* I love you back!

Boy, it is nice to see so many friends in a room. [Laughter] I live in Washington, so that doesn't always happen. [Laughter] But when you gather up so many folks who helped get me where I am today—I am reminded of that story of Abraham Lincoln when he was President. Back then anybody could have—he had office hours. And he'd let people come in and meet with him. And somebody insisted on coming to see him, barged through the door, said to his personal assistant, "I need to see the President. I'm the one who got him elected." And none of you have done that, of course. [Laughter]

So the assistant goes in, mentions this to Lincoln. Lincoln looks at his watch. He's got a little bit of time. He says, "Oh, bring the guy in." He says, "Sir, I understand you're the person responsible for getting me elected." He says, "That's right." He says, "Well, I forgive you." [Laughter] So I forgive all of you. [Laughter]

I want to acknowledge obviously somebody who has done extraordinary work. This is the person who not only has fought for the things we care about—first as a mayor, then as a Governor, most recently as DNC chair—he's also somebody who was the first elected official to endorse me outside of Illinois when I announced for President of the United States. And he did so in the capital of the old Confederacy, at a time when very few people thought I was going to win. So, clearly, he was term